PATTERNS OF DIFFUSION: THE 1886-1888 MEASLES EPIDEMIC AND THE EXPANSION OF SETTLER INFLUENCE IN THE CENTRAL INTERIOR OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Amanda Nicole Dinnes

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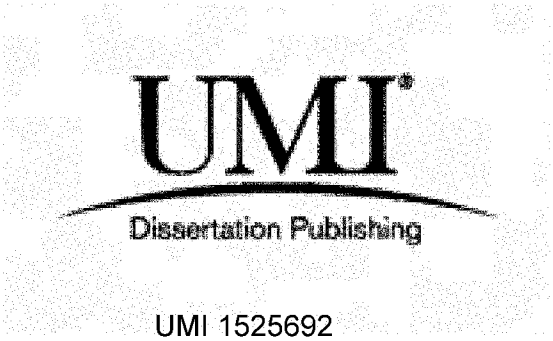

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ABSTRACT

"Patterns of Diffusion" argues that the measles epidemic of 1886-1889 was a pivotal event in the indigenous history of British Columbia especially in its Central Interior. This conclusion is drawn primarily through the examination of Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and Department of Indian affairs (DIA) documents, but also from newspaper accounts, the oral histories of Imbert Orchard, and the anthropological notes of Marius Barbeau. Prior to this study, no academic work has fully examined the epidemic. "Patterns of Diffusion" traces the spread of the epidemic, explores the involvement of the HBC, and examines the origins of the Skeena River Uprising, in which the epidemic was deeply involved. The incorporation of the 1886-1889 measles epidemic into the broader historical narrative contributes to our understanding of the expansion of white settlement and colonial authority in BC's Central Interior region at the end of the nineteenth century.

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Introduction

Writing to William Sinclair, postmaster of Fraser Lake, in February 1888, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Chief Factor Roderick MacFarlane wrote, "It should be our misfortune indeed if the Measles Epidemic extends to the Babine—should it do so, the attacked Indians must be careful not to catch cold, by exposure or otherwise. ... so far, our Indians have escaped attack and I hope may long continue this."[1] Despite the efforts of the HBC, the good fortune MacFarlane desired was not forthcoming. Aided by harsh weather and the periodic scarcity of small animals, epidemic measles spread rapidly throughout British Columbia's Central Interior and Skeena region during the winter and spring of 1887-1888. Changes in local economies, prompted by declining animal populations, a shifting wage-labour system, and conflicts over access to fisheries further weakened indigenous communities, undermining their ability to withstand the disease. Although mortality during the 1886-1888 measles epidemic did not reach the scale of earlier epidemics, it is historically significant because it occurred during a pivotal point in newcomer/indigenous relations in the Central Interior of British Columbia, and contributes to our understanding of the expansion of white settlement and colonial authority in BC's Central Interior region at the end of the nineteenth century.

An examination of provincial and settler response to illness in indigenous communities in the Central Interior reveals a complex relationship among settler perceptions of land, indigenous people, and disease. Despite a growing white population, settlement was not yet firmly established in many regions of British Columbia's Central

[1] Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) B.188/b/10 R. MacFarlane to William Sinclair (Fraser Lake) vol.1, Fort St. James (Stuart Lake) Correspondence Outward.

Interior, and the control of provincial and federal governments was still tenuous. The provincial government had developed some administrative presence in the Central Interior, as jurisdiction over First Nations Peoples passed in 1871 from the provincial government to the Canadian federal government, but the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) had little effective presence in much of British Columbia before 1888. Moreover, the epidemic struck in the aftermath of the North-West Rebellion (1885), and was heavily intertwined with the Skeena River Uprising, one of few, and one of the last incidents of direct military conflict between government and indigenous peoples in British Columbia. Both incidents reflected and fueled anxieties about settler identity and security in western Canada, and strongly influenced the way that British Columbia's Euro-Canadian population perceived the "Indian problem." The 1886-1888 measles epidemic occurred during a period of transition in British Columbia, and although scholars have largely overlooked it, the devastating event was intertwined with important ideological and administrative developments. The measles epidemic was an essential element in the construction of the settler narrative of the Upper Skeena, and a key influence on the expansion of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) into British Columbia's Central Interior region.

Described by the DIA as a "particularly bad type of measles," the 1887-1888 measles epidemic was felt strongly in indigenous communities across western Canada. Many fatalities among children and young adults were reported almost everywhere the epidemic spread. Striking Blackfoot, Stoney, Cree and Metis communities, the epidemic spread rapidly through the southern half of the North-West Territories before entering British Columbia through both the south-east section of the province and the Puget Sound

region late in the fall of 1887. Evidence of epidemic measles in the Fraser Valley and Canyon area suggests that the disease spread northward inland, via Quesnel, as well as along the coast.[2] The strongest evidence links the diffusion of disease along the British Columbia coast to indigenous hops workers returning from Washington State.[3] The crowded and unsanitary accommodations typical of many of the hops camps encouraged the spread of the epidemic.[4] Historian Paige Raibmon suggests that measles was widespread along the west coast of the United States, and W.H. Lomas of the DIA's West Coast Agency noted that epidemic measles had been reported in the Indians of Puget Sound that same summer, where the disease "swept off . . . great numbers of Children."[5] Measles spread rapidly among the indigenous people of British Columbia. With an incubation period of between eight and twelve days, and the possibility of contagion four days prior to the outbreak of rash, measles is highly contagious. It is likely that many were not aware they were ill or contagious when they left the hops camps.[6] Reports of severe measles in indigenous communities on the Sunshine Coast, the South Coast of Vancouver Island, and the entrance to the Skeena River confirm a general northward diffusion along the coast. Hubs of indigenous trade and travel, villages along this route functioned as natural gateways to other areas of the province.

The diffusion of the epidemic through the interior of British Columbia has been more difficult to trace, in part due to a fragmentary documentary record. The earliest report of the epidemic in HBC records of the Central Interior is from Fort George on 16

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[2] W.M. Meason, "Lillooet Tribes," *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (ARDIA)*, 1888, 113; H. Dewdney, "British Columbia" *ARDIA,* 1888, lxxvi.
[3] Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 84; W.H. Lomas, "Cowichan Agency," *ARDIA*, 1888, 100.
[4] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 83; Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 54.
[5] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 40, 84; W.H. Lomas, "West Coast Agency," *ARDIA,* 1888, 118.
[6] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 74.

January 1888, but the disease had arrived at Stuart Lake and Hazelton as early as the middle of February, suggesting the disease arrived from two different directions.[7] While the epidemic did not affect the people of every locality equally, the DIA and HBC reported many deaths over a broad area. Mortality rates were particularly high in densely populated regions, notably the indigenous communities of the Babine, where the epidemic evidently arrived as late as May 1888.[8]

The exact origins of the measles epidemic are unclear, but an outbreak of virulent measles in the British Isles and parts of Western Europe was reported between 1886 and 1889.[9] As epidemic measles was also present in Ontario and eastern Canada between 1887 and 1889, it is possible that the epidemic entered Canada through routine patterns of immigration and travel. A diffusion pattern linked to immigration would also support the epidemic's general westward movement, a route that loosely followed the recently completed Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR). Although other scholars have examined the relationship between the growth of transportation and epidemic disease in the North-West Territories, any direct connection between the CPR and the 1888 measles epidemic cannot be proven given the present limitations of primary sources and the practical limitations of research. However, this does not mean that there was no connection between the expansion of settlement in the Canadian West and the diffusion of measles in indigenous populations. The epidemic entered British Columbia during a period of economic and administrative transition, and evidence strongly suggests that shifting wage

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[7] HBCA B.280/a/1 Fort George 16 January 1888; HBCA B.188/b/10 R. MacFarlane to William Sinclair (Fraser Lake) Vol.1 (29 February 1888), Fort St. James (Stuart Lake) Correspondence Outward.
[8] HBCA B.188/b/10, vol.2 Fort St. James (Stuart Lake) Outward Correspondence "Memorandum for Quesnel" pg. 81.
[9] Anne Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets: Infectious Disease and the Rise of Preventive Medicine, 1856-1900* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York, 1993), 35; "Epidemic of Measles," *The Times*, 8 December 1888, 14; "Measles at Wandsworth," *The Times*, 10 December, 1888, 6; "Measles, or two Nights in a Paris Hospital," *The Times*, 15 June 1889, 7.

labour patterns and the growth of settler economies facilitated the spread of the 1887-1888 measles epidemic.

Both the provincial government and settler population recognized the threat that epidemic disease posed to the stability of both indigenous and white communities. This anxiety was expressed in different forms in different spheres, and reflected contrasting ideas about the future of British Columbia and the responsibilities of the provincial government as white settlement expanded into the Central Interior. In each case the uncertain position of British Columbia's indigenous population was at the center of the dialogue, as well as the expansion of what historian Mary-Ellen Kelm termed "that North American middle ground between urban slums and far off colonies—the Indian reserve."[10] Part of broader dialogue about the future of settlement in remote areas, the expansion of the reserve system into the Babine and Skeena regions was both directly and indirectly linked to the period of scarcity and disease. In 1889, less than a year after the measles epidemic and the Skeena River Uprising, the Babine Agency was created with headquarters positioned in the small settler community of Hazelton. Comprising of Gitxsan, Babine and Wet'suwet'en territory, the agency was under the supervision of the newly appointed agent Richard E. Loring, a justice of the peace who had also been heavily involved in the Skeena River Uprising and the subsequent trials following government intervention.[11] In 1891, the Babine Agency was allotted 4,384 acres which were then divided into nine separate reserves. The reserves in the Babine Agency were the first to be established in this geographic region, part of a large number rapidly created

[10] Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies,* 372.
[11] Jeremy David Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations with Colonial and Canadian Law, 1858-1909" (MA Thesis, University of Northern British Columbia), 62; Joanne Fiske, *Cis Dideen Kat (When the Plumes Rise): The Way of the Lake Babine Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000), 36.

at the end of the nineteenth century in an attempt to address, among other concerns, the usurpation of indigenous land by white settlers.[12] Interdepartmental and intergovernmental conflicts over title, access to resources, and the proximity of settler populations frequently marked these transactions.[13]

The lack of formal Indian administration in central British Columbia had a direct impact on how the HBC related to the indigenous people of the Central Interior. The failure of governments to administer Indian affairs effectively in remote regions had made many people in the HBC uneasy since the Crown Colony of British Columbia was created in 1858. Between 1821 and 1858, the British government had given the HBC an exclusive licence over the land that would become British Columbia. When the government revoked the licence, and created the colony of British Columbia, the HBC relinquished legal and constitutional responsibility for providing aid to indigenous populations.[14] The situation became more complicated when British Columbia joined Canada in 1871. Unlike in the North-West Territories, the British Columbia Government retained control over Crown land, and by extension, the creation of reserves, when the province joined Canada in 1871. Thus it was unclear which federal or provincial department, if any, was responsible for indigenous peoples in British Columbia who had not yet signed treaties or been assigned Crown land for reserves. This put significant pressure on the HBC in many parts of the province. Although the company remained profitable in parts of British Columbia long after it had ceased to operate as an active

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[12] Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 204, 205.
[13] Harris, *Making Native Space,* 184, 191.
[14] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 44; Arthur J. Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade, 1870-1945," in *Merchant, Credit and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press 1990): 190, 191.

trading company in many areas of eastern Canada, by the end of the nineteenth century, the HBC asserted that it no longer bore the responsibility of providing relief to suffering indigenous communities that it had when it operated as a quasi-government under a trade monopoly.

Evidence of this tension is visible in the Central Interior in the period under scrutiny here. HBC Chief Factor Roderick MacFarlane did not consider the impact of the measles epidemic a separate issue from the political vacuum and broader economic and environmental instability experienced by the indigenous peoples of the Stuart Lake region. Although MacFarlane considered Stuart Lake and its satellite posts to be among the most profitable remaining HBC trading posts in British Columbia, he argued that the intervention of the federal government during periods of distress was necessary for the well-being of indigenous populations, and strongly advocated for the government-funded distribution of food and other aid following the winter of 1887-1888.[15] This allotment of emergency supplies would be distributed by the HBC, and supplemented by an annual system of rations and material aid for the elderly and infirm in indigenous communities in close proximity to the satellite posts of Stuart Lake. Such a system would ensure that the destitute were provided for while removing the financial burden from the HBC, and, according to MacFarlane, prove to be more cost effective for both the DIA and the provincial government.[16] Although very different from the informal need-based aid system implemented elsewhere in the province, MacFarlane's suggestions were not

[15] HBCA B.188/b/10, vol. 4, Fort St. James (Stuart Lake) Outward Correspondence, 30 June 1888, MacFarlane to H.B. Davie (Victoria, BC).
[16] HBCA B.188/b/10, vol. 4 Fort. St. James (Stuart Lake) Outward Correspondence MacFarlane to H.B. Davie (Victoria BC), pg 3.

without precedent.[17] The HBC was often used as a means to distribute aid and treaty payments to remote regions of the North-West Territories, in part, as Ray argues, because the HBC had pre-existing trade relationships with indigenous peoples and wished to capitalize upon the transfer of money and material goods, but also because some Canadian Government officials perceived the HBC as less likely to commit fraud than specially appointed government agents.[18] However, MacFarlane's repeated requests for aid were denied by both the federal and provincial governments, and neither government directly addressed the existence of epidemic disease or hardship outside of areas already under established control.

Newspapers, notably the Victoria *Times Colonist*, depicted the epidemic as an extension of an already existing threat, and used reports of virulent measles to deepen public concerns about the instability of indigenous communities. Although this dialogue primarily focused on Vancouver Island and the reserves near Victoria, these ideas were easily modified in the case of the Skeena River Uprising to encompass Hazelton and other rural communities where indigenous people were not yet living on reserves. Positioning the isolated white community at Hazelton as especially vulnerable to "Indian threat" not only legitimized already present anxieties about the safety of distant settler communities, but also reinforced the perception of Victoria as an important urban center where white identity was physically healthy and well established, if not always secure. Penelope Edmonds has argued that these types of transitions were an integral part of the imperial process for distant outposts such as Victoria, and that such ideological repositioning was an important step that had to be completed before any lasting colonial

[17] Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism," 189.
[18] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 5.

order could be enforced. These reconceptualizations allowed for once "unruly" outlying town or cities to become "nodes in active trans-imperial networks in which bodies, ideas, and capital increasingly flowed in circuits of empire."[19] Although Edmonds was theorizing about mid-nineteenth-century Victoria, the identification of the city as "a continuing and vital structure of settler colonialism," and the argument that such frontiers were "mercurial, transactional" makes this concept equally applicable to a post-confederation British Columbia increasingly interconnected by provincial webs of communication, transport, and ideology.[20] Edmond's theories are particularly relevant to Hazelton, where the HBC and the small settler community defined its relationship with Victoria (and Empire) through fears of disease and indigenous unrest.

However, not all scholarship has recognized the fluidity of settlement in British Columbia. Robin Fisher's seminal *Contact and Conflict* asserted that there was a clear distinction between the British Columbia's fur trade era and settler period, and that "white domination was complete by the end of the 1880's [sic];" with the expiry date of indigenous agency set at 1858.[21] At this point, a "human deluge" of gold-seekers shifted the balance of power in provincial affairs and effectively "signaled the end of the fur trade."[22] As the preface to the second edition acknowledges, Fisher's thesis has been superseded by more nuanced arguments describing the agency of British Columbia's indigenous peoples during the nineteenth century, as well as what has increasingly come

[19] Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th- Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 12.
[20] Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, 9, 6.
[21] Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), xi.
[22] Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 71.

to be viewed as the evolution, rather than replacement, of the fur trade economy.[23] More recent attempts to fill this gap have identified the important ideological and administrative transformations that occurred within the early twentieth century. Scholars such as Mary-Ellen Kelm, Cole Harris, and John Lutz have done much to expand the knowledge of the administrative development of the relatively young province through studies of changing practices and perceptions of indigenous health and medicine, the creation of reserves and land claims, and the adaptive nature of indigenous wage labour.[24] Although they, and other scholars, have shown that the settlement (or "resettlement"[25]) of British Columbia might be better thought of as complex relationships rather than finite periods, there is still much room for growth in discussions of indigenous people and the late nineteenth century and northern or central British Columbia. This need is particularly apparent in the scholarship of the Central Interior, Cariboo, and Skeena regions. No academic studies have incorporated these somewhat geographically isolated regions into broader discussions of nineteenth century indigenous health or epidemiology. As a result, the historical narrative of British Columbia has tended to overlook more nuanced euro-Canadian/indigenous interactions, perhaps most notably the influence of epidemic disease on the growth of the state and administrative structures.

"Patterns of Diffusion" addresses this gap by focusing on the diffusion and impact of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic in British Columbia's Central Interior, with an emphasis on the Skeena Forks and Stuart Lake region, both important economic hubs and

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[23] Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, xvii, xiv. Fisher points to John Lutz (*Makúk)* and Rolf Knight (*Indians at Work)* for more recent work on the development of indigenous economies, as well as Susan Neylan's *The Heavens Are Changing* for a more nuanced study of indigenous-newcomer missionary relationships.
[24]Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Harris, *Making Native Space.*
[25] Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996).

centers of indigenous/newcomer interaction. These heavily interconnected regions have been chosen for examination in part because of the abundance of previously under-examined evidence, and in part because of the unique and transitional role the Central Interior occupied during the late nineteenth century, a period when Victoria was urban enough to no longer be considered a "true" frontier capital but Indian policy and administration in British Columbia was still being established. By emphasizing the epidemic's importance in this period and geographic region, this thesis fills an important gap in the epidemiological history of central British Columbia and adds to existing discussions of indigenous responses to an increased newcomer presence and the extension of state authority.

The historical literature examining epidemic disease in western Canada is uneven at best. Many studies examine acute infectious diseases in the fur trade era,[26] and others examine chronic diseases in the twentieth century,[27] but few works examine acute infectious diseases in the late the nineteenth century. This study draws upon all of that work to explore an epidemic of acute infectious disease during a time of transition from a

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[26] Cole Harris, "Voices of Disaster: Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia in 1782," *Ethnohistory* 41.4 (1994): 591-626; Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Jody Decker; "Epidemics in Saskatchewan during the Fur Trade Era" in *Geography of Saskatchewan*, ed. Bernard T. Thraves et al. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2007): 86-90; Jody Decker, "We Should Never Again Be the Same People: The Diffusion and Cumulative Impact of Acute Infectious Diseases Affecting the Natives" (Ph.D. Dissertation, York University, 1989); Jody Decker, "Country Distempers: Deciphering Disease and Illness in Rupert's Land before 1870," in *Reading Beyond Words: Context for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2007). Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Disease and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Robert Boyd, "The Pacific Northwest Measles Epidemic of 1847-1848," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 95.1 (1994): 6-47; R.M. Galois, "Measles, 1847-1850: The First Modern Epidemic in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 109 (1996): 31-43; Paul Hackett, *"A Very Remarkable Sickness": Epidemics in the Petit Nord, 1670-1846* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002); Paul Hackett, "Averting Disaster: The Hudson's Bay Company and Smallpox in Western Canada during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78 (2004), 575-609.

[27] See, for example: Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*; Mary-Ellen Kelm, "British Columbia First Nations and the Influenza Pandemic of 1918-19," *BC Studies* 122 (1999): 23-48; Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

fur trade economy to a "modern" economy in a geographic region that is largely overlooked. Despite an extensive diffusion pattern and an unusual virulence, the 1886-1888 measles epidemic remains poorly understood and largely excluded from the historiography.[28] "Patterns of Diffusion" is the first study to focus on the 1886-1888 measles epidemic.

Despite gaps in the literature, historians are aware that disease has had a significant impact on the history of British Columbia. The broader debate about pre-contact indigenous populations in the Western Hemisphere remains contentious and ongoing,[29] and much of the narrative of early colonial British Columbia is still being constructed.[30] The recent recognition of indigenous oral traditions as valid and important sources of information has aided this process greatly. Although this process is far from complete, it has significantly expanded knowledge of the indigenous history of British Columbia and encouraged the broader inclusion of narratives of health and the indigenous body into the traditionally euro-Canadian dominated narratives of colonization and settlement. However, historians remain divided on the full impact of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century epidemics upon British Columbia's indigenous population. Estimates of pre-contact and early post-contact populations differ

[28] Several historians and geographers have used the epidemic to provide context for broader arguments concerning shifting economic or cultural patterns. See, for example, Paige Raibmon's *Authentic Indians,* 84; John Lutz, *Makúk,* 96; Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 135, 190.
[29] See Chapter Three, "Eden," in Shepard Krech III's *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999). Although Krech determines the "most sensible" estimates of pre-contact population are between four to seven million (93), scholars have estimated as widely as 2-18 million (83).
[30] For dialogue on the importance of ethnohistory in disease studies, see Jay Miller, "Tsimshian Ethno-Ethnohistory: A "Real" Indigenous Chronology," *Ethnohistory* 45.4 (1998): 658-671; Cole Harris, "Voices of Disaster, " 592; Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, xv.

considerably, with more recent estimates of depopulation ranging from 50 to 90 percent of the indigenous population.[31]

Historians and First Nations scholars now largely accept the argument that epidemic disease played a crucial role in the colonization of British Columbia, but they disagree about what such high mortality rates signify in the context of indigenous agency and the later establishment of colonial government in British Columbia. Cole Harris has called for a better integration of epidemic-era evidence into mainstream literature. Harris challenged the continued reluctance of scholars to acknowledge "strong evidence" of cultural disruption resulting from epidemic disease, citing both the lingering influence of salvage ethnography and the ongoing refusal to acknowledge indigenous history as a dynamic force independent of British Columbia's broader imperial narrative.[32] Such massive disruption, Harris argued, should be foremost when considering indigenous/newcomer relations on Vancouver Island and the West Coast.[33] This argument was in some ways furthered in Robert Boyd's *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*. Introducing the population debate to the context of the Coast Salish, Boyd argued that the influx of epidemic disease to the Northwest Coast resulted in a depopulation that was as much cultural as it was literal, claiming that "[a]fter a century of Euro-American contact ... cultures were shattered: populations had plummeted, some groups had become extinct, and others were shadows of their former selves."[34] This claim is primarily based on the calculation that at least 74 percent of the Northwest Coast's

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[31] Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 3. Boyd estimates that out of a pre-contact population of "over 180,000, only about 35,000 to 40,000 [indigenous people] were left. Cole Harris, "Voices of Disaster," 592. Cole Harris argues that the decline of population in British Columbia was most likely around 90 percent, a figure parallel to contemporary estimates for other areas of North America.
[32] Harris, "Voices of Disaster," 592.
[33] Harris, "Voices of Disaster," 617.
[34] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 3.

indigenous population was lost to epidemic disease.[35] Such large-scale depopulation, when combined with the loss of cultural knowledge, according to Boyd, shifted the balance of power between newcomers and indigenous people on the Northwest Coast for the next two hundred years. While "Patterns of Diffusion" does not emphasize the cultural ramifications of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic, and disputes Boyd's assertions that the indigenous cultures were irreparably damaged by the early-nineteenth century epidemics,[36] it does use elements of Boyd's methodology, most notably the use of a variety of primary sources to reconstruct a fuller pattern of diffusion that moves beyond the immediate symptoms of illness. Although indigenous and literary accounts of the epidemic are few, they have been consulted in addition to the more Euro-Canadian sources to help reconstruct the geography and chronology of the epidemic.

At present, only a patchwork of scholarship examines the impact of disease in the context of the newcomer/indigenous relationships of the nineteenth century. Some mid-nineteenth-century epidemics have been examined, but these studies only encompass a fraction of epidemic illness experienced by the indigenous peoples of British Columbia, and many of these studies are by necessity thematically or geographically limited. This is particularly true of Boyd's "The Pacific Northwest Measles Epidemic of 1847-1848" and R. M. Galois's "Measles, 1847-1850: The First Modern Epidemic in British Columbia."[37] Both Galois' and Boyd's arguments for the modernity of the Pacific Northwest measles epidemic of 1847-1850 are constructed almost totally around the assertion that disease was experienced by indigenous communities differently when the means of diffusion

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 268-278.
[37] Robert Boyd, "The Pacific Northwest Measles Epidemic"; R.M. Galois, "Measles, 1847-1850." It should be noted that Galois's article, "Measles, 1847-1850" was written in response to Boyd's earlier study.

changed from indigenous patterns of travel to settler-introduced patterns of travel and trade.[38] However, both the 1847-1850 measles and 1862-1863 smallpox epidemics occurred prior to the extension of colonial authority to much of the Colony of British Columbia, meaning that its "modernity" was limited to British Columbia's southern sections. In both studies, little analytical consideration is given to shifts in cultural context or possible developments in interpretations of pathology. Although both works examine an important aspect of indigenous/newcomer relationships in British Columbia, the limited nature of these studies did little to further discourse surrounding the role of epidemic disease in the extension of state apparatuses in the new territory.

The impact of colonization upon indigenous health in British Columbia is more directly examined in Mary-Ellen Kelm's important *Colonizing Bodies*. Exploring themes of dominance and resistance in the growth of the DIA, Kelm argued that First Nations bodies functioned as "sites of struggle between indigenous and imported healing systems" and were shaped through "the colonial policies and practices of the Canadian government."[39] Using DIA ethnography, archaeology, archival history, and oral histories as evidence, Kelm asserted that twentieth-century Indian policy actively constructed a physically inferior indigenous body through residential schooling and regulations intended to control elements of diet, dress, and religious practice.[40] These policies formed the core of the Canadian government's relationship with indigenous people and were contingent upon the belief that the indigenous body could be improved, reformed, and controlled through strict regimentation and supervision. The idea that this transformation was possible was closely linked to the growth of the body as a subject of study and the

[38] Boyd, "The Pacific Northwest Measles Epidemic," 31-43; R.M. Galois, "Measles, 1847-1850," 31.
[39] Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, 175, xix.
[40] Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, 175, xv.

expansion of medical knowledge, all of which supported the legitimacy of racial taxonomies and the superior physicality of the white body.[41] These "scientific" principles justified the use of aggressive policies by the DIA despite the repeated failure of indigenous populations to thrive under government administration, and made, as Kelm argued, the practice of Euro-Canadian medicine among indigenous people acts of colonization.[42] Although many of the administrative structures examined in *Colonizing Bodies* were not yet fully formed in the Central Interior of British Columbia at the end of the nineteenth century, many of Kelm's core tenets are applicable to this study, and help us understand the role of epidemic disease and the indigenous body in British Columbia's late-nineteenth-century political and social sphere. By arguing that the idea of a malleable and unwell indigenous body is a social construct with roots in enduring imperial rhetoric, Kelm shows how dialogue about health, illness, and physicality can be used as a lens to examine the power dynamics at the heart of the indigenous/newcomer relationships that have defined much of British Columbia's recent history.

A more critical argument about the culpability of the DIA and the ill health of indigenous peoples is made by Maureen Lux in *Medicine That Walks.* Examining Indian policy and the expansion of the DIA that followed the signing of Treaties Four, Six, and Seven, Lux argued that poor conditions and disease among Indian reserves and residential schools were perpetuated in order to further the opening of the Canadian West to settlement and agriculture.[43] Lux asserted that the desire to increase white immigration led to the Canadian Government's intentional withholding of food, medicine, and proper farming equipment from indigenous communities, resulting in such poor living

[41] Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, xviii.
[42] Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, xix.
[43] Lux, *Medicine that Walks*, 5.

conditions that "the Native peoples of the plains could not escape the descent into illness."[44] However, *Medicine that Walks* does not acknowledge the epidemic measles that spread through much of the plains region between 1886 and 1888.

Historian James Daschuk briefly discusses the spread of the 1886-1889 measles epidemic in his recent study *Clearing the Plains.* Although the primary goal of Daschuk's study was to "identify the roots of the current health disparity between the indigenous and mainstream populations in Western Canada," his secondary goal was to "deal with the politics of famine," particularly in regards to the tuberculosis crisis that spread throughout the western plains during the late nineteenth century.[45] As the title suggests, Daschuk focused on the southern part of the North-West Territories and viewed the spread of epidemic diseases as a natural extension of pre-existing famines and ill health. Daschuk acknowledged the importance of biology in the spread of epidemic disease,[46] but primarily argued that the periods of increasingly poor health in indigenous communities were created by the "malevolence of the Macdonald regime" and the failure of the DIA to meet treaty terms or provide adequate food and medical supplies.[47] Unfortunately, Daschuk does not follow the epidemic into British Columbia, instead focusing on the rise of influenza and tuberculosis at the turn of the twentieth century.

While it is unclear what role, if any, negligence on the part of the DIA had in the spread of the measles epidemic throughout the North-West Territories, little evidence exists to suggest that officials in the DIA deliberately encouraged ill health during the 1886-1888 measles epidemic in British Columbia. The 1888 annual report suggests that

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[44] Lux, *Medicine that Walks*, 4.
[45] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), ix, xix.
[46] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, xvi.
[47] James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 103.

many agents were very concerned about poor health and the spread of the measles epidemic in reserve populations.[48] While it is difficult to know how thoroughly precautions were actually implemented in the 1886-1888 measles epidemic, a substantial amount of evidence suggests that the DIA advocated a timely response to epidemic disease. Although there is little firm evidence to suggest that quarantine was implemented by the DIA during the 1886-1888 measles epidemic, quarantine measures were sometimes relied upon to control smallpox in reserve populations. However, as quarantine procedures were just beginning to come into widespread use for epidemic measles in urban populations, the failure to implement them does not necessarily indicate anything other than disorganization.[49] Moreover, these arguments do not translate very well into the context of central British Columbia, where the DIA's presence was much more tenuous and the number of Indian agents much smaller than in the North-West Territories.

Arthur J. Ray's *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* examines the mercantile-based trajectory that the company took between 1870 and 1945 as the company struggled to meet the challenges of western Canada's expanding market, providing an important methodological bridge into the twentieth century and the modern fur trade. The HBC's transition into the twentieth century was particularly complex in British Columbia's Central Interior. Despite periods of serious financial difficulties, the company still had a far greater presence than the government did in most of the region. Although HBC personnel resisted the withdrawal of credit and emergency relief when the government was not able or willing to fill the gap, many senior officials and investors

[48] For an example see Samuel R. Lucas, "Peace Hills Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 96; WM Pocklington, "Blood Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 97.
[49] Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, 50, 51.

believed that extending credit to indigenous people was contrary to modern business plans and would not provide any long-term benefit to the Company or the Indians.[50] Moreover, the company also believed that relief was a government responsibility. These tensions were not limited to British Columbia, and plagued the HBC well into the twentieth century.[51] While the extensive credit system was not yet extinguished in the Central Interior at the time of the measles epidemic, it was in the process of being restricted at smaller and less productive posts, and MacFarlane was seeking ways to eliminate the cost and instability of the indigenous freighting system.[52]

A large part of "Patterns of Diffusion" has been informed by historical geographies. Although disease itself is a cultural and physiological experience, epidemics are inherently geographical phenomena. Works by Arthur J. Ray, Jody Decker, and Paul Hackett are used to provide context to the spread of disease in indigenous communities, and anchor the largely unexamined 1888 measles epidemic within a scholarly body that recognizes the historical significance of origin and patterns of disease diffusion.[53] Although both Ray and Decker examine important facets of geography and epidemiology in the growth of technology and newcomer/indigenous relationships, it was Paul Hackett's *A Very Remarkable Sickness* (2002) that first examined the spread of epidemic disease as a result of non-biological factors. Relying primarily upon HBC documents, Hackett tracked the diffusion of several infectious crowd diseases, including measles,

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[50] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 3, 5, 86, 87.
[51] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 201.
[52] HBCA B.188/b/10 vol. 5, Fort St. James (Stuart Lake) Outward Correspondence, November 1888, MacFarlane to William Sinclair (Fraser Lake); Galois, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder," 80.
[53] Arthur J. Ray, "Diffusion of Diseases in the Western Interior of Canada, 1830-1850," *Geographical Review* 66.2 (1996): 139-157; Jody Decker, "Smallpox along the Frontier"; Jody Decker, "Country Distempers: Deciphering Disease and illness in Rupert's Land before 1870"; Paul Hackett, *"A Very Remarkable Sickness:" Epidemics in the Petit Nord, 1670-1846* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002).

through the Petit Nord, the area between the Great Lakes and the Hudson's Bay lowlands before 1846. By introducing concepts such as "critical community size" to the discussions of epidemic disease in the indigenous communities of the remote interior, Hackett emphasized the biological importance of the growing connections between outlying geographic areas and the large cities of the east coast. As transportation between the HBC posts and the urban centres of the east coast improved, the indigenous people of the Canadian interior were exposed to crowd diseases increasingly frequently. In asserting that the diseases that spread through the remote areas of the Petit Nord were both a continuum of the contact-era "Columbian Exchange," and directly and indirectly linked to distant urban populations, Hackett emphasized the necessity of the further study of later-period epidemic disease. As such, Hackett's work provides a strong model for the examination of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic.

Although factors such as economic stability, social disruption, and the shifting role of indigenous participation in settler communities are examined in an attempt to reconstruct the ideological climate of the late nineteenth century, "Patterns of Diffusion" does not attempt to explore the epidemic from an indigenous perspective or speak to any particular experience of disease. This is in part due to my outsider's position in regard to indigenous traditions as well as the natural limitations of primary sources that are, in many cases, over one hundred years old, and the product of ideologies that privileged the white, male, and imperial voice. Disease among indigenous populations was not always seen or remarked upon as an abnormality,[54] and many of the documents produced by colonial administrators make only oblique references to the measles epidemic. The annual reports from the DIA seldom mention areas outside their jurisdiction and the

[54] Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, xvi.

quality of documentation was highly variable and dependent on the vigilance of individual employees. Similarly, while HBC employees tended to be very concerned by the presence of disease among the indigenous populations, in many cases the epidemic took second place to larger economic concerns and the daily running of business. Although every HBC post kept detailed records, only a fraction of the material from the Central Interior of British Columbia survives today. Post journals are particularly fragmentary, with many of the most detailed records coming from the smaller, less economically important posts. However, despite significant limitations in chronology and scope, both of these sources remain some of the most informative sources on the lives of indigenous people in British Columbia during the late nineteenth century.

"Patterns of Diffusion" also acknowledges the limitations inherent in working with sources collected by third parties whose practices may not meet the standards set by contemporary historians, and aims to reflect this by attempting to use such material only in ways that are both cautious and discriminating. The particular challenges of using anthropological material from the early twentieth century have forced me to consider primary sources in terms of layers: the information the source provides about the period it documents, as well as the information the source provides about those who created the documentary record. This two-pronged approach has been particularly important when working with the Marius Barbeau collection, an extensive archival collection stored at the Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC) in Ottawa.[55] Barbeau, along with Tsimshian research assistant William Benyon, spent several years in the early 1920s transcribing oral tradition and collecting interviews from the Gitxsan, Tsimshian, and Nishga

[55] CMC Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, Northwest Coast Files, Canadian Museum of Civilization, (B-F-1 to B-F-731) (1910-1969).

(Nisga'a) peoples. However, this was not Barbeau's only exposure to the indigenous peoples of British Columbia. Shortly prior to visiting the Skeena, Barbeau conducted research in Victoria and the northern part of Vancouver Island, and this experience particularly influenced his opinions of indigenous peoples.[56] Much of the information Barbeau and Benyon collected during this period formed the basis of Barbeau's later publications describing the life, art, and culture of the Northwest Coast.

As the Barbeau collection only became available to researchers in the early 1990s, there has been little discussion of the challenges or implications of using either the field notes or completed manuscripts for research purposes.[57] Although Barbeau's studies were among the first to assume an in-depth approach to the study of the Gitxsan, Tsimshian, and Nisga'a peoples, many of Barbeau's conclusions were deeply problematic.[58] Several of these erroneous conclusions have had lasting impacts in both popular and academic scholarship.[59] As a result, former CMC employee and research assistant Derek E. Smith has warned against simply using the collection as an unproblematic databank capable of supplying "globules of data," and instead called for a "careful discursive analysis" that takes the form and meaning of the archive itself into consideration.[60] This work follows

[56] Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, 3.
[57] Archival research assistant Derek G. Smith is one of the few scholars to critically examine the value of the Barbeau collection. Derek G. Smith, "The Barbeau Archives at the Canadian Museum of Civilization: Some Current Research Problems," *Anthropologica* 43.2 (2001): 191-200.
[58]Smith, "The Barbeau Archives," 194. As well as erroneous conclusions about the origins and developments of the Tshimshanic language, Barbeau deeply misunderstood the Northwest Coast Crest System, attributing both the animal symbolism and the proliferation of totem poles to the influence of the mid-nineteenth-century fur trade.
[59] Smith, "The Barbeau Archives," 194.
[60] Smith, "The Barbeau Archives," 196.

the lead of historians such as J.R. Miller and Susan Neylan who have also recognized the value of the Barbeau and Benyon collection and utilized it judiciously.[61]

The Imbert Orchard collection is similarly problematic. Although Orchard was forthright about his lack of formal training as a historian, the depth and scope of his personal records suggest that he viewed his work in British Columbia as a serious historical effort. However, Orchard sought candidates and conducted interviews often only when he knew the information provided would match the predetermined theme at the core of the *Living Memory* radio programs. Orchard did not think that the modern historical narrative of British Columbia captured the "pioneer" history of British Columbia, and having witnessed the rise of technology that followed the Second World War, was concerned that both time and modernity were obscuring the most authentic history of the province.[62] In other words, Orchard was concerned with honouring the pioneers and the expansion of the Euro-Canadian settlement. While Orchard's collection did attempt to serve as an alternative to the already established histories of the mid-twentieth century, it did not attempt to challenge the dominant white settler narrative or orchestrate either political or social change.[63] The interviews in *Living Memory* indicate that Orchard viewed the construction of identity as separate from the narrative of progress and development that was at the center of many of these stories. In examining another side of this process—the rural working-class experience—Orchard attempted to further legitimize the earlier, colonial narratives of the Skeena region, seeking a particular

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[61] J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) and Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).
[62] Robert Budd, "'The Story of the Country': Imbert Orchard's Quest for Frontier Folk in BC, 1870 -1914," (MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2005), 97, 15.
[63] Budd, "The Story of the Country," 13.

"feel" that often came at the expense of historical accuracy.[64] While most obvious in the finished radio products, the continued drive for a "good story" is also apparent in many of the rough notes and transcripts that form the bulk of the Orchard collection.[65]

The tone and nature of the Orchard interviews used in this thesis vary greatly. It is notable that many of the interviews were recorded by Robert Tomlinson's wife, Roxy Tomlinson, as the product of informal conversations, rather than by Orchard. The lengthy interviews with Tomlinson maintain a formal and didactic tone, suggesting that Tomlinson was concerned with legitimizing both his father's work and family's presence in the Skeena Region. In contrast, the interviews with Roxy Tomlinson and Constance Cox are far more informal and anecdotal. The differing emphasis of the interview material significantly influenced the way that the measles epidemic and the surrounding Gitxsan communities are positioned in the rough recordings and transcripts and the finished radio programs, and reflects an important difference in methodology. While the present study primarily utilizes Orchard's preliminary interviews and research notes, the biases inherent in the research methods used by Orchard are important and should not be overlooked.

"Patterns of Diffusion" consists of three chapters, organized thematically and geographically. The first chapter provides a background to epidemic measles and the rubeola virus as a disease. It also traces the diffusion of the epidemic from the North-West Territories into British Columbia, connecting federal, provincial, and public response to disease within indigenous communities to the expansion of DIA influence into British Columbia and western Canada. Articles from Victoria's daily newspaper *The*

[64] Budd, "The story of the Country," 6, 22.
[65] BCA Imbert Orchard papers from CBC radio interviews 1961- 1972 "Living Memory" project (notes)," MS-0364.

Colonist provide insight into anxieties surrounding the threat of disease in both indigenous and white communities, as well as the proximity of the newly established Indian reserves to an increasingly urban and white Victoria. This information is supplemented by extracts from the Annual Reports of the DIA which provide information on estimates of fatalities as well as a rough guideline of the spread of disease in many areas of both British Columbia and the North-West Territories. The chapter argues that the measles epidemic was likely spread by both indigenous and newcomer populations, roughly following the route of the newly constructed CPR as well as wage labour patterns that were shifting in response to an increasingly settler- and market-orientated economy.

The second chapter explores the impact of the epidemic in the Stuart Lake area between 1888 and 1889 as revealed by the documentation of the Hudson's Bay Company. Although measles was present in British Columbia's Central Interior only between January and May 1888, the epidemic occurred during a period of economic hardship and cyclic resource scarcity that lasted for upwards of two years. While this hardship was largely due to recurring and uncontrollable environmental factors, HBC Chief Factor Robert MacFarlane's efforts to provide evidence of responsible resource use and to procure aid for the indigenous populations that visited the trading forts triggered a much larger conversation surrounding the uncertain position of the HBC in British Columbia. MacFarlane's requests culminated in a correspondence examining the role that the provincial government and the DIA would assume in governing the province's indigenous population as white settlement increased and the economic stability of the fur trade and other means of subsistence lifestyles declined. Using HBC post journals from western Canada, provincial and federal correspondence, DIA records, and MacFarlane's

personal correspondence, this chapter shows that the measles epidemic was an essential part of a larger dialogue surrounding the viability of the fur trade and the future of the DIA in central British Columbia and western Canada.

The third chapter shifts focus to the introduction of measles to the Northwest Coast during a period of political upheaval and indigenous resistance. It examines accounts of the epidemic experience of the Upper Skeena region. This chapter links the period of disease to legal and administrative changes that occurred during the spring and summer of 1888 and an event best known as "The Skeena River Uprising" or the "Kitwoncool Jim Affair." This approximately eight-week-long period of conflict began with the murder of medicine man Neatsque by hereditary chief Kamalmuk, who apparently believed that Neatsque had cursed his son and primary heir with a fatal case of measles.[66] Although the dispute was settled amicably under Gitxsan law, the murder was reported to Constable Washburn along with other colonial officials in Victoria, and the Skeena River Patrol was sent to the Gitxsan village of Gitwangak to apprehend Kamalmuk in late June.[67] Supported by factions of the Gitxsan community, Kamalmuk managed to evade custody for several weeks, but was eventually found and fatally shot in

[66] CMC Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, informant Lelt (Salomon Harris), "Gitwinkul Jim" in "Gitksan Narratives (Hazelton, 1920 etc)," Canadian Museum of Civilization, Northwest Coast Files (Kitwanga) (B-F-89.2)(1924) pg 1, 2; informant George Derrick, "Gitwinkul Jim" in "Gitksan Narratives (Hazelton, 1920 etc)," Canadian Museum of Civilization, Northwest Coast Files (Kitwanga) (B-F-89.3)(1924) pg 1.

[67] BCA, Minutes of the Executive Council of British Columbia Relative to the Indian Troubles on the Skeena River and the Expenses of the Expedition Sent to that Locality, British Columbia Archives, GR 1108, Box 1, File 1; Williams, 26, 52. Williams' thesis emphasizes that this exchange took place in the context of an evolving legal relationship between the Gitxsan and Colonial administrators following the 1872 agreement between Gitseguklan chiefs and Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works Joseph Trutch to adhere to colonial law. Williams argues that this agreement had "long term implications for Gitxsan attitudes towards blood vengeance," and strongly influenced the chain of events in 1888.

the back by a constable sent to arrest him.[68] As relations between the Gitanyows and the white community further deteriorated, the settlers barricaded themselves in the HBC post at Hazelton.[69] In response, the provincial government dispatched the gunboat H.M.S. *Caroline* and `C` battery of the Royal Canadian army, consisting of 80 soldiers, to the mouth of the Skeena.[70] A unit of special constables under the leadership of Superintendent Roycraft of the provincial police, along with Gold Commissioner and Stipendiary Magistrate Captain FitzStubbs, were sent into Hazelton to assess the situation and meet with Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en chiefs from five villages. Finding little actual unrest and the majority of Gitxsan away at seasonal activity, the *Caroline* returned to Victoria within two weeks of arrival.[71]

The Skeena River Uprising has come to occupy a symbolic position in studies of Gitxsan resistance and the settlement of the Skeena region, in part due to the direct connection between violence and the development of colonial administrative structures. The immediate aftermath of the Skeena Uprising saw significant administrative changes, notably the creation of the Babine Agency and the first permanent placement of a Canadian legal presence on Gitxsan territory. Several academic publications have examined the military response to the Skeena River Uprising in detail, but few studies acknowledge the complicating presence of the epidemic when exploring either the legal

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[68] BCA, Constable James Homaus to Attorney-General Davie, 14 August 1888, GR 677; Robert Galois, "Research Report and Notes: The History of the Upper Skeena Region, 1850-1927," *Native Studies Review* 9.2 (1993-1994): 136.
[69] BCA, Constable B.W. Washburn to Attorney General, 27 June 1888, GR 677; BCA, R.E. Loring to HB Roycraft, 8 August 1888, GR 677; Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 53.
[70] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region": 137; BCA, Minutes of the Executive Council of British Columbia Relative to the Indian Troubles on the Skeena River and the Expenses of the Expedition Sent to that Locality, GR 1108, Box 1, File 1.
[71] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region," 137.

or socio-cultural aspects of the Skeena Uprising.[72] Chapter Three re-examines oral accounts collected by anthropologist Marius Barbeau and Canadian radio journalist Imbert Orchard in an attempt to fully explore the role that the epidemic played in both the cultural and economic disruption the Gitxsan people experienced during the spring and summer of 1888. Provincial, federal, and interdepartmental correspondences are used to expand upon these accounts and to explain the crucial role of the epidemic in the "Skeena Uprising" narrative and the settlement of the Upper Skeena Region.

Primary sources reveal that the 1886-1888 measles epidemic was an important event in the history of British Columbia, especially in the context of indigenous/newcomer relations. Although few sources give specific estimates, most suggest large numbers of mortalities in indigenous communities. The high death toll was compounded by inclement weather, the failure of salmon runs, and a scarcity of small fur-bearing animals. Moreover, the epidemic occurred during a period when the administration of British Columbia's indigenous population was in transition, and the colonization of the province accelerating.[73] The resulting tension was perhaps most obvious in the upper Skeena region. "Patterns of Diffusion" shows that the story of the measles epidemic was intricately connected with the Skeena River Uprising and the creation of the Babine Agency. The military response to the Skeena uprising was not only a reaction to the fear in Hazelton, where settlers felt physically threatened, but also reflective of colonial anxiety in Victoria, where the threat posed by the indigenous population was far less direct. The repeated refusal of both the provincial and federal

[72] An exception to this is Robert Galois' article "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder: The Skeena "Uprising" of 1888," in *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, ed. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007). However, Galois does not explore the larger impact of the epidemic.

[73] Harris, *Making Native Space*, 71.

government to provide aid to the indigenous peoples of the Stuart Lake Region revealed the overall reluctance of the government to establish an expensive apparatus outside of areas deemed suitable for settlement. This bureaucratic conflict reflected the uncertain and shifting position of the Hudson's Bay Company at the end of the nineteenth century, but also the challenges faced by indigenous peoples during an epidemic period as lives based on subsistence activities and commercial trapping became increasingly difficult to achieve.

Chapter 1
"The 1886-1888 Measles Epidemic in British Columbia and the North-west Territories."

Although some areas of western North America may have remained isolated from measles until as late as 1910, by 1886, British Columbia was far from "virgin soil."[1] While there is little scholarly consensus on the impact that viral epidemics had upon pre-contact British Columbia, the use of oral tradition and early written records have allowed for a fairly robust picture of the impact of measles and other viral diseases in the early post-contact period. The complete geographic and demographic scope of these epidemics is unknown, but several scholars have argued that outbreaks of viral disease influenced the establishment and continued success of Vancouver Island and British Columbia as successful Crown colonies.[2] At least two measles epidemics occurred in British Columbia prior to the 1886-1888 outbreak, the most recent and well documented entering the province through coastal trading routes in early 1846.[3] These early epidemics have been the subject of several studies, almost all of them highlighting the socially disruptive nature of epidemic disease.[4]

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[1] Robert J. Wolfe, "Alaska's Great Sickness: An Epidemic of Measles and Influenza in a Virgin Soil Population," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association* 126.2 (1982): 91.

[2] Robert Galois and Cole Harris. "A Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," *in The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*, ed. Cole Harris, 137-160. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Robert Galois, "Research Report and Notes: The History of the Upper Skeena Region, 1850 to 1927," *Native Studies Review* 9.2 (1993-1994): 113 - 183; Cole Harris, "Voices of Disaster around the Strait of Georgia in 1782," *Ethnohistory* 41.4 (1994): 591 - 626. For a more theoretical approach, see Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Diagnosing the Discursive Indian: Medicine, Gender, and the 'Dying Race,'" *Ethnohistory* 25.3 (2005): 665-684.

[3] Robert Galois, "Measles: 1847- 1850, The First Modern Epidemic in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 109 (1996): 38.

[4] See, for example, Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Cole Harris, "Voices of Disaster," 591; Robert Galois, "Measles: 1847- 1850, The First Modern Epidemic in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 109 (1996): 38. Galois describes the "sickness and despondency" that surrounded the HBC posts, impeding trade and limiting band movement.

In contrast, comparatively little attention has been paid to the dynamics of epidemic disease within western Canada during the later nineteenth century, despite the fact that this period saw the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), a massive boom in the settler populations of British Columbia and the North-West Territories, and the formalization and expansion of the reserve system throughout the interior of British Columbia. Such rapid development, although geographically specific, was significant on both a provincial and national scale. For example, as geographer Jody Decker argued, the route of the CPR influenced patterns of disease diffusion, and Euro-Canadian perceptions of race and geography.[5] Similarly, as campaigns for the increased development of the Canadian west continued to draw immigrants into British Columbia and the North-West Territories, new ideas about contagion and disease prevention accompanied the actual diseases that spread from urban centres.[6] This influx had a wide-ranging impact on British Columbia's intellectual sphere, influencing everything from sanitation planning and public health campaigns in the growing towns and cities of Nelson, Vernon, Prince Rupert, and Vancouver,[7] to ideas about the "proper" racial division of fruit picking in the still sparsely settled Okanagan Valley.[8] Occurring simultaneously with significant social transformation, the measles epidemic had the power to upset the precariously balanced system of wage labour, trade, and seasonal

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[5] Jody Decker, "Smallpox Along the Frontier of the Plains Borderlands at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, ed. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

[6] Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada 1885-1925*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 16.

[7] Margaret W. Andrews, "The Emergence of Bureaucracy: The Vancouver Health Department, 1886-1914," *Journal of Urban History* 12.2 (1986): 149, 150; Megan J. Davies, "Night Soil, Cesspools, and Smelly Hogs on the Streets: Sanitation, Race, and Governance in Early British Columbia," *Social History* 38.75 (2005): 2, 3.

[8] Jason Patrick Bennett, "Apple of the Empire: Landscape and Imperial Identity in Turn-of the Century British Columbia," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 9.1 (1998): 72, 73.

subsistence cycles that continued to define the lives of many First Nations Peoples in western Canada during the late nineteenth century.

The earlier measles epidemics made it likely that by the winter of 1886-1888, many indigenous communities knew of measles and its symptoms, and that a portion of the adult population had acquired immunity from previous exposure, two factors that had the potential to significantly impact the mortality rates and diffusion patterns of subsequent epidemics.[9] As the studies of Boyd, Hackett, and Decker show, context-specific social and economic situations influenced how indigenous and settler communities conceptualized and interacted with disease, and these perceptions themselves influenced the further diffusion of epidemics. Using methodology borrowed from these historical and geographic works, this chapter will trace the spread of the epidemic through the North-West Territories, through Vancouver Island, and north towards British Columbia's more sparsely populated Central Interior. A brief examination of measles (rubeola) as a virus during the late nineteenth century and how the disease was perceived by medical professionals provides the historical context necessary to ground this exploration in the broader Canadian historiography of disease and indigenous peoples. Whenever possible, primary source material is included to help illustrate the serious and unusual nature of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic. By tracing the epidemic throughout the North-West Territories to British Columbia, this chapter

[9] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 18; It is likely that communities with higher levels of acquired immunity were much more likely to flee in an attempt to escape disease, both because of overall better health and increased familiarity with early symptoms. However, because viral diseases are often contagious long before symptoms are visible, the "flight response" is not only ineffective at preventing the continuation of the disease cycle, but often counterproductive. In many cases flight only widened the area of contagion, leaving the party even more isolated when illness struck. As Ray shows in Arthur J. Ray, "Diffusion of Diseases in the Western Interior of Canada, 1830-1850," *Geographical Review* 66(2): 139-57, regular patterns of trade, travel, and seasonal migration also played an important role in disease diffusion.

reveals some of the larger social and political ramifications of a disease that diffused rapidly in an already swiftly changing demographic.[10]

Historical studies of epidemic and crowd diseases have been the subject of some recent scholarly interest. Geographer Robert Boyd takes an epidemiological approach to the epidemics studied in *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*. Unlike the "germ-focused" medical approach used by many micro-histories, Boyd attempts to anchor his study "in [a] space and time" that extends beyond highly specific pathogen or host characteristics, as epidemiology: "... views disease from an 'ecological' perspective which emphasizes (1) the interaction between pathogen and human populations and (2) the relationships of both to the larger environment and cultural systems."[11] The result of this approach is a study that maps the diffusion of disease, and creates a timeline anchored upon relevant social and cultural developments. Unfortunately, Boyd did not move beyond the early nineteenth century and what he rather short-sightedly labelled the formative period of colonial-indigenous interaction.[12] While "Patterns of Diffusion" does not emphasize the cultural ramifications of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic, it does use elements of Boyd's methodology, most notably the use of a variety of primary sources to reconstruct a fuller pattern of diffusion that moves beyond the immediate symptoms of illness. Although indigenous and literary accounts of the epidemic are few, they have been consulted in addition to the more Euro-Canadian orientated sources to help reconstruct the geography and chronology of the epidemic.

Despite the growth in disease literature, it was Paul Hackett's *A Very Remarkable Sickness: Epidemics in the Petit Nord* (2001) that first suggested that the spread of

[10] Galois and Harris, "A Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," 160.
[11] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 7.
[12] Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 3.

epidemic disease in sparsely settled regions of North America depended on much more than a hospitable biological host and vulnerable populations.[13] Relying primarily upon Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) documents, Hackett tracked the diffusion of several infectious crowd diseases, including measles, through the "Petit Nord," the area between the Great Lakes and the Hudson's Bay lowlands. Although Hackett used trade routes and migration patterns to track the primary routes of disease diffusion, the complex nature of diffusion patterns are most clearly revealed when variables such as seasonal subsistence cycles, transportation networks, community size, and rural-urban dynamics are considered in relation to disease diffusion.[14] Notably, Hackett assigned human populations as much agency as the geographic landscape in the transmission of disease, and claimed that "the likelihood that a disease would be passed between neighboring Aboriginal peoples ... was by no means universal" but instead "varied with a number of different factors beyond the season and the environment they inhabited."[15]

Fears surrounding race, contagion, and border security played a prominent role in the 1886-1888 epidemic. While evidence suggests that quarantine was only sporadically enforced, the indigenous peoples of British Columbia experienced steadily increasing levels of restriction during periods of seasonal migration, not wholly dissimilar to the 1902 quarantine measures outlined by geographer Jody Decker. Decker used the study of a very specific area (the 1,287 kilometer section of the 49th parallel located between the Lake of the Woods and the Rocky Mountains) to emphasise the political nature of epidemic disease, but was more concerned with perceptions of contagion than actual

[13] Paul Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness: Epidemics in the Petit Nord, 1670-1846* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002).
[14] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 13, 19.
[15] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 19.

patterns of diffusion. To this end, Decker argued that it was the Canadian Government's efforts at quarantine that most dramatically shaped the epidemic experience of the Plains First Nations and Metis, many of whom disregarded the political demarcation of the Canadian-U.S. border, and freely lived, hunted, and socialized on both sides until well into the twentieth century. [16] The quarantine measures and government-regulated inspections of the prairie region further "altered the once porous border between the two countries," marking the border as "a permeable shield" and "the zones adjacent to it ... a widened borderlands 'scare zone' of multiple meanings, where cultural practices, border politics, and border enforcement intersected."[17]

It is not surprising that settlers linked a particular geographic area to the spread of disease. Theories of germs and disease shifted dramatically throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, but the general concepts of contagion and illness were well understood in the medical community.[18] The existence of micro-organisms or "germs" had been known since the days of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek (1632-1723), and theories that germs caused diseases had also existed for many years.[19] In the 1860s, Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) provided sufficient experimental evidence to convince most of the scientific community that germs caused disease.[20] However, it was still unclear what these germs were, and which diseases were caused by germs. Robert Koch (1843-1910) developed a method for identifying diseases caused by germs, and established that anthrax, cholera,

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[16] Decker, "Smallpox along the Frontier," 97.
[17] Decker, "Smallpox along the Frontier," 92.
[18] Alessandra Parodi, David Neasham, and Paolo Vineis, "Environment, Population, and Biology: A Short History of Modern Epidemiology" *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 49.3 (2006): 360.
[19] Howard Gest, "The Discovery of Microorganism by Robert Hooke and Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, Fellows of the Royal Society," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 58.2 (2004): 188.
[20] J.R. Porter, "Louis Pasteur Sesquicentennial," *American Association for the Advancement of Science* 178 (1972): 1252.

tuberculosis and smallpox were all caused by similar germs.[21] However, although Francis Holme (1719-1813) had argued that measles was caused by an infectious agent,[22] the measles virus was not isolated and identified until 1954 by John F. Enders (1897-1985) and Thomas C. Peebles (1921-1910), and no vaccine was available until 1963.[23] Thus measles had quite a different history than smallpox and other contagious diseases, and was not yet well understood or vaccinated for at the time of the 1886-1888 epidemic. As British medical historian Anne Hardy argued, "the arrival of the laboratory as a frontier for medical research ... proved disappointing in therapeutic terms," and measles continued to be considered a routine, although potentially life-threatening disease of childhood well into the twentieth century.[24] In urban areas, where measles was endemic, most cases of measles occurred in children below the age of five and most deaths below the age of two.[25] Adult cases were rare except in isolated areas where exposure to the virus was limited, but by the mid-nineteenth century, most of North America's largest cities had the necessary populations to sustain at least partially endemic status.[26] In contrast, measles had been endemic in many of the larger European cities since as early as the sixteenth century, although variations in population and environment allowed for occasional outbreaks of severe measles.[27] Both of these distant disease reservoirs had the potential to affect the indigenous populations of Western Canada.

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[21] Parodi, Neasham, and Vineis, "Environment, Population, and Biology," 363.
[22] Barbara Gastel, "Measles: A Potentially Finite History," *Journal of the History of Medicine* (Jan 1973): 40.
[23] Gastel, "Measles: A Potentially Finite History," 41.
[24] Hardy, *Health and Medicine,* 26.
[25] Anne Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets: Infectious Diseases and the Rise of Preventative Medicine 1856-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 30, 31.
[26] Hackett, *Epidemics in the Petit Nord,* 238.
[27] The incidence of measles in the United Kingdom appears to have increased dramatically towards the end of the 19th century, with the London *Times* reporting measles epidemics in 1883, 1885, and 1887. Hardy also describes a "severe" measles epidemic in Sunderland in 1888, which she attributes to economic

Measles remained a significant cause of childhood mortality in both urban and rural centers well into the twentieth century, but both contemporary and modern research suggests that high death rates often had more to do with respiratory co-morbidity than any notable severity of disease.[28] Despite the fact that measles mortality during the nineteenth century actually rose as advances in vaccinations reduced London's overall experiences of crowd disease, Hardy claimed that the most severe form of measles, "black measles," was almost entirely eradicated from Britain by the turn of the twentieth century.[29] Caused by the same virus as regular measles, black measles is named for the blood-filled blisters that form under the skin of the face and limbs. It is much more likely to be fatal than measles that present with characteristic flat, red papules. The secondary symptoms of black measles are equally serious, including hemorrhages from the nose, and a much increased likelihood of coma, delirium, and convulsions.[30] While not the primary manifestation of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic, black measles, described as "severe" or "of a bad type," was mentioned several times in both the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) annual reports and Victoria's *Times Colonist*.[31]

Although a subject of debate, a substantial amount of evidence suggests that poor nutritional status prior to infection has the potential not only to significantly increase the

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hardship (Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets*, 35.) Reports of severe measles in the North of the United Kingdom are echoed by the *British Colonist* "Condensed Dispatches," *British Colonist* 5 July, 1887, 1.

[28] Anne Hardy, "Rickets and the Rest: Child-care, Diet and the Infectious Children's Diseases, 1850-1914," *Social History of Medicine* 5.3 (1992): 8; Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets*, 45; Charles West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood*, 4th and 7th ed (Philadelphia: Blanchard and Lea, 1860, 1880): 297.

[29] Hardy, "Rickets and the Rest:" 8. While Hardy linked high respiratory mortality to London's increasing industrialization and poor environmental conditions, she did not conclusively determine if the decrease in measles severity was due to the general improvement of nutritional status and living conditions of late Victorian London or changes in biological and epidemiological patterns. As care for measles remained largely palliative through the end of the nineteenth century, it is clear that the decline in mortality was not due to developments in medical practice.

[30] Charles Fisher, *Diseases of Children* (New Delhi: B. Jain Publishers, 1999), 206.

[31] "From Bearing's Sea," *British Colonist*, 13 September 1888, 4; "Local Briefs," *British* Colonist, 7 December 1887, 4; W. Anderson, "Edmonton, N.W.T," *ARDIA*, 1887, 104; Thos White, "District of Alberta," *ARDIA*, 1887, liii.

possibility of measles-related mortality, but also greatly increase the severity of disease presentation. James Daschuk suggests that indigenous people were highly aware of the connection between famine and measles, and used this to advocate for better aid during the epidemic period. [32] Epidemiologist David Morley, having extensively studied measles fatalities among children in developing countries, argued that not only is poor nutrition linked to the increased likelihood of mortality from measles,[33] but that poor nutritional status directly correlates with the severity of rash presentation, including dark-purple or "black" papules.[34] Morley's findings are particularly relevant in the case of the 1886 - 1888 measles epidemic, as environmental concerns, including unusually harsh weather, poor crops, and failed salmon runs were reported across multiple regions of British Columbia for at least a year prior to the winter of 1888.[35] More recently, Morley's theories have been challenged by Peter Aaby, who argued that disease concentration and length of exposure to the virus are the most important factors in determining the severity and length of the primordial period and illness.[36] However, as Hardy suggests, Aaby's theories are of questionable value in a historical context, as crowded living situations and nutritional deficiencies are both influential factors that are not easily separated within primary source evidence.[37]

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[32] James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 165.
[33] David Morley and Margaret Woodland, *See How They Grow: Monitoring Child Health in Developing Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 89, 90.
[34] David Morley, *Paediatric Priorities in the Developing World* (London: Butterworth's and Co ltd, 1973), 207.
[35] K. Dewdney, "British Columbia," *ARDIA*, 1888, lxxii, lxxxvi, lxxix; See also chapters two and three.
[36] Peter Aaby, "Malnutrition and Overcrowding/Intensive Exposure in Severe Measles Infection: Review of Community Studies," Reviews of Infectious Diseases 10.2 (1988): 478; Peter Aaby et al., "Decline In Measles Mortality: Nutrition, Age At Infection, Or Exposure?," *British Medical Journal* 296 (1988): 1225.
[37] Hardy, *The Epidemic Streets*, 42, 43.

The limited statistics available from the DIA annual reports reveal some basic characteristics of the 1886-1888 epidemic. Between the years 1887-1888, as the epidemic spread through coastal British Columbia and Vancouver Island, the majority of the deaths attributed to the measles in the DIA annual reports were of children. While such patterns do not preclude the unusual severity of disease as reported by the DIA, or nutritional deficiencies as suggested by Morley, it is also possible, but unlikely, that they reflect more the diffusion patterns of prior measles epidemics than any unusual degree of illness. Measles exposure in the Hudson's Bay Company Territories during the first half of the nineteenth century was uneven, in part due to a very low population density and efforts on the part of HBC traders to organize quarantines during periods of epidemic disease.[38] By contrast, measles spread unchecked through many densely populated coastal areas of British Columbia. As a result, the 1886-1888 measles epidemic appears to have affected a far greater portion of the adult population in the North-West Territories than in most of British Columbia, at least in part due to lower levels of previous exposure.[39] Additionally, the rates of famine in the North-West Territories following the North-West Uprising were substantially higher than those in British Columbia, increasing the susceptibility of a larger portion of the population to illness. [40]

The biological makeup of measles lends itself both to long-distance travel and mass contagion. Unlike the smallpox virus, which can live for weeks outside of the human body under the right conditions, the microbes that cause measles die quickly

[38] Paul Hackett, "Averting Disaster: The Hudson's Bay Company and Smallpox in Western Canada during the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78 (2004), 607.
[39] It is important to note that these speculations are dependent upon the limited geographic scope of the DIA records.
[40] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 100.

outside a human carrier, or host.[41] The cycle of the virus depends upon high levels of human interaction to facilitate transmission. Furthermore, while some other crowd diseases such as the bubonic plague or certain types of influenza can be passed through wild or domesticated animals, there is no non-human reservoir for the measles virus, and most cases of measles are transmitted through close contact with an infected individual. As the disease is spread via nasal or throat secretions, indirect transmission, or contagion through secondary items, such as contaminated food or previously used clothing or bedding, is possible but rare.[42] Following viral infection, the host will recover, die, or carry the disease asymptomatically until the body's biological balance is upset and the virus is triggered into action, a process that usually occurs within two weeks.[43] Alternately, a virus may die if the host becomes immune. Immunity may be conferred actively through vaccination or by simply surviving infection.[44]

Unless the disease is very severe, the time between exposure and presentation of the characteristic rash is between ten and fourteen days. Prior to the appearance of the rash, the symptoms of measles mimic that of a cold, including fever, chills, cough, and a general sense of malaise. The macula associated with measles are flat and range from bright red to reddish brown, often combining to form large blotches; however, as previously noted, severe cases can present with a dark purple rash that is indicative of internal hemorrhage.[45] Accompanying complications can range from the mild to severe, and include swelling of the water-retaining tissue around the eyes, lymphatic infection,

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[41] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 79.
[42] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 79.
[43] Jody Decker, "We Should Never be Again the Same People: The Diffusion and Cumulative Impact of Acute Infections Diseases Affecting the Natives," (Ph.D. Diss., York University, 1989), 13.
[44] Decker, "We Should Never be Again the Same People," 13
[45] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 79.

meningitis, and respiratory disorders such as bronchitis and pneumonia. Although these symptoms are more likely to be present in severe cases, a high degree of variation can exist even within extreme cases. Factors as wide ranging as genetic susceptibility,[46] environmental influences,[47] and individual physical health are shown to influence the way a particular individual or community experiences disease. In contrast to earlier theories about predisposition, Francis L. Black has argued that New World populations were more susceptible to epidemic disease not because of genetic weakness, or lack of prior exposure, but because of an overall lack of genetic heterogeneity.[48] Additionally, multiple strains of the measles virus have been identified, introducing further variables.[49]

Although an individual's health may not determine the outcome of an epidemic, it will influence it. The level of immunity in a population influences not only what percentage of a community will contract a disease, but also how far an epidemic is likely to spread. In smaller centers, or, "type III communities," viral infections such as measles and smallpox only sporadically appear. Defined by British mathematician Maurice Bartlett as communities with a population of fewer than 10,000 people, type III communities suffer only periodically from epidemic outbreaks, as the vulnerable population may not always be large enough to allow viral disease to reach epidemic

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[46] J.V. Neel, *Health and Disease in Unacculturated Amerindian Populations,* in *Health and Disease in Tribal Societies*, CIBA Foundation Symposium 49 (1977): 155; Francis Black, "An Explanation of High Death Rates Among New World Peoples When in Contact With Old World Diseases," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 37.2 (1994): 301.

[47] Wolfe, 92; George J. Armelagos, Allen Goodman, and Kenneth H. Jacobs, "The Ecological Perspective in Disease," in *Health and the Human Condition*, ed. M.H. Logan and E. E. Hunts (North Scituate, Mass: Duxbury Press, 1978) pp. 71-84.

[48] Black, "An Explanation of High Death Rates Among New World Peoples,": 301.

[49] BK Rima, JA Earle, RP Yeo et al., "Temporal and Geographical Distribution of Measles Virus Genotypes," *Journal of General Virology* 76.5 (1995): 1173–80.

status.[50] In these communities, not only is the gap between epidemics likely to be longer, but the average age of morbidities higher. As almost all of the cities on the 1886-1888 epidemic's route westward were type III communities, it is highly likely that the disease was spread and sustained by some kind of ongoing disruption to previous patterns.

The shifting patterns of travel and immigration in the rapidly developing Canadian west played an essential role in the diffusion of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic. While there is no conclusive evidence that the railway was an actual vector of the virus that caused the measles epidemic, the reach of the CPR through the North-West Territories and into British Columbia appears to have effectively shortened the biological distance between the urban populations of the east and the cities of western Canada, many of which fell far below the population threshold level (also known as "critical community size") needed to support a human-host dependent crowd disease. Hackett describes this change as a period of "epidemic transition" in which crowd diseases occur with increasing frequency. When the transition is complete, the eventual result is a "mutual toleration" of disease with limited mortalities, but until a type of balance is achieved, outbreaks of disease are likely to be both increasingly frequent and severe.[51] In larger centres, the continued renewal of population through birth and immigration kept host levels numerous enough to facilitate the longer-range diffusion essential to a sustained course of disease, but more remote areas were dependent upon immigration, settlement, and changes in technology.[52] Such variables made it possible for urban areas to have an impact on seemingly distant populations, and rapid growth and mass

[50] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness,* 11; M.S. Bartlett, "Measles Periodicity and Community Size," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 120 (1957): 48-70.
[51] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 13.
[52] Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, 13.

immigration meant that the epidemiological relationship between urban and rural during the latter half of the nineteenth century was unpredictable.

By November 1885 the CPR had reached the end of its expansion to the Pacific Coast, and the "last spike" was hammered on 7 November in Craigellachie, between the then-railway towns of Sicamous and Revelstoke. Decker, describing the smallpox that crossed the Canada-U.S border in the summer of 1895, claimed that "disease spread easily along the network of branch lines north and south of the main CPR lines," a diffusion that was facilitated by the fact that "[t]he rail had passed on or near many reserves in districts allocated for the plains Cree bands (Treaty 4) and the Blackfoot bands (Treaty 7) further to the west."[53] Unlike the primarily trade-orientated patterns Galois identified in previous measles epidemics,[54] the 1886-1888 measles epidemic followed a similar pattern to the expansion of the railway, with the disease reaching the Pacific Ocean less than six months after completion of construction.

Beyond identifying a basic progression westward, it is impossible to determine the exact route and causes of the epidemic's diffusion in the years prior to 1887. However, primary sources do provide some clues to the magnitude and direction of diffusion. Although this study focuses on western Canada, DIA reports reveal that the epidemic was also present in eastern and central Canada, reaching south-west Ontario as early as the winter of 1887,[55] spreading to the north,[56] and travelling as far as Quebec by the spring and summer of 1888.[57] While the 1889 report suggests that only isolated

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[53] Decker, "Smallpox along the Frontier," 97.
[54] Galois, "The First Modern Measles Epidemic," 32.
[55] Thomas Gordon, "Munsees of the Thames," *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs (ARDIA)*, 1887, 7; Thos. White, "Ontario," *ARDIA*, 1887, xvii.
[56] John Beattie, "Northern Superintendency, Ontario," *ARDIA*, 1889, 4.
[57] "Condensed Dispatches," *British Colonist*, 3 July, 1887, 1.

reserves and settlements in Quebec were affected by the measles, the *British Colonist* reported an outbreak of measles "raging" in Montreal, and Toronto's *Globe* supported this claim. [58] The noted presence of the epidemic in both rural *and* highly urban areas suggests that this particular strain of measles was indeed unusual, as many of North America's larger eastern cities had the population levels necessary to support endemic measles. However, the overwhelming movement west suggests that this epidemic was linked to the increased traffic of immigration encouraged by the CPR.

The 1888-89 DIA annual reports suggest that the epidemic was present as far as east as Cape Breton by the fall of 1888.[59] The diffusion path through this area is less clear, but the reports suggest a significant, if less fatal, impact on the much smaller indigenous populations of the Maritime Provinces.[60] However, although it is likely that many of the experiences of indigenous communities in rural areas went undocumented, the large amount of evidence from both the DIA annual reports and HBC suggests that the impact of the epidemic was likely less than that in the west, as the epidemic was particularly harsh in British Columbia and the portion of the North-West Territories that would eventually become south-western Alberta.

The epidemic increased in severity as it spread west. The annual report of the DIA claimed that measles broke out in August 1886 among the Peace Hill Indians, located approximately 80 kilometers south of Fort Edmonton. By the later part of October 1886, the disease had spread south-west and was present at the nearby Sharphead Stony Indians at Wolf Creek. In both places, yearly subsistence patterns were disrupted by the epidemic.

James Martin, "Indian Reserve, Ste. Anne De Restigouche," *ARDIA*, 1889, 34, 35.
[59] D.M. Isaac, "Glendale River Inhabitants, Inverness County, N.S," *ARDIA*, 1889, 44.
[60] Angus Cameron, "Christmas Island, Cape Breton," *ARDIA*, 1889, 44. Although no deaths were reported by Cameron, he claims that measles were "very prevalent among the Indians" in the fall of 1888.

The Peace Hill peoples were unable to work throughout September, impeding preparations for winter.[61] The epidemic also immobilized the Stony, who were delayed from embarking on their fall hunt until the end of November. Writing on 27 July 1887, Indian Agent Samuel Lucas reported that "when they [the Stony] left ... they had not fully recovered from their sickness." Lucas asserted that although the epidemic itself was devastating, the premature departure was the main cause of mortality, with "50 or more" Indians dying, despite the fact that "everything that could be done for them was done."[62] Similarly, the Cumberland Reserve in Manitoba reported mortalities across all age groups, as the band was wintering off-reserve and could not easily access medical care.[63]

As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, references to agents providing medical care to affected populations appear throughout the DIA annual reports. However, it cannot be assumed that the care First Nations communities received during periods of disease was uniform, adequate, or even appropriate to the situation at hand.[64] Although Treaty Six, signed with the Woodland Cree in 1876, included a medicine chest clause that stipulated that: "[i]n the event hereafter the Indians comprised within this treaty be overtaken by pestilence, or by any general famine, the Queen ... will grant to the Indians assistance necessary and sufficient to relieve [them] from the calamity that shall have befallen them,"[65] the DIA repeatedly denied obligations to provide medical care beyond the provision of basic medicines until the early 1880s, when, as Lux argued, the increased

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[61] Although it is not always clear which peoples the DIA are referring to, the 1888 annual report lists these as Sampson, Ermineskin and Bobtail [Montana], in the peace or Bear Hills; the bands or reserves of Muddy Bull on Pigeon Lake; Che- poo-te-quahn on Wolf Creek; and Sharphead [Stoney] on Battle River and Wolf Creek.
[62] Samuel R. Lucas, "Peace Hills Agency," *ARDIA,* 1887, 96.
[63] Joseph Reader, "Pas Agency, Treaty No. 5," *ARDIA*, 1888, 76.
[64] Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 140; Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, 111.
[65] As cited in Jill St. Germain, *Indian Treaty-Making Policy in the United States and Canada, 1867- 1877* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 220.

incidence of epidemic disease on reserves in the North-West Territories threatened nearby immigrant communities and the ability of the residential schools to function as a tool for social and cultural change.[66]

The epidemic also affected communities outside of reserves. Less than a year before measles spread to the Peace Hills, a large group of Metis took scrip and left the care of the Indian agency. Although very little of the annual report discussed the Metis, the 1887 DIA annual report, in two brief but revealing pieces of correspondence, acknowledged the newness of the situation facing the "half-breeds" in the Saddle Lake area who accepted the federal government's offer of land scrip. In July 1887, agent John A. Mitchell wrote that "of all those discharged, not one has to my knowledge, suffered therefore, although many were subjected to a most severe test, during the epidemic of measles of last summer ..."[67] Unlike the nearby Blackfoot and Cree, whom agents described as "suffering," those who had taken scrip and disbanded were described only as being subject to a "crucial test."[68] The Metis and mixed-blood population, as self-defined entities, often occupied precarious and marginalized positions within the late and post-fur-trade social order of both First Nations and Euro-Canadian communities. The occurrence of disease had the potential to heighten anxieties about identity and race both within and outside First Nations and Metis communities, and it is likely that the settler community viewed the easy transmission of disease between the two groups as a source of further instability in an area that was still reeling from the impacts of the North-West Rebellion.

Beyond the brief mentions in the DIA records, there appears to be little concrete

[66] Lux, *Medicine That Walks*,138.
[67] John A. Mitchell, "Indian Agency - Treaty No. 6, Saddle Lake," *ARDIA*, 1887, 93.
[68] R. Dewdney, "District of Alberta," *ARDIA*, 1887, liii.

evidence of how the Metis fared during the measles epidemic. Although it is possible that overall resistance to the disease was marginally higher in the Metis and mixed-blood communities,[69] the agent's choice of either passive (suffering) or active (being "tested") language reflects a classification of the "half breed" body as more physically capable of resisting disease than the Indian body, despite the experience of what was likely an identical illness and for many, a similar lifestyle.[70] While the DIA's depiction of illness as an inherently racial experience was not unusual, the inclusion of Metis into a comparative equation suggests an intentional construction of a racial hierarchy, built, as Paige Raibmon suggests, upon the observation and "performance" of health and, conversely, illness, that relied upon "the tragic trope of the vanishing Indian" to gain legitimacy.[71] A similar pattern is noted by Lux, who argued that during the late nineteenth century, Indian agents in the North-West Territories intentionally withheld food and farming supplies in an attempt to impress the need for subjugation to treaties and federal policies at the same time as crop failure, starvation, and epidemic disease were attributed to the perceived moral and intellectual failings of the Plains Indians.[72]

By October 1886, the disease had also spread to the nearby Saddle Lake Reserve, 180 kilometers north-east of Edmonton, where it continued to spread throughout December, killing at least nine children and an unspecified number of adults before spreading to the southern part of the territory.[73] The reports from the Edmonton agency do not provide a specific date of arrival, only stating that a "bad type" of measles was

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[69] Black, "An Explanation of High Death Rates Among New World Peoples," 300.
[70] Patrick C. Douaud, "Genesis," *The Western Métis: Profile of a People*, ed. Patrick C. Douaud (Regina: University of Regina, 2007), 5, 11.
[71] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 75.
[72] Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 33, 155.
[73] T.P. Wadsworth, "Saddle Lake Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 142.

present throughout the winter and spring of 1887, and that many died from complications after the epidemic had passed.[74] However, on 29 November 1887, the *British Colonist* published a short article stating that "the Indian population around Edmonton is being exterminated by measles," which suggests that the epidemic spread to the Edmonton area as late as the middle of the month.[75] Fort Edmonton, acting as a major point of transfer for both colonists and indigenous populations, likely functioned as a hub for further contagion and provided the transient population needed to carry the disease to surrounding bands and agencies.[76]

By January 1887, the epidemic had spread to a Stony camp near Gull Lake, where over fifty members of the band perished.[77] In the following spring, the Blackfoot on the North Reserve were attacked "very severely" by measles. [78] Several cases of measles occurred on the Blood reserve in isolated areas, but the annual reports suggested that diffusion to the broader community was prevented. The report does not indicate exactly how contagion was halted, but stated that "every precaution was taken . . . with complete success."[79]

Unlike the DIA, the Hudson's Bay Company could draw upon a long history of experience with contagious disease in remote regions. Preventative measures, including quarantine, vaccination, and variolation in the case of smallpox had been practised by company officers as early as the late eighteenth century.[80] Although not always

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[74] W. Anderson, "Indian Agent's Office, Edmonton, N.W.T.," *ARDIA*, 1887, 104.
[75] "North-West Territories," *British Colonist,* 29 November 1987, 3.
[76] Although there are several reserves within close proximity to the city of Edmonton, Edmonton Agency was the closest. The Annual Reports also list White Lake, Sturgeon River, Lac la Nonne, Stony Lake, Stony Plain, and Pass-pass-chase's Reserve.
[77] Samuel R. Lucas, "Peace Hills Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 96.
[78] Magnus Begg, "Blackfoot Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 100.
[79] W.M. Pocklington, "Blood Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 97.
[80] Paul Hackett, "Averting Disaster," 579.

successful, these practices helped reduce deaths caused by contagious disease. However, by the late nineteenth century, the Canadian government largely relied upon the relatively inexpensive quarantine measures to manage illness in both First Nations and immigrant populations, although quarantine was not yet considered a feasible solution for treating measles in densely populated urban areas.[81] It is likely that the Indian agent's actions on the Blood reserve resembled the quarantine measures taken in the previous epidemics, capitalizing upon the increased level of control that the DIA exercised in the prairie regions following the North-West Uprising.[82] Although the mobility of First Nations populations in this area was already restricted, the increased restriction that came with quarantine measures had the potential to considerably limit the further spread of disease.

Other reserves in what would eventually be southern Alberta were heavily affected by measles in the early months of 1887. The Sarcee Agencies at Fish Creek and Morleyville "suffered severely," with an estimated mortality rate as high as 3 percent of the population.[83] Although most accounts of infection come from the early part of 1888, the epidemic continued to spread throughout the North-West Territories for the next year and a half. The Chipewyan populations of Onion and Cold Lake, both located close to the border of present day Saskatchewan and Alberta, reported fatalities from a "severe attack" of the measles as late as the winter of 1889.[84]

The path of diffusion becomes much harder to trace upon entering the more highly populated regions of southern British Columbia. It is unclear exactly where the disease entered the province. It is possible that that the measles entered through the

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[81] Hardy, *Epidemic Streets*, 50, 51.
[82] Lux, *Medicine That Walks*, 48.
[83] WM. Carnagey De Balinhard, "Indian Agent's Office, Sarcee Agency," *ARDIA*, 1887, 103.
[84] Geo. G. Mann, "Onion Lake Agency, Pitt District," *ARDIA*, 1889, 70.

southeast portion of British Columbia, but the 1888 DIA annual report identifies the source of disease as a group of First Nations workers who had recently returned from picking hops in Washington State.[85] Speculation about disease among hops pickers raised concern about the security of the border, as well as the seasonal employment of First Nations individuals, the latter of which was falling under increasing criticism as being both unprofitable and detrimental to the settled, agricultural-based lifestyle that federal agents considered ideal.[86] Such distrust was compounded by the sheer volume of the annual migration. In 1885 Indian agent W.H. Lomas estimated that close to a staggering 6,000 people, or as Raibmon suggests, one quarter of British Columbia's Indian population, took part in the journey south for employment.[87] Although 24,000 is a very conservative estimate of the 1885 indigenous population,[88] Raibmon's calculations reflect the important position that hops work and migration held in the late-nineteenth-century wage economy.

The yearly migration to the Washington State hops fields functioned as an important source of income, but also served as a key social and cultural outlet during a period of increasingly strict government regulation.[89] American Indian agents had no legal power over Indigenous people who came from Canadian territories, and legislation prohibiting traditional cultural practices such as the potlatch could not be easily enforced

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[85] W.H. Lomas, "Cowichan Agency," *ARDIA,* 1888, 100.
[86] Harry Guilloid, "West Coast Agency," *ARDIA,* 1884, 99: "[A]lthough the seed is often obtained with great difficulty in the spring, and a good deal of labor expended in putting it in the ground, at harvest time it is often neglected (the owners being away at the canneries or hop-fields) and much grain is lost every year in this way, few being able to resist an offer of high wages, no matter at what future loss to their families."
[87] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 79.
[88] Galois and Harris, "A Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," 138. Galois and Harris estimate that in 1881, there was an indigenous population of just over 53,000 people, and a very low population density of about one person per eighteen square kilometers.
[89] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 61, 62.

across the 49th parallel.[90] Thousands of white spectators also travelled yearly to trade and watch indigenous workers in the Washington State hops fields. However, despite participation in what was obviously a thriving economy, many contemporary observers, including British Columbian Indian agents, interpreted the migrations as further evidence of the inability to adapt to the Euro-Canadian lifestyle.[91] The direct association of illness with this migration cemented such perceptions in the minds of provincial and federal authorities, and vulnerabilities that were once viewed as insular weaknesses became seen as active viral threats. In truth, hops grounds in both British Columbia and Washington State were enough of a breeding ground for disease to cause continued controversy.[92] Accommodations were crowded and in many cases poorly maintained, and Raibmon suggests that in seasons when work was plentiful, hops workers exercised agency in either demanding better accommodations or moving on to better grounds.[93]

Correspondence between the DIA and migrant Cowichan workers reveals that indigenous hops workers regularly concealed illness for fear that quarantine would prevent entry into Washington State.[94] The system of self-disclosure and quarantine was not effective at preventing the spread of disease, and in 1888, the measles epidemic was prevalent enough to have a measurable impact on the hops harvest. Restrictions upon re-entering British Columbia were much more lax, the only requirements being a letter from either a local Indian agent or a hops grower affirming the good health of the traveling

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 75.
[92] Kelm 54; Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 83.
[93] Paige Raibmon, "The Practice of Everyday Colonialism: Indigenous Women at Work in the Hop Fields and Tourist Industry of Puget Sound," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 2.3 (2006): 34.
[94] Library and Archives Canada (LAC) RG 10 (Department of Indian Affairs), Vol. 1355, W.H Lomas to A.W. Vowell, 17 July 1882; LAC RG 10 (DIA) Vol. 1356 W.H Lomas to Levi Meyers, U.S. Consul, Victoria, 9 August 1892.

parties.[95] These letters were easily falsified, and often did not include assessments of children, who were among the most vulnerable to the highly contagious disease. In the winter of 1888, infected hops pickers returned home as far north as Prince Rupert. Some of those who survived the journey almost certainly carried measles back with them to the mouth of the Skeena River.[96]

Having entered British Columbia in the late fall of 1887, the measles was epidemic among First Nations populations by December, and continued to spread throughout the first six months of 1888. The DIA reports do not provide detailed information about the spread of the epidemic throughout the Lower Mainland and Fraser River Agency, only stating that the disease was present in several areas by early 1888, and had "fatal impacts" on some of the bands closer to the coast.[97] The reports from agents in coastal regions provide slightly more information. The Burrard Inlet, Schechelt, and "Sliamman" (Sliammon) Coast Salish populations were reported to be hit particularly hard, experiencing both measles and a respiratory disease that lingered into the spring and resulted in high child mortality rates.[98] The disease continued to spread slowly north along the Northwest Coast,[99] and by mid-December, the epidemic had reached the densely populated Cowichan agency, where Indian Agent W.H. Lomas claimed to have attended over 100 cases in one day. [100] Most of the reserves on Vancouver Island and the surrounding areas contracted measles over the next month. The impact of the disease was

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[95] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 84.
[96] Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*, 84; Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 136. Although Neylan does not discuss many details of the epidemic in the Skeena region, Neylan claims that the measles reached the Skeena region as early as late 1887.
[97] K. Dewdney, "British Columbia," *ARDIA*, 1888, lxxvi.
[98] P. McTiernan, "New West Minister, B.C.," *ARDIA*, 1888, 105.
[99] K. Dewdney, "British Columbia," ARDIA, 1888, xci.
[100] W.H. Lomas, "Cowichan Agency," *ARDIA*, 1888, 100.

particularly harsh in the Puget Sound area, just over the American border, where it "swept off great numbers of ... children."[101] It is likely that the disease then spread down the coast of Washington, or was already present in this region, having entered from south-eastern British Columbia.

The residents of Victoria were well aware of the threat that measles posed. The *British Colonist* frequently published reports of incoming ships quarantined in port for cases of measles, making special note of any indigenous passengers or employees. Notably, few ships without indigenous passengers were quarantined for carrying passengers suffering from measles.[102] In some cases, more severe diseases (such as cholera) were said to be measles, most likely as a means of avoiding quarantine, which was both costly and bad for business.[103] Several ships were quarantined for suspicions of measles and cholera, and others for rumours of smallpox.[104] However, these measures were not enough to prevent the importation of disease, and the paper reported that an epidemic of a "mild type" of measles was present in the city as of 8 November 1887, suggesting that despite the recent influx of immigration, Victoria and the surrounding areas had not yet reached the population level needed to support endemic measles.[105]

The fact that the epidemic was mild among the settler population did not lessen the city of Victoria's concerns about contagion, and the newspaper continued to report new cases of measles among both the indigenous and white populations. On 27

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[101] H. Moffat, "West Coast Agency," *ARDIA,* 1888, 118.
[102] See "The Elder Case," *British Colonist*, 4 May 1887; "The Last of the Fleet," *British Colonist*, 9 October 1888, 4.
[103] See "Cholera on the Alexia," *British Colonist*, 2 November 1887, 1.
[104] See "Cholera on the Media," *British Colonist*, 2 November 1887, 1; "The Elder Case," British Colonist, 4 May 1887.
[105] "Local Briefs," *British Colonist*, 8 November 1887, 4. According to census records, Victoria's population in 1891 was 16,841, significantly increased from 1881's record of 5,925. The Euro-Canadian death toll from the epidemic appears to have been relatively low and the paper only occasionally reported fatalities and quarantined houses within city limits.

November 1887, the *British Colonist* reported that the mayor of Nanaimo had official information that "a malignant form of measles" had broken out among indigenous children in a Nanaimo camp and that "[a]n effort is being made to persuade the Indians to remain in their own quarters until the epidemic has subsided."[106] The next mention of the epidemic was on 7 December 1887 when "black measles," was reported to have been epidemic at Esquimalt, with seven Indian deaths occurring in two days.[107] This report was retracted in the following day's edition, which claimed that there were no cases of black measles at Esquimalt, and that only three bodies were buried. These deaths were said to have occurred elsewhere from exposure following cases of measles but were not directly related to the illness. [108] The article then noted that there were three persons, most likely settlers, sick with measles in a mild form at Esquimalt. Although it is not possible to know which version of events most accurately reflected reality, the *British Colonist* was clearly attempting to allay concern surrounding both the virulent nature and rapid diffusion of the epidemic.

The relative isolation of Victoria and the lack of geographical barriers between First Nations, immigrant, and Euro-Canadian populations worked to heighten pre-existing fears of contagion and racial contamination. Victoria's origins as a company city had long divided loyalties between those who viewed the city as the administrative hub of a still-profitable fur trade and newer British immigrants who considered the expanding metropolis as the westernmost stronghold of British civilization.[109] Local First Nations populations were at the centre of this debate, and on 15 December 1888, the *British*

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[106] "Measles in Nanaimo," *British Colonist*, 27 November 1887, 4.
[107] "Local Briefs," *British Colonist*, 7 December 1887, 4.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Chad Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History, 1784-1958* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 21, 22.

Colonist republished a short article from *The Nanaimo Free Press* that shifted attention from the spread of disease directly onto the indigenous body: "measles have appeared in Epidemic form at Toby and Malaspina inlets on the mainland coast. In one family alone five deaths have occurred. This is hardly to be wondered at when it is remembered that Indians, in the case of any eruption of the skin, rush into the salt water to bathe."[110] By arguing that the high death toll was the result of medical and cultural ignorance, rather than the widespread or unusually severe nature of the epidemic, the article limited the threat of measles to First Nations bodies that were already seen as weakened and in a state of moral and physical decline. Despite this reassurance, the disease—and fear of contagion within the nearby First Nations communities—spread, and measles was prevalent enough in Victoria to substantially lower attendance rates at schools throughout January of 1888.[111]

It is likely that the disease spread north via the Fraser Canyon and the Northwest Coast at the same time as it moved through Vancouver Island. In late 1887 or early 1888, there were ten deaths among the Chilcotin, and seventeen in a band the DIA identified as the "Anahun," in which the measles was described as being "very prevalent among them, and its attack virulent."[112] The epidemic then reached both of the bands at Alexandria, as well as Soda Creek, and all communities experienced fatalities.[113] Although the mortality rate at Fort Quesnel was comparatively low, the 1888 report claimed that "almost all the tribe suffered."[114] The epidemic continued to spread north throughout the HBC's network

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[110] "Outbreak of Measles," *British Colonist*, 15 December 1888, 4.
[111] "School Board Meeting," *British Colonist*, 15 February 1888, 1.
[112] B. Dewdney, "Annual Report," *ARDIA*, 1888, lxxxvii.
[113] Wm. Laing Meason, "Williams Lake Agency, B.C.," *ARDIA*, 1888, 113; B. Dewdney, "Annual Report," *ARDIA*, 1888, lxxxviii.
[114] Wm. Laing Meason, "Williams Lake Agency, B.C.," *ARDIA*, 1888, 113.

of trading posts, spreading to Fort George, Stuart Lake, Babine Lake and the smaller post of Hazelton, as is discussed in chapters two and three. The dates of arrival are uncertain, but the epidemic was present as early as January 1888 at Fort George and lingered as late as May in regions outside of Fort Babine. Although evidence suggests that the epidemic spread further than the DIA or HBC's documentation, little evidence remains from more geographically isolated areas. As such, the DIA annual reports should be considered only as starting points for further research. It is also important to remember that the reports may not be complete or accurate, and that the influence of the DIA had not yet reached much of the central or northern portion of the province.

Heavily intertwined with seasonal patterns of wage labour and the arrival of new transportation networks, the rapid spread of measles emphasized the isolation of Victoria and the insufficient networks of communication linking the predominately white provincial capital to the more remote regions of the province.[115] Although rapidly declining in number, the First Nations population still significantly outnumbered the Euro-Canadian and immigrant populations.[116] The fear of measles, although for most of the settler population a relatively common childhood disease, was inseparable from fear surrounding an inadequate system of public health and the proximity of indigenous peoples.

The British Columbia government's memory was short when it came to the well-being of the indigenous population in the aftermath of the epidemic. Few lasting changes

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[115] Cole Harris, "The Struggle with Distance," in *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 179.
[116] Galois and Harris, "A Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881," 138. Galois and Harris estimate that in 1881, there was an indigenous population of just over 53,000 people, and a very low population density of about one person per eighteen square kilometers. Of the remainder, 4,200 were identified as "Chinese" and over 19,000 identified as either European or "white."

occurred on a provincial level. [117] The rapid spread of measles throughout the province was quickly minimized by the DIA and forgotten by the newspaper. On 8 February, 1889, the *British Colonist* claimed that "[t]he report of the Indian Department was presented to parliament ... [a]n epidemic of measles of a *mild form* [emphasis mine] is reported to have been prevalent among the British Columbia Tribes with fatal effect."[118] Less than a year before, the same newspaper had reported with alarm that measles was spreading throughout Victoria and Vancouver Island's Indian population and "exterminating" the Indian population near Edmonton.[119] The DIA's mention of the epidemic was presented as new information, and no reference was made to the events of the previous year.

Although the full extent of the 1886 - 1888 measles epidemic may never be known, it had a heavy impact on indigenous communities both within and without the reserve system of western Canada. British Columbia in particular experienced a significant amount of disruption during the epidemic, including high levels of mortality and illness. The inclusion of the 1886-88 measles epidemic into the historical narrative of British Columbia will greatly broaden historians' understanding of indigenous-newcomer relations of the late nineteenth century, and fill a gap in the epidemiological history of the Canadian west.

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[117] LAC RG 10 (DIA) Vol. 1355, H. Lomas to A.W. Vowell, 17 July 1892. While there is some evidence that broader vaccination campaigns for other diseases were undertaken in the wake of the epidemic, provincial authorities showed little enthusiasm and it appears that plan was soon abandoned.
[118] "Capital Notes," *British Colonist*, 8 February 1889, 1.
[119] "North-West Territories," *British Colonist*, 29 November 1987, 3.

Chapter 2
"It Cannot Surely be Right:"[1] The Hudson's Bay Company's Response to the 1886 - 1888 Measles Epidemic.

The measles epidemic diffused rapidly throughout the Central Interior of British Columbia. As outlined in the previous chapters, the epidemic entered northern British Columbia through the Skeena watershed, spreading via trade and travel routes throughout the HBC (Hudson's Bay Company) networks. The epidemic then spread to Fort Quenelle and the Upper Skeena region in late 1887 or early 1888, suggesting separate interior and coastal diffusion routes. It then spread to the more distant post of Fort George in January, reaching Stuart Lake by February at the latest.[2] The epidemic lingered as late as May 1888 in isolated regions, but the poor conditions that had facilitated the rapid spread of disease continued into the winter and spring of 1889.[3] Every post in the region appears to have been affected by the disease.[4]

Evidence from several locations reveals that the epidemic became deeply intertwined with HBC trade and business in the Central Interior between 1888 and 1889. The HBC records from Fort George provide the most detailed account of the epidemic and the period of scarcity that followed. The presence of measles was first recorded on 16 January 1888, corresponding with a period of severe cold and hunger.[5] Over the next month, Factor Charles Griffin Ogden repeatedly described the measles as "raging," and noted that, because of the severity of illness, most of the "Indians [were] still doing nothing ... [t]hey are all starving with nothing to eat."[6] At one point, Ogden noted that

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[1] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MacFarlane Fonds, MG29, A11, vol. 1, pp. 808-809.
[2] Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) B.280/a/1 16 January 1888; HBCA B.188/b/10 vol. 3 f. 80.
[3] HBCA B.188/b/10 vol. 3 f. 77-80; HBCA B.188/b/10 (24 May 1888) R. MacFarlane to Thomas R. Smith Esquire (Victoria BC) 24 May 1888, pg 25.
[4] HBCA B 188/b/10 vol. 3 f.81.
[5] HBCA B.280/a/1 16 January 1888.
[6] HBCA B.280/a/1 18 January 1888.

the whole camp was completely prostrate.[7] These conditions continued for approximately a month before any signs of improvement were noted, but the measles lingered for close to two months, in part due to a relapse that occurred after a hunting trip in early March.[8] Similar to the evidence provided in Chapter One, children were hit particularly hard. At least eight children and two adults died of measles or measles-related causes in the vicinity of Fort George, and Ogden suggested that fatalities were even heavier in more isolated regions.[9]

Despite evidence of severe illness, it is unclear if these deaths were the result of measles or disease-related starvation. Due to the severity of disease, hunting and subsistence patterns were disrupted for most of the winter. As travel-adventurer and trapper J. Turner-Turner observed of the indigenous peoples at Fort George in January of 1888, "an outbreak of measles ... had so thinned their ranks that among the survivors there were about eight fit to hunt," and that it "was so late that they did not propose to take their usual trip higher up."[10] Turner-Turner also noted that mail and supply deliveries were delayed, and normal patterns of employment, such as guiding, were greatly disrupted.[11]

The HBC was ill positioned to respond to the measles epidemic. By the late 1880s, the company had lost much of the economic power of the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1858, the British Government had revoked the HBC's licence over the territory to form the crown colony of British Columbia. One result of this action was

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[7] HBCA B.280/s/1 28 January 1888.
[8] HBCA B.280/s/1 March 16 1888.
[9] HBCA B.280/s/1 30 January 1888, 20 February 1888.
[10] Turner-Turner, *Three Years' Hunting and Trapping in America and the Great North-west* (London: Maclure, 1888), 159.
[11] Turner-Turner, *Three Years' Hunting and Trapping*, 150.

that the company lost its exclusive fur trading privileges and was forced to compete in an open market. Although the impact of this change was gradual, it allowed for an influx of free traders and merchants into territories that were once strictly controlled. Despite the loss of monopoly, the Canadian government still expected the HBC to maintain the costs of providing relief to Aboriginal people in many regions. This was a heavy burden, and one the HBC was not legally required to sustain. However, the government recognized that if it paid the HBC to assume this task, the company would gain a commercial advantage over its competitors through extra profit, a fact that HBC officials refused to acknowledge. As a result, many of the company's decisions in the second half of the nineteenth century were influenced by its strained relationship with the federal government.[12] Moreover, improperly managed imports, high tariffs and heavy retail competition absorbed a huge portion of potential profit.[13] Chronic financial mismanagement and a failure to keep pace with the modernization of free traders and other retail competition hampered both trade and the development of a strong regional administrative system. This disorganization was particularly apparent in British Columbia, where a sharp division was rapidly developing between retail-orientated branches in the southern half of the province, and the more remote fur-trading posts of the Central Interior and northern districts, which were often stocked with older goods and were not always economically self-supporting.[14]

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[12] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 18, 42.

[13] Jennifer Anne Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Hudson's Bay Company and its Transition from Fur Trade to Retailing," (M.A. Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2011), 67, 80; Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 26.

[14] This is particularly apparent in HBCA B.226/b/46 Fort Victoria correspondence books, 1884-1891. For more information on the development of the Hudson's Bay Company as a retail force, see: Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century" and Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

Many of the challenges to the fur trade in the Central Interior were outside of the direct influence of the HBC. An economy that Ray characterized as "volatile" placed increased pressure on those northern posts, including Stuart Lake, that were at the edge of the settler market, as they remained dependent on indigenous trade and trapping to produce profit.[15] After the HBC lost its exclusive trading rights, its profits were far more subject to vicissitudes of distant economies and trends, many of which also translated into direct competition in the form of increased fur tariffs and operating costs.[16] Moreover, free traders provided a wider variety of goods at cheaper prices. As historian Frank Tough observed "[e]ven with cost cutting measures, the external demands for furs ultimately determined the viability of the local economy."[17] An international economic depression reduced the price of luxury fur from 1879 until 1895, when expanding markets and a declining stock increased the market value of less expensive and more readily available alternatives.[18] The expansion of mining in the Omineca region and the construction of canneries on the Northwest coast and lower Fraser reduced the returns of salmon traditionally relied upon by the Gitxsan, Carrier, Babine, Wet'suwet'en, and other indigenous peoples of the Central Interior and Northwest Coast.[19] Moreover, as Keith Carlson and Douglas Harris argued, the development of industrial fishing operations and canneries on the lower Fraser and Skeena Rivers strengthened the claim of settlers to the

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[15] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 13.
[16] Patricia McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788-1920s: "We Like to Be Free in this Country"* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 71, 72.
[17] Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 64.
[18] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 25, 50.
[19] Douglas Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries: Indian Reserves and Fishing Rights in British Columbia, 1849-1925* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 50; Brian Dale Stauffer, "Resource Development Patterns of British Columbia, 1870-1970" (MA Thesis: University of Northern British Columbia, 2001), 48; Robert Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region, 1850 to 1927," *Native Studies Review* 9.2 (1993-1994): 121, 122; James A. MacDonald and Jennifer Joseph, "Key Events in the Gitxsan Encounter With the Colonial World," in *Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Benyon's 1945 Notebooks* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000): 202, 203.

indigenous lands and influenced the way that the provincial government viewed the resource rights of indigenous peoples. [20] This is perhaps most apparent in the correspondence between the HBC and the provincial government between the winter of 1888 and the spring of 1889, the majority written by HBC Chief Factor Roderick MacFarlane of Stuart Lake and the New Caledonia fur trading district.

The HBC was not responsible for and hard pressed to provide aid to the indigenous peoples of western Canada in 1888. Unusually harsh weather, epidemic disease, and a sharp decline in the populations of small fur-bearing animals limited trading profits in the Central Interior between 1887 and 1889. The sum of these conditions resulted in terrible famine conditions in parts of the North-West Territories and British Columbia.[21] Under increased pressure from Victoria to collect old debts, reduce outfit costs, and be financially conservative when trading, MacFarlane appealed to both provincial and federal governments to provide either long-term or temporary aid to the indigenous peoples of the Central Interior. MacFarlane's correspondence emphasized two main points: the unsustainable nature of the prevailing fur economy and the ongoing subsistence struggles faced by the indigenous people of the Central Interior.[22] Using the regional trading district of New Caledonia as a focal point, this chapter argues that the combination of cyclic scarcity and the 1887-1888 measles epidemic allowed for the growth of federal and provincial involvement in the Central Interior of British Columbia. Although no aid was provided to Stuart Lake or any of the indigenous peoples mentioned

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[20] Keith Thor Carlson, "Innovation, Tradition, Colonialism and Aboriginal Fishing Conflicts," in *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 151; Douglas Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
[21] McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History*, 83.
[22] HBCA B.226/b/46 Vol 4. F.185; LAC RG10 (DIA) Vol. 3803, File 53556, R. MacFarlane to E.B. Davie, 12 November 1888.

in MacFarlane's correspondence, the DIA became increasingly involved in the region as the economic stability of the HBC declined and indigenous peoples were forced to look elsewhere for aid during periods of disease and hardship.

Wildlife and salmon cycles were almost certainly a factor in the diffusion of the measles epidemic, and were a key factor in the disruption of seasonal rounds in British Columbia's Central Interior. Post journals from Fort Babine and Stuart Lake show that the lack of game and insufficient access to supplies led to changes in hunting patterns; however, it is not clear how these changes interacted with the diffusion of disease beyond the vulnerability resulting from malnutrition. One possible explanation for this correlation in British Columbia's Central Interior is that periods of scarcity and hunger encouraged increased congregation around posts where aid was often available. However, as Tough notes, this may have been more harmful than helpful: the majority of posts did not have access to the stocks of food needed to support large populations for extended periods, and even smaller posts often traded at a considerable distance for game.[23]

Very familiar with the environment of western Canada and highly knowledgeable of weather and game patterns, MacFarlane knew that the cyclic scarcity was temporary, but was also keenly aware that conditions were unlikely to improve in the prevailing economic climate, which limited the profitability of the fur trade and prevented the HBC from carrying the full burden of support for individuals who were ill, orphaned, or otherwise unable to provide for themselves.[24] While not inherently related, the

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[23] Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail,* 19.
[24] McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History*, 84. For more details on MacFarlane's work as a naturalist, see Greg Thomas, "The Smithsonian and the Hudson's Bay Company," *Prairie Forum* (Autumn 1985): 283-305; E. O. Hohn, "Roderick MacFarlane of Anderson River and Fort," *The Beaver* (Winter 1963): 22-29; "Statement of Roderick MacFarlane," *The Beaver* (Sept. 1939): 12-15; E.A. Preble, "Roderick Ross MacFarlane, 1883-1920" *The Auk* 39 (1922): 203-209.

intersection of environmental and economic factors and the inability of the company to address them are indicative of the changing nature of indigenous-settler relationships in the late nineteenth century.[25] HBC letter books, correspondence from the provincial and federal governments, and documentation from the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) reflect the uncertain role of Canadian authorities in indigenous affairs prior to the extension of the reserve system into British Columbia's Central Interior. The private and business correspondence of MacFarlane suggests the extent to which the HBC was involved in defining the relationship between the provincial government and the indigenous population of the Central Interior, and points to MacFarlane's experiences with the DIA as an HBC employee. MacFarlane, transferred to Stuart Lake in 1887, was heavily influenced by his prior experiences at Fort Chipewyan, where cyclic scarcity, a changing economy, and the DIA's reluctance to supply non-treaty Indians with aid had repeatedly contributed to periods of hunger and disease.[26] Finding similar conditions in British Columbia, MacFarlane argued strongly and repeatedly for the indigenous communities in the Central Interior to receive aid while continuing to be engaged in the fur trade.

MacFarlane's persistence exacerbated the tension between him and the HBC personnel in Victoria and Winnipeg, and further strained company relationships with provincial and federal governments.[27] Although MacFarlane's suggestions received little

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[25] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 49. Ray argued that the failure of the state to support the social costs of the fur trade, notably seasonal aid, was directly related to the decline of HBC authority among indigenous communities in the late nineteenth century, as the company had met indigenous survival needs much better than the uneven state paternalism of the post-confederation era.

[26] McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History*, 84.

[27] Roderick MacFarlane Fonds, LAC MG29-B15. MacFarlane had a reputation within the company for being outspoken about HBC policies and procedures, and had been quietly removed from his previous position as Chief Factor of Fort Chipewyan for criticizing company policy to a superior. It is unclear exactly what policy MacFarlane was criticizing when he offended his superior, but personal

direct response from either federal or provincial authorities, his correspondence also reveals the contested and uncertain position of the HBC in British Columbia's Central Interior during the late nineteenth century. The changing economic position of the HBC was a central influence in the shifting indigenous-newcomer relationships of the late nineteenth century. The HBC, although no longer technically responsible for the indigenous population, was the only settler presence in many regions of the province in 1887-1888, and struggled to respond to the epidemic due to a number of internal and external financial and political constraints.

Geographically remote and operating within a distinct economic climate, the HBC's Central Interior posts suffered from poor organization and inattention from superiors in Victoria. The larger posts in the southern half of the province, although still supplying indigenous communities and buying furs, were now primarily concerned with competing for retail dominance in the lucrative and rapidly expanding settler market. Similar shifts were occurring in posts across the southern part of western Canada as immigration and agriculture increased.[28] Immigration far outpaced the retail development of most districts, and the transition to a settler-based economy was not smooth for the HBC on either a regional or corporate level. While the HBC had successfully adapted to the changing demands of the indigenous economy, it was "slow in adapting to the growing European market" and reluctant to abandon business plans built around the traditional fur trade stock and operations of the earlier years.[29] These plans had very little

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correspondence indicates that he was unsatisfied with the growing lack of influence Factors and other high-ranking regional employees had on company policy, company organization, and recent changes in policy regarding the retirement rights of company employees. The short length of his tenure at Stuart Lake (1887-1889) suggests that MacFarlane did not find company organization or policy improved in British Columbia.

[28] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," 64.

[29] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," ii.

provision for mercantile expansion and were ill-suited to the increasingly diverse and consumer-orientated market of the Canadian west.[30]

Despite increasingly stringent restrictions on credit and company expenses, by 1886 the only HBC outlet consistently producing a profit in British Columbia was the Victoria retail store. Many regions, including the entire New Caledonia district, were losing money to debt and poorly managed merchandizing even when individual yearly outfits did not produce a deficit.[31] Such ongoing instability left the company very little economic power to respond to periods of scarcity and disease in the period between 1887 and 1889. This problem has been discussed by Arthur J. Ray.[32] Using the economic theories of H. Clare Pentland, who asserted that "the patterns of personal labour relationships broke down as competitive labour markets developed, " Ray argued that the HBC slowly moved to managing the social overhead costs of the fur trade via the debt system.[33] This transition involved the introduction of the cash economy, wage labour, and modernized trade routes. All three of these systems were in the process of being extended to the Central Interior in the period between 1886-1888, and influenced how the company responded to the epidemic.

It was not until the early twentieth century that the HBC began to respond to the demands of an increasingly urbanized western market. Such a delayed response to the changing economic environment not only limited the profits of individual posts, but also

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[30] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," 16.
[31] HBCA B.226/b/46 Vol. 4, F.107
[32] Arthur J. Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade, 1870-945," in *Merchant, Credit, and Labour Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer. (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 189.
[33] Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism," 189.

interfered with the overall modernization of the company.[34] The merchandizing techniques of the HBC in the late nineteenth century were outdated, inefficient, and expensive, leaving Stuart Lake and other more isolated posts ill-prepared to compete with free traders and smaller merchants who had access to affordable and modern luxury goods obtained from wholesale suppliers in the United States.[35] Smaller posts often received shipments of rejected or inferior goods in an attempt to clear outdated stock and reduce costs, a practice that continued well into the 1930s.[36] HBC district reports commented on the damage that this merchandising policy did to sales and year-end balances, as the remaining inventory of unsold goods limited the ability to import new goods and thus hampered future sales.[37] Chronic organizational problems with shipping meant that orders were often received weeks or months behind schedule, limiting the ability of more remote regions to respond to epidemics, famine, and the types of shortages experienced in the winter and spring of 1888.[38]

In an effort to increase retail sales and reduce administrative costs, the HBC re-organized on both a regional and national level. One of the most notable changes was a multi-level company restructuring in 1881 and 1884 that resulted in the shift to Winnipeg from London as the center of Canadian business, greatly reducing the frequency of expensive cross-country trips and overseas travel. Other changes, including the restructuring and modernization of the freight system, had a much larger impact on the

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[34] Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation,* 7, 24, as cited in Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," 64. Belisle explains how important reliable catalogue ordering was to the advancement of the retail structure. The HBC would catch up in the 1890s with larger depots in urban centres, but many northern posts would lack the stability of regular catalogue access.
[35] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," 161.
[36] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," 53; Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, 194.
[37] HBCA B.226/b/46 Vol. 4 pg. 185.
[38] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," ii, 64; James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 131.

daily operations of the HBC in British Columbia's Central Interior. Both Morris Zaslow and A.A. den Otter explored the HBC's introduction of steam and industrialization on the fur trade in Western Canada, den Otter notably attributing the company's decision to transition to steam to disruptions in transportation and indigenous employment during the Red River Uprising.[39] However, despite an increasing awareness of the HBC's role in the relationship between indigenous peoples and the Canadian government, little other work has been done on the technical or economic modernization of the HBC east of the Rocky Mountains in the late nineteenth century. This chapter fills part of this gap by showing that the economic and administrative development of the HBC in British Columbia's Central Interior occurred within the broader context of the industrialization of the fur trade of British Columbia, and resulted in the increasing destabilization of indigenous communities during and in the years immediately following the measles epidemic of 1887-1889.

Over twenty years after publication, Ray's *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Era* remains the only general study of the fur trade in western Canada during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Refuting the assertion that the "continuities of native traditions between 1870 and 1945 can be explained in terms of a stable fur industry," the majority of *The Canadian Fur Trade* focuses on the evolution of the HBC as a company, and how the shifting dynamics of upper management influenced the direction of regional operations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. [40] Ray shows that the fur trade was complex, dynamic, and subject to an increasingly

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[39] Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); A.A. den Otter, "The Hudson Bay Company's Prairie Transportation Problem, 1870-85" in *The Developing West: Essays on Canadian History in Honor of Lewis H. Thomas*, ed. J. E. Foster (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), 27.
[40] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, xvii.

diverse and challenging market. The significant organizational and economic changes the company underwent in the period between 1870 (when the HBC surrendered the chartered territorial rights to Rupert's Land) and the close of the Second World War had a large impact on indigenous wage labour and subsistence trapping, resulting in "fierce competition that ... led to the depletion of fur and game resources and the 'pauperization' of native peoples."[41] The results of this process cemented the position of the HBC as an intermediary between indigenous people and the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) in western Canada, and were ultimately used to justify the increasing intervention of provincial and federal governments in indigenous communities as well as the creation of reserves.

The industrialization of the trade economies of northern communities has also been studied as a key factor in the expansion of Canadian authority and the establishment and growth of settler communities. Kerry Abel's *Changing Places: History, Community, and Identity in Northeastern Ontario* examined the growth of community in an isolated region that also experienced environmental instability and rapid economic change at the end of the nineteenth century.[42] A former economic centre and once one of the HBC's most important posts, Moose Factory underwent dramatic transformation in the period between 1880 and 1950, a development triggered in part by the influx of modern industry and the completion of the CPR. Although Abel cautions against considering Moose Factory as reflective of all northern communities or assuming that patterns that develop within communities can be successfully "extrapolated to the national stage," *Changing Places* provides valuable perspective on shifting settler-indigenous dynamics in the wake

[41] Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade*, xv.
[42] Kerry Abel, *Changing Places: History, Community, and Identity in Northeastern Ontario* (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 2006).

of treaties, a growing resource economy, and settlement and immigration.[43] Abel's study holds significance for many parts of northern Canada, where the expansion of settlement and Canadian authority did not occur until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century when fur stocks were considerably depleted. While the majority of *Changing Places* focuses on the development of settler communities of the post-treaty period, Abel argues that the effects of environmental hardship and disease, left unaddressed by the DIA and the Ontario government, undermined treaty negotiations and influenced the way that reserve boundaries and conditions of residency were negotiated with indigenous communities.[44] Moreover, Abel argues that many of the cultural changes evident in late-nineteenth-century Moose Factory were directly related to the declining economic importance of the HBC in the wake of immigration and the growth of settler populations.[45] *Changing Places* highlights the need for a more nuanced, region-specific examination of the relationship between indigenous communities and the HBC in the late nineteenth century as the impacts of rail and industrialization reached local economies.

Historical geographer Frank Tough examines a similarly economically and environmentally unstable period in *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and The Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870 -1930.*[46] Compiling material from both indigenous and HBC sources, Tough shows how internal company restructuring and industrialization gradually removed indigenous wage labour from the northern Manitoba fur trade. This transition was particularly apparent in the isolated communities surrounding York Factory, a major post in northern Manitoba and until the late nineteenth

[43] Kerry Abel, *Changing Places*, xxii.
[44] Abel, *Changing Places*, 46, 47.
[45] Abel, *Changing Places*, 42.
[46] Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 70, 71.

century, headquarters of the HBC's operations in the western interior. Unlike the indigenous communities of Stuart Lake and Hazleton, which had the advantage of access to coastal trade networks that later allowed for economic ties to independent traders from Victoria, the indigenous peoples of York Factory and northern Manitoba remained largely dependent on HBC trade.[47] Such dependency allowed the HBC to influence the shifting indigenous economy of northern Manitoba to its advantage, and once indigenous labour was no longer an economic necessary for the fort, "the native role in the seasonal economy was modified to meet the Company's changing priorities."[48] As York Factory was no longer an economic and commercial hub, indigenous dependence upon credit and company aid was no longer beneficial or financially sustainable for the company. The lack of tradable furs in this region secured this transition as the "kindness" of the company was, as Tough asserts, by necessity attached to the prospect of future income and a profitable trade. [49] In an attempt to reduce the starvation, mass unemployment, and poor conditions that were developing in light of the HBC's administrative changes, the officers at York Factory enacted measures to eliminate the residential population of "Fort Indians" between 1880 and the early 1890s.[50] This involved the continued dispersal of gathered crowds, except during certain periods of the year, as well as encouraging hunting, fishing, and trapping over a broader area.[51]

While the Stuart Lake post was much smaller and far less economically important than York Factory, the lack of similarly established alternate provision in and around the Central Interior suggests that the HBC did not believe that either the scarcity of animals

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[47] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region": 119; Tough, *As their Natural Resources Fail*, 5.
[48] Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 69.
[49] Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 7.
[50] Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 64, 73.
[51] Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, 71, 72, 73.

or the deficit of the fur trade in the New Caledonia region would be ongoing. MacFarlane, who petitioned for the provision of aid from both the provincial government and the DIA, requested the seasonal provision of goods to "destitute" individuals during periods of economic and environmental hardship. As MacFarlane also requested that twine and other supplies necessary for hunting and trapping be provided to indigenous communities, he clearly considered both the environment and market viable enough to continue to support the indigenous population in a subsistence lifestyle, an argument that was further supported in company correspondence of 1889 where he suggested that under "careful development an extension of the fur trade" was possible.[52] The success of this extension depended upon "a system of adequate supplies promptly dispatched; cheap transport; [and] reduced expenses," as well as measures to limit overhunting and strategies to combat aggressive free traders, including lower fur tariffs and a more consistent presence in the Skeena region.[53]

MacFarlane's recommendations proved too ambitious for the HBC, who were struggling to match the competition's basic retail structure. One of the biggest flaws was inadequacy in shipping. The HBC was slow to adapt to the mercantile advantages of the CPR, but integrated steamer ships into several important regional transportation routes in the 1870s. By the 1880s, steam freight had been introduced to transport routes on Lake Winnipeg, the Saskatchewan, Peace, Athabasca and the Mackenzie rivers in an attempt to reduce dependence on indigenous labour and "fickle voyagers."[54] The use of steamships improved access to wholesale goods and helped reduced the company's importation of

[52] LAC RG10 (DIA), Vol. 3803, File 53556, R. MacFarlane to EB Davie, 12 November 1888; HBCA B.226/b/46 vol. 5 pg 29.
[53] HBCA B.226/b/46 vol. 5 pg 29.
[54] den Otter, "The Hudson Bay Company's Prairie Transportation Problem," 28.

more expensive English merchandise.[55] Although the introduction of steam by the HBC is considered a mixed success at best, MacFarlane referred to the company's use of steam ships as a positive development and almost certainly based his plans for the redesign of the Skeena-Stuart Lake interior freight system on these efforts.[56]

The HBC's introduction of steam freighting to British Columbia's Central Interior resulted in unexpected challenges to the economy that complicated the 1887-1888 trading season. Prior to the late 1880s, the majority of freighting was still contracted to indigenous employees who were hired regionally and on a seasonal basis, charging the HBC up to $60 per tonne for freighting on the Skeena.[57] Intended as a means of modernization, the HBC's ongoing efforts to streamline regional transportation systems meant that indigenous peoples of the Central Interior were increasingly removed from fort economies and this source of income. This intentional transition significantly weakened the position of indigenous and mixed-blood seasonal workers in the Central Interior. In the fall of 1887, immediately prior to the outbreak of the measles epidemic, the season's freight was shipped by steamer in a coastal route via Port Simpson, Hazelton and Babine, instead of the formerly used overland route via the Cariboo wagon trail, Ashcroft, and Fort Quesnel.[58] This change was intended to reduce transportation time and allow for a wider variety of consumer goods to be imported to the Central Interior than a pack train would allow. The coastal route, although more efficient in terms of actual labour and expense, necessitated an early start and the employment of different portage

[55] Schmidt, "Shopping in the Late Nineteenth Century," 67.
[56] den Otter, "The Hudson Bay Company's Prairie Transportation Problem," 31; McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History*, 72.
[57] W. Wicks, *Memories of the Skeena* (Saanichton, British Columbia: Hancock House, 1976), 44.
[58] HBCA B. 226/b/48 vol. 2, Wrigley to Assistant Commissioner, 15 March 1888.

workers.[59] Tough notes a similar transition occurring in Manitoba in 1876, when the labour-intensive York boats used to transport goods between York Factory and Norway House were replaced by the efficient and economical steam powered boats that brought freight directly from Winnipeg. Following this change, some of the labour force relocated in order to load carts or supply wood for the steam engines, but a significant portion of the wage-labour economy was displaced.[60]

The HBC's attempt to transition to a non-local freighting system was met with resistance from at least one indigenous community of the Central Interior. The complete shipment of freight left Winnipeg in March, but by mid-summer, less than a fifth of the expected goods had reached Stuart Lake, leaving the company, as well as the indigenous trappers, waiting for supplies and outfits, unprepared for the coming season.[61] All of the trade goods and the majority of the food had been stolen, or as some speculated, abandoned in the bush along the portage by the inexperienced workers.[62]

Despite the large impact the missing goods had upon the already difficult trading season, little HBC documentation directly links the theft of goods with the implementation of the new freighting system or changes in hiring practice. It is thus unclear who, exactly, was responsible for the theft of the freight: the newly hired portage employees, the former pack-train employees, or an uninvolved third party. Several possible motivations for theft exist. The period between 1887 and 1889 was exceptionally challenging, and harsh weather, declining salmon runs and a scarcity of fur and game

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[59] HBCA B.255/b/48 vol. 2 15 March 1888 (Trade Commissioner Joseph Wrigley to Assistant Commissioner)
[60] Tough, 57.
[61] HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol. 3 pg 17; HBCA B.255/b/48 vol. 2 15 March 1888, Trade Commissioner Joseph Wrigley to Assistant Commissioner.
[62] HBCA B.255/b/48 vol. 2 15 March 1888, Trade Commissioner Joseph Wrigley to Assistant Commissioner; BCA, A.C. Murray Fonds, E/E/M963, "Murray, Alexander Campbell, 1858-1931-Reminiscences 1980? Typescript," pg 7.

animals were reported throughout the Central Interior and North-West coast.[63] It is thus possible that the goods were seized out of immediate need or possibly to be locally resold for financial gain. However, the strongest evidence suggests that the theft was a response to a breach of etiquette regarding hiring practices. Indigenous protests in response to changes in employment and company trading practices were not uncommon; in 1885, transport workers at Moose Factory successfully went on strike, demanding the same wages being offered to transport workers in the interior.[64] Additionally, as Galois shows, the upper Skeena region has a strong history of indigenous protest in response to unauthorized land and resource use.[65] Correspondence between Indian Agent R.E. Loring and anthropologist Marius Barbeau describes some of the reactions among the indigenous communities to the use of outside labour when transporting in the Central Interior: "[T]he Babine Indians, when formerly doing the packing for the Hudson's Bay Company to Fort Babine and inland, upon the arrival of forty-five pack mules (from the 150-mile house, Cariboo wagon road) they were going to way-lay and shoot all the mules on their way thither. I headed it off as everything else I could . . . .[sic]."[66] Considered in the context of such aggressive acts of protest, the sabotage of a shipment of goods appears a plausible expression of dissatisfaction.

Deviating from expected patterns of employment may not have been the only breach of etiquette committed by the HBC in the attempt to implement steam freighting. Although regional trade was significantly disadvantaged by the lack of freight, the abuse

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[63] LAC RG10 (DIA) Vol. 3803, File 53556, R. MacFarlane to EB Davie, 12 November 1888.HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol. 1 pg. 77, 79.
[64] Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade," 195.
[65] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region," 116.
[66] Canadian Museum of Civilization (CMC), B-F-202.2, R.E. Loring to Barbeau, January 1934. See also BCA GR-0429, Attorney General Correspondence, Assistant Commissioner to John Robson, 27th April 1888.

of traditional territorial boundaries of the Gitxsan along the Skeena must also be considered as a motivation for theft. The Gitxsan considered portages and land alongside the Skeena as private property that required special family permission to use, and challenged any unauthorized access.[67] Although each community operated under distinct rules, villages were exacting tolls for waterway access and protesting the unauthorized use of traditional territory for profit by settlers and other indigenous groups even after Canadian law enforcement entered the area in 1889 and into the early twentieth century.[68] The HBC's documents do not indicate that the new freighters had the permission of the Gitxsan to travel through the region. As Gitxsan law places precedent on individual and community relationships as negotiated through the *wilp* system of territorial and hereditary rights, it is unlikely that the Gitxsan would continue to recognize the prior freighting arrangement once new employees were hired.[69] This is supported by Galois, who asserts that "[w]hite visitors were expected to conform to established practices governing trading journeys," and argues that the exchange of gifts at Kitsegugla by early prospectors was evidence of the necessity of a "request and payment for permission to proceed" through village territory.[70] The HBC, unevenly established in this region, were also held to these expectations.

In light of the freighting failure, MacFarlane's plans for the transportation of supply and trade goods to Stuart Lake via steamship were deemed too expensive and impractical for continued use by HBC superiors in Victoria. As MacFarlane failed to

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[67] Jeremy Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations with Colonial and Canadian Law, 1858-1909," (MA Thesis: University of Northern British Columbia), 9, 32. Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region," 123.
[68] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region,"153.
[69] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 13, 16.
[70] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region," 120.

submit final accounts for the year of 1888, it is impossible to determine the total cost of the theft and the failed shipping endeavor.[71] A rail and wagon route through Quesnel via Ashcroft and the Cariboo wagon road, as suggested by HBC Trade Commissioner Joseph Wrigley, was eventually adopted as the main system of transportation and freight in the region.[72] A successful steam freighting system was not introduced into the region until 1891, which "quickly replaced the Indian freighter canoes and ended the last . . . trade monopolies."[73] However, unlike MacFarlane's plan, this route did not extend directly to Fort Babine or Stuart Lake, further reinforcing the shift in indigenous trading patterns that occurred following the 1887-1888 measles epidemic.[74]

Company correspondence identifies the lack of access to adequate provisions as a primary factor in the disruption of indigenous seasonal activity around Fort Babine and other regional posts.[75] Although providing food for immediate consumption during the epidemic and subsequent months was among the company's primary concerns, the fur economy was financed by the promise of a reciprocal, working relationship. Due in part to the disruption to the food supply, the HBC was unable to supply trappers with the yearly outfits necessary for travel and trapping, a variable that significantly exacerbated the disruption of seasonal and economic activity.[76] While the outfits provided by the HBC did not contain the whole of the food needed to support a family through a winter, an increased reliance on dry foodstuffs such as tea, preserved meat, and flour made it

[71] HBCA B.226/b/50 vol 6 10, August 1886.
[72] HBCA B.226/b/48 vol.2 pg 227.
[73] James A. MacDonald and Jennifer Joseph, "Key Events in the Gitksan Encounter with the Colonial World," 205.
[74] HBCA B.74 2 2 f. 13; HBCA B.226/b/48 vol. 2.
[75] LAC RG10 (DIA) Vol. 3808, File 53556, Murray to R. MacFarlane, 1 April.
[76] HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol. 1 pg. 34; HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol. 1 pg. 77; HBCA B.188/b/10 vol. 3 pg. 17.

increasingly difficult to trap for an entire season without substantial supplementation.[77] What canned food was available at posts was expensive and too heavy to be practical for continued transport through the snow. Additionally, seasonal outfits often contained more than food, also consisting of gear necessary for trapping, including twine, shotgun shells, and sometimes tools such as axes and knives. Achieving a profitable trapping season without these supplies was very difficult.

Cyclic scarcity—the periodic decline in the populations of small, fur-bearing animals—also challenged subsistence patterns and further decreased the ability of the HBC to provide aid to the indigenous people of the Central Interior. A major component of North American game patterns, cyclic scarcity was first observed and documented by the HBC in the early 18th century.[78] Although the company recorded fluctuations in the populations of many fur-bearing animals, the most dramatic connection observed was the periodic and corresponding scarcity of snowshoe hare and lynx. The connection between hare and lynx was observed in the documentation of individual posts, as well as district reports that totaled the types and numbers of furs traded regionally. Although the HBC did not explore the cause of the cycle, its records provided an unparalleled source of data for scientists in the twentieth century. Using the HBC data, biologists determined that when hares are numerous, lynx populations will expand, and when the hare population declines, the lynx population is forced to hunt smaller and less nutritiously rewarding animals, causing populations decline after a short delay.[79] Although the decline in the population of lynx is the most dramatic result, the decline in the population of hares

[77] Tough, *As Our Natural Resources Fail*, 17; Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company," 189.
[78] Charles Elton and Mary Nicholson, "The Ten-Year Cycle in Numbers of the Lynx in Canada," *Journal of Animal Ecology* 11.2 (1942): 215.
[79] Kreb et al., "What Drives the 10-year Cycle of the Snowshoe Hares?," *Bioscience* 51.1 (2001): 25.

triggers a type of secondary scarcity throughout the whole predator chain, as snowshoe hares are an important source of food for many other small predators, including foxes, martins, and wolverines.[80] However, as the majority of small predators do not rely solely on hares, the decline in these populations is not as dramatic as the decline of lynx populations, but still significant enough to be visible in fur returns. This cycle occurs over eight to eleven years, with ten being the average length.[81]

Unfortunately, the scarcity of small animals also coincided with low runs of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. In that river, sockeye salmon have a four-year cycle. After leaving the Fraser basin, each fish will return "home" to their natal stream to reproduce once at the end of a four year period, and then die. No older or younger fish balance out these runs. Because of this, populations are staggered with one high-density year, one middling year and two low years.[82] Thus, the larger stock will spawn another large stock that will return in four years, but it is estimated that low runs could contain as few as one percent of a high year.[83] The years 1887 and 1888 were at the lowest point of the four-year Fraser salmon cycle.[84] The fact that the epidemic occurred during a low-return salmon year as well as a low period in the small animal cycle contributed greatly to the hardship of the indigenous peoples of the Central Interior.

MacFarlane wrote to British Columbia Premier and Attorney General E.B. Davie

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[80] Kreb et al., "What Drives the 10-year Cycle of the Snowshoe Hares?," 29; S Boutin et al., "Population Changes of the Vertebrate Community during a Snowshoe Hare Cycle in Canada's Boreal forest," *Oikos* 74 (1995):69–80.
[81] Kreb et al., "What Drives the 10-Year Cycle of the Snowshoe Hares?," 34.
[82] Robert L. Burgner, "Life History of Sockeye Salmon," in *Pacific Salmon Life Histories,* ed. C.Groot and L. Margolis (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991), 95-96, as cited in Blake Bouchard, "The Resilience of the Babine: the Economic and Social Relations of the Babine to 1830," (MA Thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2012), 94.
[83] William E. Ricker, "Cycles of Abundance among Fraser River Sockeye Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka),*" *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 54.4 (1997): 963.
[84] John F. Roos, *Restoring Fraser River Salmon: A History of the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission, 1937-1985* (Vancouver: Pacific Salmon Commission, 1991), 10.

at least three times in the spring and summer of 1888 recommending that the DIA provide aid to the New Caledonia district before receiving a short and negative response.[85] MacFarlane's following letter to Premier and Attorney General E.B. Davie, written on 12 November 1888, underlined the gravity of the ensuing conditions and finally sparked a chain of correspondence:

> ... [T]he fact that the total failure of last autumn's salmon fisheries of Fraser and Stuart lakes, which largely diminished results at Fort George, Babine, and Connoly, is, in the existing absence of rabbits, and the scarcity of lynx and other food animals, presently certain to cause great privation, not only to the poor, aged, and infirm, but also among many of the abled bodied nations as their families, in the course of the present winter; and unless relief is judiciously given in each case, from time to time, when absolutely required, I greatly fear it is possible, nay, too probable, that some may soon perish of starvation.[86]

MacFarlane continued by stating that the HBC would take "due precaution" to assure that further starvation or hardship would not occur with the understanding that all expenses would be reimbursed by either the provincial government or the DIA.[87]

MacFarlane had once before made an appeal to the Canadian government to intervene and provide aid to an indigenous community during a period of famine, and this incident undoubtedly influenced MacFarlane's perception of events in 1888. In 1880, writing from Fort Chipewyan, MacFarlane warned Lt. Governor David Liard that "... owing to the scarcity of food animals, and the comparative failure of the fisheries, numbers of Indians will doubtless suffer many privations betwixt [now] and Spring. We

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[85] Referenced in LAC RG10 Vol. 3803, File 53556, MacFarlane to Alex E. Davie, 12 November 1888.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

have already expended a lot of fish and potatoes on them; in short, but for the assistance thus annually rendered to starving Indians, throughout the North, many of them would assuredly perish . . . [i]t strikes me very forcibly that something must be done and that speedily to help these poor people." [88] However, the amount of aid the HBC was willing to supply was not sufficient to address the failed fisheries, cyclic scarcity, and overhunting that many regions in the north faced. Moreover, MacFarlane made it clear that he did not believe that the HBC was being fairly treated by the Dominion Government, nor that the shifts in company policy reflected the trading realities of the late 1880s:

> While the brandy belongs to the Company, and Customs' cries were unknown . . . it was [to] me to see that the Indian fared as well as possible, but now that we are as fairly faced as the most favoured citizens of the Dominion, and opposed in as trade, it cannot surely be right to burden us with the expense of maintaining infirm and starving Indians. Confining my remarks as applicable to the District of Peace River, Athabasca, English River, and the Mackenzie, I am really unaware of anything that has yet been accomplished by our rulers ... since the territory was transferred to Canada. [89]

Referring both to the company's unwillingness to continue to carry the social costs of the fur trade, as well as the ensuing conflict of interest between the HBC and the federal government, MacFarlane's correspondence reflects the uncertain position of the HBC at the end of the nineteenth century. The HBC could simply not afford to continue the older traditions in light of the open market, but were bound by necessity and expectation to

[88] LAC, MacFarlane Fonds, MG29, A11, vol. 1, pp. 808-809.
[89] Ibid.

provide aid in periods of famine. MacFarlane was not alone in considering the cost a burden; similar complaints had been expressed by other factors since the early 1880s.[90] Although the DIA eventually supplied some minor relief to the Athabasca region MacFarlane had earlier petitioned for, it was ultimately reluctant to assume expenses in an area not yet covered by treaty and was, according to McCormack, unwilling to set precedent.[91] No official reimbursement agreement for the HBC providing aid outside of treaty areas was reached until the mid-1890s.[92]

Despite MacFarlane's prior success, both the British Columbia government and the DIA ignored MacFarlane's requests for aid in 1888. MacFarlane's 12 November letter was forwarded by Davie to Edgar Dewdney, Minister of the Interior and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, who, in response, reminded Davie to be cautious when evaluating the statements of the HBC officers, who "resid[ed] way off into the interior, and ... have always been accustomed ... in cases of distress like the present, to assist Indians themselves."[93] After a brief and apathetic inquiry, in which acting Indian Superintendent Captain H. Moffat travelled only as far as 150 Mile House, MacFarlane's request for compensation and further intervention was denied.[94] Moffat then claimed that MacFarlane admitted he had overestimated the harshness of the coming winter and had retracted his request for aid, as there was "no destitution for want of provision."[95] No evidence supports Moffat's claim. In April 1889, MacFarlane wrote again to Dewdney,

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[90] Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism," 200. In 1880 Chief Factor and company partner James Fortescue campaigned for the Canadian government to provide ongoing aid to indigenous peoples, also claiming it was unfair for the company to assume the cost in a competitive market

[91] McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History*, 84.

[92] Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism," 200.

[93] LAC, RG10 (DIA), Vol.3803, File 53556, E. Dewdney to Alex E. Davie, December 1888.

[94] LAC, RG10 (DIA), Vol. 3803, File 53556, H. Moffat to W. Meason, 14 January, 1889.

[95] LAC, RG10 (DIA), Vol. 3803, File 53556, W. Meason to EB Davie, 18 April 1889.; LAC, RG10 (DIA), Vol. 3803, File 53556, W. Meason to EB Davie, 18 April 1889.

this time enclosing another account of the harsh winter as well as supporting statements from other officers that emphasized the extent of distress. Having been forced to procure supplies and food from Quesnel at company cost, MacFarlane billed the provincial government and failed to submit the accounts of 1888 to the HBC Western Department.[96] MacFarlane's claims for reimbursement were once again denied.[97]

Although the company attempted to rectify its dependence on the unpredictable fur economy of the late nineteenth century, the impact of these changes were uneven and excluded much of British Columbia from the newly established economic patterns. As a result, subsistence cycles based around fur trade and company wage labour suffered. The measles epidemic of 1887-1889 and poor environmental conditions further weakened the indigenous economies of Stuart Lake and Fort George. Economic activities, including trapping and the indigenous production of dried salmon for commercial purposes, sharply declined in many areas following the epidemic's high mortality rate and placed further importance on a reciprocal relationship with the HBC at a time when the company was limiting trade and wage-labour in less profitable districts.[98] The combined force of these changes helped create the conditions necessary for the expansion of government authority and the further development of reserves in British Columbia's Central Interior.

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[96] LAC, RG10 (DIA), Vol. 3803, File 53556, R. MacFarlane to H. Moffat, 2 April 1889; HBCA B.226/b/50 vol. 6 10 August, 1888.
[97] LAC RG10 (DIA), Vol. 3803, File 53556, H. Moffat to R. MacFarlane, 20 May 1889.
[98] HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol. 1; Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region,"122. Galois estimates that up to half of the We'tsu'eten and Babine populations succumbed to measles and starvation between 1887 and 1888.

Chapter 3
"The Measles Passed Over the People"[1]: Integrating the 1888 Measles Epidemic into the Skeena River Uprising and Settler Narratives of the Skeena Forks.

The measles epidemic reached the Northwest Coast in the early winter of 1888, and had a devastating impact on the First Nations communities of the upper Skeena region. While firm evidence shows that the measles outbreak was widespread and affected much of British Columbia, it is unclear if the illness reached all of the Gitxsan villages in the Skeena Forks area.[2] Evidence from villages outside of Gitanyow (Kitwoncool), Gitsegukla, and Hazelton is sparse, and the rapid spread of disease between the geographically close and strongly connected communities obscured transmission patterns that might otherwise be apparent. However, despite uncertainty regarding the path of contagion, primary sources depict a rapid diffusion of severe disease throughout the Skeena Forks region. Primary accounts describe many houses in the village of Gitanyow "empty or abandoned," which suggests that entire families either died or were displaced by disease.[3] These accounts, supported by evidence from Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) journals and correspondence, reflect the uneven age distribution typical of measles mortality as well as the continued presence of secondary

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[1] Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, informants Somodio.ok and Sinclair, "Tsimtyan Beliefs," Northwest Coast Files, (Gitsegukla), Canadian Museum of Civilization, (B-F -201.3) (1924).

[2] Jeremy Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations with Colonial and Canadian Law, 1858-1909" (MA Thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2000), 32. The Gitxsan are a Tsimshianic people who live between one hundred and four hundred kilometers inland from the mouth of the Skeena River. The Gitxsan are politically and socially distinct from both the Nisga'a and Coast Tshimsian but share many cultural and legal traditions. As today, Gitxsan in the late nineteenth century were dispersed throughout several villages on the river, including Kispiox, Kuldo, Kisgaga'as (Kisgagas), Kistsegyukla (Gitsegukla), Kitwancool (Gitanyow), Gitwangak (Kitwanga), and Hazelton (Gitenmax). Although these villages shared a common culture and language, most operated as an independent unit with their own territorial, economic, and political systems, distinct from other Gitxsan and Tsimshian systems of organization.

[3] Roxy Tomlinson, interviewed by Imbert Orchard, 25 November 1965, "Mrs. Robert Tomlinson, Jr. : Christian missionary work in the Skeena Region : part 2," Imbert Orchard Fonds, British Columbia Archives (BCA), Victoria, BC.

complications to which the young and elderly are particularly vulnerable.[4] Roderick MacFarlane, Chief Factor of the regional headquarters of Stuart Lake, estimated that as many as 24 children succumbed to measles and complications in the nearby Babine villages.[5] When compared against other primary source evidence, the HBC's estimates appear conservative. Provincial correspondence and reports from the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) claimed that at least 240 indigenous people died of measles in the Gitxsan villages on the Upper Skeena alone.[6] These figures reflect the reports of unusually fatal cases of measles in other indigenous communities in the winter and spring of 1888.

As Robin Fisher's seminal *Contact and Conflict* argues, the North Coast and Skeena watershed experienced a dramatic increase in traffic in the second half of the nineteenth century as prospectors, miners, and other settlers flowed into British Columbia from all corners of the Empire (and beyond) seeking to "strike it rich."[7] The expansion of surveyors into the Central Interior led to the survey and construction of the Telegraph Creek trail, and several mineral-related booms followed in the far north during the mid-1860s, as well as the establishment of Fort Hazelton, a small HBC post and settler community.[8] Although the gold rush in the Omineca region did not reach the magnitude

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[4] See Chapter One for a further discussion of this topic.
[5] Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) B.188/b/10 vol. 2 Fort St. James (Stuart's Lake) Outward Correspondence "Memorandum for Quesnel" pg 81.
[6] Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Rg10, Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) Vol. 1355, Premier Alex Davie to Edgar Dewdney, 30 November 1888, Vol. 1355, Department of Indian Affairs, RG10.
[7] Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 97.
[8] Mica Amy Royer Jorgenson, "'It happened to me in Barkerville,': Aboriginal Identity, Economy, and Law in the Cariboo Gold Rush, 1862-1900" (MA Thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2012), 4.

of the earlier discoveries in other areas of the province,[9] the influx of newcomers seeking gold and the many related economic opportunities was significant in a region that had previously seen little settlement and exploration.[10] Government presence in the Skeena region prior to the 1880s was minimal, primarily limited to inconsistent surveying and mineral prospecting, and indigenous trade networks continued to operate independently of white traders until the mid-1860s.[11] The growing white population, although far from large, encouraged regional integration into the expanding provincial economy, and the increasing influence of missionaries and government officials in the Skeena watershed challenged indigenous law and traditional perceptions of justice and recompense. The expansion of the Canadian government into the Skeena Region was complex, uneven, and far from complete by 1888, and the Gitxsan and other indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast continued to define economic and legal relations with both the HBC and the provincial government both during and immediately following the uprising and epidemic period.

Although the exact patterns of contagion within the Skeena region remain unclear, both the timing of the epidemic and range of diffusion can be linked to economic and cultural changes occurring in First Nations communities throughout the north coast and Central Interior. The strongest evidence suggests that measles entered the Skeena region through a costal route via freight portage, or more likely, with canoes of workers

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[9] Ronald Genini, "The Fraser-Cariboo Gold Rushes: Comparisons and Contrasts with the California Gold Rush," *Journal of the West* 11.3 (1972): 471; Barry Gough, "'Turbulent Frontiers' and British Expansion: Governor James Douglas, and the British Columbia Gold Rushes," *Pacific Historical Review* 41 (1972): 17; Ralph Hall, *Pioneer Goldseekers of the Omineca* (Victoria: Morris Publishing, 1994).
[10] Jorgenson, "It Happened to me in Barkerville," 4; Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 2003): 8; Gough, "'Turbulent Frontiers' and British Expansion," 18, 23.
[10] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 19.
[11]Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 32.

returning from seasonal labour in the hops fields of the Fraser Valley and Washington State.[12] However, it is also possible the epidemic spread westward via trade routes through the small community of Portage across Stuart Lake, or through the more frequently travelled trade routes to the south and east. The short contagion period of measles and the continued presence of disease in indigenous communities throughout British Columbia make it unlikely that either the coastal or inland trading route was the epidemic's sole point of entry into the Skeena region. Several posts, including Fort George, reported illness as early as 16 January 1888,[13] and correspondence from Stuart Lake suggests that that the epidemic reached Hazelton by way of Stony Creek by late February.[14] Epidemic measles lingered in the Gitxsan villages along the Skeena until mid-summer, and HBC Chief Factor Roderick MacFarlane described measles "raging" in the Babine area as late as May 1888.[15]

Keeping the unusual severity of disease in mind, this chapter examines the impact of the 1888 measles epidemic upon the First Nations communities of the Skeena Region and Northwest Coast, including its role in the event popularly known as the "Skeena River Uprising," an incident in the spring of 1888 that began with a violent conflict and the murder of two Gitxsan men and resulted in the dispatch of a gunboat and seventy Canadian soldiers to the banks of the upper Skeena River. As the details of the Skeena

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[12] Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 84; Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 136. A similar pattern of diffusion was seen in the 1862 smallpox epidemic.
[13] HBCA B.280/a/1 16 January 1888.
[14] HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol.1 29 February 1888, Fort St. James' (Stuart's Lake) Correspondence Outward, R. MacFarlane to Mr. William Sinclair (Fraser Lake).
[15] HBCA B.188/b/10 (24 May 1888) R. MacFarlane to Thomas R. Smith Esquire (Victoria BC) 24 May 1888, pg 25.

uprising are documented in both academic and popular publications, [16] this chapter only briefly reprises the uprising, asserting that the events that took place reflected the unsettled nature of both the region and British Columbia as a whole. Although this chapter primarily focuses on the impact of the measles in the Gitxsan villages along the northern Skeena, events and evidence from other Tsimshianic-speaking communities are considered to help fully contextualize the impact of epidemic disease in both settler and indigenous communities.

With few exceptions, the authority of the HBC and the Gitxsan system of retribution and repayment were relied upon to resolve conflicts as serious as murder in both the indigenous community and between First Nations and whites as late as the 1870s.[17] Although the prosecution of the murder of white trader Amos Card Youmans by a Gitxsan man in 1884 has also been credited with encouraging the shift to colonial authority,[18] the events that took place in the spring and early summer of 1888, variously known as the Kitwooncool Jim Affair; the Kamalmuk Affair; the Skeena "Rebellion," "Murder," "Affair," or "Incident;" were central to the establishment of a permanent and authoritative government presence in Gitxsan territory.[19] While more recent examinations of the Skeena Uprising have taken both indigenous and newcomer affairs into

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[16] See, for example, Gough, "'Turbulent Frontiers and British Expansion"; Hamar Foster, "'The Queen's Law Is Better Than Yours': International Homicide In Early British Columbia," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law, Volume V: Crime and Criminal Justice*, ed. Jim Phillips, Tina Loo, and Susan Lewthwaite (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 41 - 111; Robert Galois, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder: The Skeena 'Uprising' of 1888," in *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, ed. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 220-248.

[17] Foster, "'The Queen's Law Is Better Than Yours'," 47, 51, 52. Foster argues that the Gitxsan found "The Queen's Law" acceptable as long as it protected traditional property rights, and that conflict occurred only when this law contradicted or impeded Gitxsan community decisions or beliefs; Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 33.

[18] Foster, "The Queen's Law Is Better Than Yours'," 41, 43.

[19] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 86. However, Williams does acknowledge that the "practical realization of Canadian law" in the Upper Skeena Region was an ongoing process.

consideration,[20] there has been little acknowledgement of the influence of epidemic disease and the related social and economic tensions in the Gitxsan communities during this period.[21] Drawing upon a wide range of primary and secondary sources as evidence, this chapter places emphasis on the less frequently examined narratives to ascertain a fuller picture of the involvement of the epidemic in the Skeena Uprising and the spring and summer of 1888. Primary sources include oral histories collected by CBC radio journalist Imbert Orchard, HBC journals and correspondence; notes from oral histories collected by anthropologist Marius Barbeau and Tsimshian interpreter William Benyon; provincial and federal correspondence; and early records from the Babine Lake Indian Agency, which was established shortly after the epidemic faded in the spring of 1889. Many of these materials, notably the HBC post records and the Orchard interviews, have remained almost completely overlooked from a qualitative standpoint in historical examinations of the uprising.[22] A closer examination of these sources reveals the significant impact of the 1888 measles epidemic upon the First Nations communities located in the area between the coast and Rocky Mountains. Acknowledging and exploring this connection will contribute to existing discussions of the expansion of Canadian authority in the Gitxsan territories and the permanent establishment of the DIA as an active force in British Columbia's Central Interior, an expansion which paved the way—both literally and figuratively—for the further white settlement of the Skeena River basin.[23]

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[20] Although William's thesis is perhaps the most balanced example, Galois' recent essay, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder," makes a strong effort to incorporate both indigenous and settler narratives.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Galois does reference these sources, but does not use them to support any kind of broader argument.
[23] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 64, 117.

Expressly challenging Fisher's assertions of total cultural and religious transformation, Susan Neylan's *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* approaches the cultural and economic developments of the Skeena Region through the lens of missionary work and the "dialogic" relationship established between the Tsimshianic peoples and Protestant missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century.[24] Neylan argued that to "recognize the subtler forms of colonization, one must appreciate the active and frequently willing participation of First Nations" in what were inherently dynamic and evolving relationships.[25] As a result, a large portion of *The Heavens are Changing* focuses on Tsimshian response to, and involvement in, a conversion process that Neylan identifies as part of a larger continuum of cultural change. Although *The Heavens are Changing* acknowledged that Euro-Canadian/indigenous missionary/convert relationships were inherently unequal, and founded within an imperialistic framework that positioned the indigenous convert as morally and physically inferior, Neylan asserted that the Tsimshian exercised agency in their interactions with and interpretations of Christianity. This assertion is directly counter to earlier arguments that, unlike the dynamic need-based relationships formed between fur traders and First Nations, missionaries arrived in British Columbia to "conspicuously and deliberately" transform indigenous cultures.[26] While Neylan's arguments are based upon evidence specific to the hegemonic struggles typical of missionary work, these relationships influenced many areas of nineteenth century

[24] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 5.
[25] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 5.
[26] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 11; Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), 198.

Indigenous/Newcomer interactions on the Northwest Coast and were closely involved with the development of the late-nineteenth century Gitxsan worldview.[27]

The overlap between euro-Canadian spirituality and indigenous perceptions of disease is a central aspect of *The Heavens are Changing*. Christian missions were intended to reform and reshape indigenous bodies and souls, a concept that found resonance with pre-existing Tsimshianic beliefs that positioned disease as both "an indicator and cause of spiritual imbalance in the world."[28] This worldview was rooted in the concept of a highly physical yet non-temporal existence that linked medicine and healing to the spiritual realm and sick bodies with a type of personal and community disorder Neylan termed "moral disruption."[29] Moral disruption could be caused by ill-doing, witchcraft, or a failure to adhere to social norms and traditions, and was considered symptomatic of larger universal imbalances. Neylan argued that these associations not only eased the introduction of the Judeo-Christian system of morality but also fundamentally altered indigenous perceptions of disease, a transformation that resulted in the 1888 measles epidemic being considered by missionaries and Tsimshian converts as both a divine punishment and a potential "means to salvation" for the unconverted. [30] Although the thoroughness of this ideological transformation among British Columbia's indigenous peoples is debated by Neylan and other scholars,[31] an awareness of this association is essential to a full understanding of the significance of the

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[27] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 11.
[28] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 215.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 135, 136.
[31] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 16, 17; Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), xix; Mary-Ellen Kelm, "Wilp Wa'ums: Colonial Encounter, Decolonization and Medical Care among the Nisga'a," *Social Science and Medicine* 59 (2004): 338. In both publications, Kelm argued that First Nations communities turned missionary medical efforts to their own advantage, incorporating aspects of either treatment or ritual into traditional belief structures, thereby diminishing threats of cultural change and coercion.

histories collected by Orchard and Barbeau. These histories, although broad in scope and content, strongly reflect this assumption, as well as contemporary ideologies of morality and race that influenced the collection of indigenous oral histories well into the twentieth century.[32]

While the uprising itself receives very little attention in *The Heavens are Changing*, Neylan suggested that an ongoing rivalry between Anglican and Methodist factions played a substantial role in the tensions following the death of Gitxsan shaman Neatsque, a detail that emphasizes the impact that missionary activities had upon indigenous communities in the Skeena region during the spring of 1888.[33] However, the majority of historical studies that discuss the Skeena Uprising adopt a predominantly legal and law-orientated perspective of cultural change. Those that vary from this approach, notably Galois' lengthy article "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder: the Skeena "Uprising" of 1888," focus almost exclusively on settler-Gitxsan interactions in the months following Kamalmuk's murder, minimizing the substantial social conflict and the altercation that led to the *first* murder, Kamalmuk's stabbing of Neatsque.[34] While Jeremy Williams and Barry Gough rightly link the shooting of Kamalmuk and aggressive provincial response at the end of a substantial series of Tsimshian-settler conflicts, this interpretation appears to have encouraged scholars to overlook the significance of the

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[32] See Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, ed. "Critical Developments: Introduction," in *The Oral History Reader: Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 1998) for an overview of how ideology shapes oral histories.

[33] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 51, 220. Neylan suggests that the accusations of witchcraft early in the Skeena Uprising are reflective of social discord resulting from a variety of factors, including disease and religious rivalry. Although tensions between the Anglican and Methodist missionaries in the Skeena region had perhaps reached a climax with William Duncan's departure and founding of New Metlakatla in 1887, the indigenous communities themselves remained divided, and the two missionary groups continued to be in competition well into the twentieth century.

[34] Robert Galois, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder," 233.

epidemic in the Skeena Uprising.[35] Perhaps most significantly, it appears to have limited the investigation of other events in the winter and spring of 1888 and the impact that the period of disease had upon the Gitxsan and other indigenous peoples of the Northwest Coast.

Extending to a later date than many of the other studies examined, Williams' thesis "A History of Gitxsan Relations with Colonial and Canadian Law, 1858-1909" examined the changing relationship between Gitxsan legal traditions through the lens of English, colonial and Canadian law. Relying primarily on material from anthropologist Marius Barbeau and provincial and federal correspondence, Williams argued that disputes during the colonial period, including the shooting of Kamalmuk in 1888, were "fundamentally shaped by customary expectations of what constituted justifiable killing and recompense."[36] These expectations were not static, but rather evolved with the changing relationship between the Gitxsan people and the colonial and provincial governments, which in turn was influenced by both internal Gitxsan politics and the increasing frequency of extended economic interaction and conflict with white settlers.[37] Although Williams does not discuss the 1888 measles epidemic other than to provide very brief background to the initial conflict, he does refer to a "general state of unrest" preceding the uprising that included disease and starvation.[38] Unfortunately, Williams did not elaborate on the influence that these factors may have had on the Gitxsan response to either the uprising or the period of increased provincial administration that followed.

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[35] See Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations"; Barry M. Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-90* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984).
[36] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 19.
[37] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 4.
[38] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 52.

Robert Galois' "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder" remains one of the most detailed historical examinations of the Skeena region during the tumultuous spring of 1888. Although Galois touched upon themes of social disruption, the article's main thesis is that the conflict between the white residents of Hazelton and the neighboring Gitxsan population was the result of lingering tension from earlier disputes over resources and a reaction to overly aggressive military responses to prior conflict.[39] Galois positioned these developments at the center of a broader narrative of imperial expansion, arguing that the increased commoditization of the region's resources helped validate an administrative presence and further legitimized settler claims in the already densely populated Tsimshianic territories.[40] This reading is apt, but almost fully dependent upon the existence of a culturally and economically destabilizing outside influence, a conclusion that is not supported by the majority of contemporary accounts and the more detailed studies of North Coast indigenous-newcomer relations, several of which emphasize the high degree of agency that the Gitxsan and other Tsimshianic peoples were able to maintain during the late nineteenth century.[41] Moreover, although Galois's reconstruction of the Skeena Uprising is far more inclusive of a First Nations experience than many of the other narratives, the complicating presence of the measles epidemic in the events of 1888 is neglected.

While the events of 1888 were not isolated occurrences, the Skeena Uprising can be perhaps be better linked to the growing and province-wide tensions surrounding definitions of race, settler identity, and geographic boundaries than issues of immediate

[39] Galois, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder," 222.
[40] Galois, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder," 222.
[41] See Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing* and Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations."

conflict or shifts in resource use.[42] Expanding this focus does not discount previous arguments about the encroachment of provincial authority or, as is asserted by Galois, the broader impact of the small white community's search for legitimization.[43] This wider-lens approach is supported by sociologist Renesia Mawani, who argued that government policy imported from elsewhere in the British Empire allowed settlers to create intentionally "racialized" spaces, and that the creation of geographically isolated reserves along the Northwest Coast was the direct result of a dichotomized settler/Indian/"other" identity, an ideology that also defined how white settlements were conceptualized and governed by the rapidly expanding provincial administration.[44] Although British Columbia had experienced increasingly diverse immigration since the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, Mawani asserted this later period of settlement and immigration was essential to the development of Indian policy in British Columbia and the designation of British Columbia as a "white settler society;" a transformation in part linked to the growth of the CPR and the largely Chinese workforce that followed construction projects and cannery work to the North Coast.[45] When considered in tandem with the new and potentially threatening other of Asian immigration, the more familiar and increasingly legislated First Nations body began to hold a new significance in British Columbia's social, legal, and political systems of order. Although further work on the impact of this transformation on the Northwest Coast and Central Interior is needed, an awareness of this ideological shift is essential to understanding the provincial government's response, and lack of

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[42] Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 178, 180.
[43] Galois, "Gitxsan Law and Settler Disorder," 32.
[44] Renisa Mawani, *Colonial Proximities: Cross-racial Encounters and Judicial Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 8, 15.
[45] Mawani, *Colonial Proximities*, 19; Renisa Mawani, "The 'Savage Indian' and the 'Foreign Plague': Mapping Racial Categories and Legal Geographies of Race in British Columbia, 1871-1925" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2001), 2, 59.

response, to epidemic disease among indigenous populations in the late nineteenth century.

The second half of the nineteenth century introduced significant changes to the economic patterns of Northwest coast First Nations. Fort Hazelton, the first non-native settlement in Gitxsan territory, was established in 1866 with the intent of supplying goods and services to builders of the Collins overland telegraph, miners, and other travelers, many of whom entered the interior via the Skeena. This new market of prospectors considerably expanded the pre-existing economy and encouraged further independent economic incursions into indigenous territory, most significantly the influx of the travelling "free traders" that formed the main basis of the HBC's competition in the second half of the nineteenth century. Both the Stuart Lake and Fort George post journals suggest that these men, who provided illicit alcohol and cheaper goods than the HBC, were viewed as serious threats to the economic stability of the company.[46] However, the influence of outsiders was not always limited to economic endeavors. B.W. Washburn, an independent trader living in Hazleton, played a pivotal role in the uprising by attempting to assert the authority of the province in the absence of colonial officials. Although Washburn was married to a Gitxsan woman and thus presumably aware of local legal traditions, he encouraged the indigenous community to report the murder to the white authorities and seek further legal punishment for Neatsque's death. When the Gitxsan refused to cooperate, Washburn travelled to Victoria to report the incident himself.[47]

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[46] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 26; HBCA B.1888/b/10 Correspondence Outward "Memorandum for Quesnelle," pg. 77.
[47] Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, informants Isaac Tens and Benyon, Marius Barbeau Collection, "Gitksan Narratives (Hazleton, 1920, etc)," CMC, Northwest Coast Files (Gitsegukla) (B.F.89.8) (1924).

Other economic developments had a lasting impact on both local and distant indigenous trade economies. The establishment of commercial fisheries in Port Essington, located approximately 180 miles downstream from Hazleton, coincided with a sharp decline in the importance of fur in the local economy.[48] Employment in canneries provided an alternative to the income that the declining fur trade could no longer provide, but such opportunities were not a complete substitution for what had been a relatively steady income until the mid-nineteenth century. Although the Tsimshian, Gitxsan, and other costal peoples were already active participants in British Columbia's wage labour economy, the establishment of local commercial fisheries and the declining availability of freighting and other company employment was a notable factor in the changing environment of the Northwest Coast. Cannery work often conflicted with other spring and summer subsistence patterns, and like trapping, could be disrupted by environmental fluctuation. Additionally, as Mawani demonstrates, although social relationships among indigenous and Asian employees were not always discouraged, the canning and fishing industry was much less hospitable to "half-breeds" than the seasonal employment HBC offered through freighting and trapping. [49] The cannery's reservations were exacerbated by the reluctance of government officials and missionaries to support wage employment, as many believed that the environment of the canneries was detrimental to the broader mission of civilization occurring in the planned villages and reserves further north along the coast.[50] Not specific to the Skeena region, these ideas influenced the development of

[48] James A. MacDonald and Jennifer Joseph, "Key Events in the Gitxsan Encounter With the Colonial World," in *Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Benyon's 1945 Notebooks* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 194.
[49] Mawani, *Colonial Proximities*, 46; Renisa Mawani, "The 'Savage Indian' and the 'Foreign Plague'," 216, 230.
[50] Mawani, *Colonial Proximities*, 567, 70.

settler/First Nations relationships on the Northwest Coast during the period of reserve creation in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and reflected much of the ideology surrounding race, industry, and settlement relied upon by the department of Indian affairs well into the twenty century.[51]

The position of the HBC in the Skeena region was tenuous and highly dependent upon outside influence. Even at its most profitable, the HBC did not dominate trade to the exclusion of indigenous networks. This was especially true in the Upper Skeena region. The inland Gitxsan had long-standing trade relationships with coastal Tsimshian and Nisga'a well before HBC presence was solidified in the mid-1860s, and these hereditary community-based relationships continued to take precedence over company trade.[52] The primary function of the HBC's Fort Hazelton and the seasonal satellite posts was to prevent further incursion from outside influences that would hamper trade or reduce profit, and ensure strong economic presence at the mouth of the Skeena, a location that affected trade in the Nass Valley, Haida Gwaii, and southeastern Alaska. After it became clear that Hazelton and the satellite posts would not be as profitable as those inland, the company began to focus on the posts where company trade dominated. This shift appears to have been a factor in the development of economic and administrative tensions at Fort Hazelton. The earliest reports of the uprising claimed that not only was Hazelton under siege, and the white residents held captive, but also that the itinerant postmaster Charles Clifford had also been seriously harmed or murdered.[53]

Although it is unclear to what extent Clifford was actually involved in the uprising, the larger involvement of the HBC in the Skeena Uprising should not be

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[51] Daniel Clayton, "Geographies of the Lower Skeena;" *BC Studies* 94 (1992): 52.
[52] MacDonald and Joseph, "Key Events in the Gitxsan Encounter With the Colonial World," 196.
[53] HBCA B.226/b/48 vol. 2 18 July 1888.

neglected. If Fort Hazelton was the geographic center of the uprising, it soon became the ideological one as well. The Skeena Uprising occurred at a time when conflicts over identity, land, and resources were being glorified as Indian Wars on the western frontiers of the United States, and the aftermath of the Northwest Rebellion was fresh in the minds of both officials and settlers as expectations surrounding government responsibility evolved in response to fears of future unrest and broader questions of national identity and government policy. Public response to the reports of violence in the Skeena region was swift and exaggerated, with reports of the incident being published in newspapers as distant as the *Toronto Globe* and the *New York Times*. Written to have the mass appeal of a frontier adventure, these sensationalist accounts described the uprising as a violent and potentially bloody hostage-type situation, and emphasized the "murderous" nature of the Gitxsan and the fear felt by the white population during the week-long incident.[54] Notably, none of the newspapers mention the epidemic in their reporting. One of the most detailed accounts, dispatched to New York from Winnipeg, warned that the actions of the "redskins . . . on the warpath" would result in "rebellion much more serious than that of a couple years ago" and a "bitter Indian war."[55] As the article mentions both the relatively recent disturbance at the old village of Metlakatha, where Gitxsan had constructed a blockade on the Skeena River to seek compensation for the accidental burning of Gitsegukla [Kitsegukla],[56] and the Ninetieth Battalion, the unit that responded to the North-West Rebellion, it is unclear exactly which "disturbance" the author of the article

[54] "The Murderous Skeena Indians," *The Globe*, 17 July 1888; "The Skeena River Expedition," *The Globe*, 19 July 1888; "The Skeena Indians," *The Globe*, 31 July 1888.
[55] "The Skeena River Revolt," *The New York Times*, 22 July, 1888.
[56] See Robert Galois, "The Burning of Kitsegukla, 1872" *BC Studies* 94 (1992): 59-81.

was referring to, or if the newspaper considered both incidents as equally serious threats to the Canadian settlers.

Notably distinct from the dominant discourse surrounding the fur trade, the accounts of the uprising in the weeks and months following the spring of 1888 emphasized the positive role that the HBC had played in the troubled period prior to the murder of Kamalmuk, as well as the authoritative position that the company assumed in maintaining order prior to the arrival of the 5th Artillery Regiment.[57] Although the press and certain factions of the provincial government viewed the HBC as antiquated and even a potential barrier to achieving economic maturity,[58] the accounts published in the *Victoria Daily Colonist* celebrated the position of the company. Two differing but closely related discourses developed: the first sought to highlight the difference between the controlled environment of Victoria and the distant "frontier" of Hazelton,[59] while the second emphasized the ongoing danger of the province's unpredictable Indian populations and the perceived need for increased government administration.[60] In many areas of the province, colonial authorities were often days away and vastly outnumbered. As Galois argued of the Skeena region in "The Burning of Kitsegukla, 1872," "the writ of the state ran weakly, and perhaps more significantly, it ran slowly,"[61] and as Williams highlights, there "were few, if any" government officials established on Gitxsan territory prior to 1888, [62] much to the ongoing concern of the settler community.[63]

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[57] For example, see "H.B. Co's Agents View," *The Victoria Daily Colonist*, 31 July, 1888.
[58] Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade,* 3, 48.
[59] "The Kitwoncool Jim Tragedy," *The Victoria Daily Colonist* 31 July, 1888; "Trouble in the North," *The Victoria Daily Colonist* 12 July, 1888.
[60] "H.B.C Co's Agents View," *The Victoria Daily Colonist* 31 July, 1888; etc.
[61] Galois, "The Burning of Kitsegukla,": 88.
[62] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 32.
[63] Concern about adequate police presence in Hazelton continued to be a topic of discussion in urban British Columbia well into the twentieth century. See "Ask for Mounted Police at Hazelton: Indians Laugh

The question of settler identity in the Skeena region continued to be an issue of concern well into the nineteenth century. One of the most powerful sources concerning the measles epidemic in the Skeena region is a series of oral histories conducted by radio journalist Imbert Orchard between 1959 and 1960. Originally intended to be research for a biography of long-time Hazelton resident Constance Cox, Orchard instead divided the interviews to form the basis of the Canadian Broadcasting Radio (CBC) 1961 program "Living Memory." [64] The first in a series of three radio programs, "Living Memory" was designed by Orchard to record and present the stories of British Columbia's 'old-timers' before they either died or became too infirm to fully recollect their experiences. While Orchard's two successive programs, "From the Mountains to the Sea," and "People and Landscape," included stories and interviews from other parts of the province, "Living Memory's" episodes largely focused on the Skeena Region and the characters surrounding Cox.

Containing material from over 900 distinct interviews, approximately 200 unique programs were produced for radio broadcast between 1961 and 1966. Keenly aware of the historical potential of even the earliest interviews, Orchard recorded far more material than necessary for the CBC contracts, eventually amassing "one of the largest oral history collections in North America."[65] Orchard strongly believed that the stories he was collecting were both essential to a full understanding of British Columbia's history and that they were in grave danger of being lost due to the passing of time, modernization,

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at Local Authority," *The Daily Province* 29 September 1906 or "More Constables for Hazleton," *Victoria Daily Colonist* 12 November 1909.

[64] The materials from these interviews form a substantial portion of the Imbert Orchard collection and are currently housed at the British Columbia Archives in Victoria.

[65] Robert Budd, "'The Story of the Country': Imbert Orchard's Quest for Frontier Folk in BC, 1870- 1914." (M.A. Thesis, University of Victoria, 2005).

and the increasing industrialization of Canada's west.[66] This approach can be loosely linked to the "salvage paradigm" that was popular at the time in both historical and anthropological discourse, and as such, the interviews must not be accepted at face value, but must be understood as the consciously manufactured product of a broader influence.[67] As Robert Budd argued, although Orchard had studied history and literature, he had no formal training as a historian, and conducted oral history as a radio journalist,[68] often entering the interviews looking for, and sometimes already having, a particular story.[69] Additionally, although historians and researchers now have access to many of the uncut interviews and Orchard's personal notes, the finalized (and heavily edited) broadcast versions of the interviews reflect an important aspect of Orchard's, and the CBC's, agenda.[70] Although indigenous traditions and spirituality are mentioned quite frequently in much of the northern content, Orchard largely limited the active participation of First Nations individuals to "reminiscent" discussion matter rather than main speakers or even potential candidates for interview, an exclusion that Budd attributes to the need for a clear, strong radio voice.[71] In using such carefully selected stories to unite a diverse geographical landscape, this narrative obscures a significant portion of the "pioneer" past

[66] Budd, "The Story of the Country,"10.
[67] Budd, "The Story of the Country," 10, 11. Budd suggests that Orchard may have been influenced by Barbeau's work with the Tsimshian, but provides little actual evidence to back this claim.
[68] Budd, "The Story of the Country," 28.
[69] Imbert Orchard, interviewed by Derek Lawrence Reimer, 1978, Vancouver, "Aural History in British Columbia" Provincial Archives of British Columbia Interview Collection, 1974-1987, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC. This attitude is perhaps most visible in Orchard's later acknowledgement that Constance Cox was not well regarded as a reliable informant, but was a "very good story teller."
[70] Imbert Orchard, interviewed by Derek Lawrence Reimer, 1978, Vancouver, "Introduction to Aural History" Provincial Archives of British Columbia Interview Collection, 1974-1987, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC; Teresa Iacobelli, "'A Participant's History?': The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Manipulation of Oral History," *The Oral History Review* 38 (2011): 313 -348.
[71] Budd, "The Story of the Country," 7. A notable exception to this is Constance Cox, the primary subject of "Living Memory," who was of at least partial Tlingit descent. However, Cox did not identify as such, taking pride in being the first "white child" born in Hazelton.

that Orchard was attempting to chronicle. Through this exclusion, Orchard effectively suppressed the indigenous and mixed-blood experience in his reimagined rural history.[72]

Despite these notable exclusions, the Orchard interviews that mention the measles epidemic and the Skeena Uprising help to fill an important gap in the history of the Skeena region between 1886 and 1888. Although these interviews provide little direct insight into the epidemic experiences of the Gitxsan, they do provide some evidence relating to the spread of measles through the Skeena region. Perhaps most importantly, they are a window into the dynamics of settler-newcomer interactions in the western interior region during the late nineteenth century, and provide new insight into one of the last examples of direct military conflict with British Columbia's First Nations people. Particularly relevant are the interviews of Methodist missionary Robert Tomlinson Junior; his wife, Roxy Tomlinson; and long-time Hazleton resident Constance Cox. Each of their interviews deals with events that occurred in Hazelton and the Upper Skeena region during the spring of 1888.

Robert Tomlinson Jr. was born in 1870 in Kincolith, a Nisga'a village in the Nass River valley, to parents who had also been missionaries along the Northwest Coast. Tomlinson's father, Robert Tomlinson Senior, was a prominent Irish Anglican missionary who immigrated to British Columbia in 1867. In 1879, the Tomlinsons moved to the Kispiox region, north of Hazelton, with the intent of establishing a missionary community similar to William Duncan's Metlakatla. Although this effort was soon abandoned, the Tomlinson family continued to serve as medical missionaries in the Hazelton region well into the twentieth century. Assuming both medical and missionary functions was a common way to make inroads into indigenous communities and, as

Neylan argued, missionaries received considerable attention and achieved success through the use of their skills.[73]

Despite the fact that Roxy Tomlinson recounted providing medicine and other aid to the Gitxsan community as one of the family's main functions during the winter of 1888,[74] Robert Tomlinson Jr. placed very little emphasis on the details of the measles epidemic, instead emphasizing the complexity of the inter-personal conflicts that led to both murders. In contrast, Roxy Tomlinson's account is far more conversational and focuses on the difficulties of treating disease in an isolated indigenous community. Although it is likely that Roxy Tomlinson had far more hands-on experience with medical treatment than her husband,[75] the difference in focus can be attributed to the fact that that the majority of the Tomlinson Jr. material was the product of informal conversations recorded by Roxy and edited for use in "Living Memory," the result being a much more direct, if less informative, narrative.

Tomlinson Jr.'s account begins with the conflict between Kamalmuk's wife, Fanny Johnson (Sigidimnak Ha'naamuux, referred to as Sunbeams by Barbeau in *The Downfall of Temleham*) and the Shamaan (or "Witch Doctor") Neatsque (referred to as "Neech" or "Nits" in Barbeau's field notes).[76] Johnson, who Tomlinson describes as a "chiefess in her own right," had placed her son in her ceremonial seat at a Potlatch, when Neatsque was said to have pushed the boy to the ground and claimed the seat as his own. Tomlinson explained that both Johnson and the Gitxsan community viewed the

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[73] Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing*, 215.
[74] Roxy Tomlinson, "Mrs. Robert Tomlinson Jr., part 2."
[75] Roxy Tomlinson, "Mrs. Robert Tomlinson Jr., part 1;" Roxy Tomlinson (nee Lydia Roxy Irene Drysdale) had a similar background, having served as a Salvation Army officer in Sik i dak, a small Gitxsan community now generally known as Glen Vowell. She had not yet married Tomlinson at the time of the epidemic.
[76] Tomlinson Jr. does not name Johnson in this account, but the Barbeau collection refers to her both as "Sunbeams" and Fanny Johnson.

displacement of the heir and the resulting community disruption as a critical event in both the course of the epidemic as well as the Skeena Uprising.:

> [A]nd so the old lady went back and ... got Neech [Neatsque] right out of his seat right now, and the rest of the chiefs that were sitting there, they knew he had no claim to the seat, not like the lady has—and so she pushed Neech out—and put back her little boy to hold on her seat until she was ready to sit on it. But as Neech was sneaking out the house, he said, well, that won't avail you very much, because he's only got a short time to live anyway. ... And it was only a few days after that the little boy had measles and died. Then they moved to Kispiox down to their own town . . . Gitsegukla and were given a potlatch there, and it was only a few days after that before the second boy took sick, and then from there they moved to Kitwoncool ... and they were only a day or two there when the little boy died.[77]

Johnson, Tomlinson claimed, was "heartbroken" after losing two of her children in such a short time, and angry that Neatsque's threats had gone unchallenged by both Kamalmuk and the Gitxsan community: " ... [Johnson] turned down to Jim and upbraided him and called him an old woman, and said that ... he knew who was killing his children and yet did nothing. And she lit into Jim so hot and strong that Jim went over and took his gun off ... and out he went ... because he knew Nitch was coming up to join the potlatch at Kitwoncool [Gitanyow], and he was watching for him."[78] Tomlinson continued by describing the events leading up to and following Neatsque's murder, placing emphasis on the involvement of the Gitxsan community in resisting Kamalmuk's capture. It is

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[77] Robert Tomlinson Jr., interviewed by Roxy Tomlinson, 1950s, Ketchikan Alaska, "Robert Tomlinson: Christian Missionary Work on the Nass and Skeena Rivers," Imbert Orchard Fonds, BCA, Victoria, BC.
[78] Robert Tomlinson Jr., "Christian Missionary Work."

unclear whether the epidemic was a direct cause of conflict, or if it only exacerbated pre-existing social tensions with the Gitxsan community. In the end, Tomlinson Jr. claimed that many in Kitwoncool [Gitanyow] were relieved that Neatsque, and his violent tendencies, were finally "out of the way."[79]

The much briefer interview with Roxy Tomlinson places considerably greater emphasis on the Tomlinson's experiences as medical missionaries. After providing some details on the history of the Tomlinson family and her own experience as a medical missionary, Roxy describes her family's role in treating the epidemic:

> Grandmother busied herself making soup and taking it to the people that were sick. Grandfather [Tomlinson Sr.] worked early and late with the sick people. The small children that were in their cradles survived the measles, but the youngsters that were running around half-dressed succumbed to it, and there were funerals every day. Robert ... went out early in the morning with an Indian and they chopped their own wood and brought it in and distributed it among the people that were sick to keep them warm ... [he] always felt that it was overruled that they go back there, or else he felt that the village would have been wiped out with the measles. Because grandfather had enough of the know-how to tell the Indians how to take care of themselves, quite few of them did survive ... .[80]

Roxy clearly found the severity of disease and number of deaths disturbing, and viewed her domestic position, as well as the medical services provided by the missionaries as essential to the continued survival of the community. In notable contrast to the

[79] Robert Tomlinson Jr., "Christian Missionary Work."
[80] Roxy Tomlinson, "Mrs. Robert Tomlinson Jr., part 2."

observations made by the HBC officers, Roxy did state that the illness was especially virulent, but attributed the harsh mortality to inadequate Gitxsan response to the disease:

> [T]here were lots of funerals. And the potlatching went on. ... there were hundreds that died. I don't know how many, but I know there were whole families wiped right out in the measles epidemic—especially the young people. It caught so many of the young people; they wouldn't take care of themselves. The babies that were in their cradles were ... quite a few of them escaped. They were kept warm by being wrapped up in their cradles and kept covered up; therefore they escaped. But the other children that were older, that could get exposed to draughts and so forth, the poor little things, they all passed on—many of the young people, young men and young women. The older people, it didn't hit them too hard, though there were lots of them that passed on too.[81]

Symptomatic of severe measles, unusually high numbers of fatalities among children and young adults were also observed elsewhere in the province. Like Roxy, medical professionals and Indian agents tended to view this discrepancy as the result of poor parenting or the failure of traditional medical knowledge, although evidence suggests that a number of environmental factors, including nutritional status, play a large part in determining the likelihood of survival from measles and other air-borne viral diseases.[82]

The events of the spring and summer of 1888 were also documented by French-Canadian anthropologist Marius Barbeau, artist W. Langdon Kih, and Tsimshian interpreter William Benyon. Barbeau, primarily interested in ethnology and folklore,

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[81] Roxy Tomlinson, "Mrs. Robert Tomlinson Jr., part 2."
[82] See Chapter One.

visited the Northwest Coast in 1923 to collect information on the language, culture, and art of the Tsimshian, Nisga'a and Gitxsan peoples. Although Barbeau and Benyon produced several important anthropological works on British Columbia's Northwest Coast First Nations peoples,[83] one of the best sources of information on the Gitxsan communities produced during this period is the incredibly detailed field notes collected as research for the semi-fictional narrative account, *The Downfall of Temlaham*.[84] Although heavily influenced by outdated anthropological theory, Barbeau's research lends insight into how the epidemic period was interpreted by the Gitxsan, and it highlights the lack of communication between the Department of Indian Affairs and the indigenous communities of the upper Skeena.

The information Barbeau collected is not easily reconciled with "settler" constructions of the Skeena Uprising which tend to emphasize the colonial response, rather than the origins or long-term social consequences of the conflict. While the epidemic is not always elaborated upon, it is mentioned at the beginning of the majority of accounts in a way that suggests that the interview participants consider it to have been intricately involved with other aspects of the uprising. Although differences exist in the details of the interviews and stories, particularly in the chronology of Kamalmuk's death, the discussions of both disease and murder are anchored in traditional expectations surrounding the role of outsiders and social responsibility. Multiple accounts suggest that the displacement of Kamalmuk and Johnson's son is significant not only because Neatsque's actions violated Gitxsan perceptions of social order, but because this trespass

[83] Most notable of these are Barbeau's collections of indigenous mythologies, including Marius Barbeau, *Tsimsyan Myths*, Anthropological Series 51, National Museum of Canada Bulletin 174 (Ottawa: Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, 1961).
[84] Marius Barbeau, *The Downfall of Temlaham* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1928).

happened at a feast that was being held during a time of illness and community crisis. The gravity of this situation is the focus of an account collected from an informant named Isaac Tens, who directly addressed the association between malevolence and the epidemic. Tens claimed that prior to this period, although disease was feared, "it was a belief that such a scourge carried once in so many years apart but [we] did not attribute it to witchcraft or anything."[85] However, these accusations appeared to have become common as settler-contact increased; Tens prefaces his account of Kamalmuk's death and the 1888 measles epidemic by explaining how deaths from a later measles epidemic were linked to a "magic lantern show" organized by missionaries for residents of outlying villages.[86]

Interviewed by both Barbeau and Orchard, community member Constance Cox recounted several ways that the epidemic affected the broader functioning of both the indigenous and white communities at Hazelton. The daughter of local trader Thomas Hankin, and the part-Tlingit Margaret Hankin, Cox was only seven or eight years old when the epidemic occurred; Cox recounts her mother encouraging her to pretend to be ill with her sibling so that the Gitxsan community would not be suspicious of their immunity.[87] While suspicion of the white community is apparent in many of the Barbeau interviews, Cox's accounts are the only that mention the possibility that the measles was purposely introduced from an outside (settler) source. Cox claims that several prominent leaders in the First Nations community thought that the disease was introduced by the

[85] Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, informant Isaac Tens, "Gitksan Narratives (Hazelton, 1920 etc) CMC, Northwest Coast Files (Hazelton) (B-F-89.7) (1924).
[86] Isaac Tens, "Gitksan Narratives."
[87] Constance Cox, interviewed by Imbert Orchard, 1959, Hazelton "Constance Cox: Recollections: part 1," Imbert Orchard Fonds, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC.

unpopular HBC Clerk, Charles Clifford, through the distribution of "poisoned" sugar. [88] While it is entirely possible that those delivering the freight may have been actively contagious, it is far more likely that these accusations originated from the fact that sugar was the only part of the HBC freight to reach the interior. The majority of the yearly shipment, including flour and foodstuffs, had been seized by an unidentified group of Indians on the lower Fraser reportedly protesting their displacement as portage workers.[89]

A small, isolated post such as Hazelton would find the loss of such a large amount of provisions a hardship at the best of times, but the unusually inclement weather and the occurrence of severe cyclic scarcity during the winter and spring of 1888 meant that disruptions to the supply chain were felt particularly hard. The resulting shortage of dried goods had a ripple impact on the economy and subsistence patterns of the surrounding indigenous communities. The disruption to the cycle of credit had a lasting impact on the communities of the Upper Skeena. Most indigenous trappers purchased outfits on at least partial credit, with the expectation that the season's profits would offset some or most of the debt incurred throughout the winter.[90] The inability to make payments made prior debt unmanageable and the provision of further company credit on an individual basis unlikely, although postmaster William Sinclair did continue to dispense credit at Fort

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[88] Constance Cox, "Recollections: part 1;" Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, informant Constance Cox, "Gitksan Narratives (Hazleton, 1920 etc.)," CMC, Northwest Coast Files (Hazelton)(B-F-89.5).

[89] HBCA B.188/b/10 Vol.1 Correspondence Outward Letter book pg 34; HBCA B/1888/b/10 Vol. 3 (5 April 1888) to Angus McIntosh (Fort Babine) from R. MacFarlane; HBCA B.1888 /b/10 Vol.3 (29 April 1888) to Thomas K Smith Esq, Assistant Commissioner, Victoria from R. MacFarlane; HBCA B.1888/b/10 Vol.4 (23 July 1888) to Mr. Clifford Esq from R. MacFarlane; Constance Cox, "Gitksan Narrative (Hazelton, 1920 etc.);" Indian Agent R.E. Loring to Marius Barbeau, Marius Barbeau Collection, Northwest Coast Files, CMC (5 January 1924) (B-F-204.2). This incident is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.

[90] Arthur J. Ray, "The Decline of Paternalism in the Hudson's Bay Company Fur Trade, 1870-1945," in *Merchant Credit and Labor Strategies in Historical Perspective*, ed. Rosemary E. Ommer (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 189.

Fraser.[91] However, the 1888 Fort Fraser journal suggests that the trading patterns of the Skeena region may have been permanently altered by the experience of disease. In a rare moment of administrative foresight, Sinclair documented his concerns in the 27 May 1888 Fort Fraser journal entry: "[f]our Indians from the Forks of the Skeena [Hazelton] arrived ... [t]hey traded all the skins they had this afternoon, and intend on leaving tomorrow, to return again in the fall. They will probably they say, make this their trading post in the future, as they are afraid to return again to the Skeena in account of the sickness and mortality among the Indians there last season."[92] Sinclair's account of displacement is supported by MacFarlane, who documented the indigenous peoples who passed through Stuart Lake, noting that many individuals who were expected to trade there failed to visit during the winter of 1888.[93]

Although the disruption brought about by the epidemic was temporary, it had a larger impact on community structures. As both Williams and Galois argue, in 1889 Magistrate Captain W. Fitzstubbbs, Indian superintendent I.W. Powell and future Indian Agent R.E. Loring would find the Skeena region in a greatly weakened position following the uprising, but also following the epidemic period.[94] Surveying in the forks, which had been challenged by the Gitxsan in 1881, 1884, and 1887, began in the fall of 1888, only a few short months after the H.M.S *Caroline* and the last of the regiment departed.[95] Economically and physically compromised by the extended period of disease and cyclic scarcity, the Gitxsan had little power to influence the creation of the Babine

[91] HBCA B.74/a/ 2 12 May 1888, f. 11.
[92] HBCA B.74 /a/22 1887-1893 27 May 1888, f. 13.
[93] HBCA B.188/b/10 vol. 2 "Memorandum for Quesnel," pg. 77.
[94] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 59; Robert Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region, 1850-1927," *Native Studies Review* 9.2 (1993-1994): 137, 139.
[95] Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region," 137, 139.

Agency in 1889 and the permanent placement of an Indian Agent in Hazelton. George Derrick, one of Barbeau's informants, claimed that the creation of the reserve and the response of the provincial government to Kamalmuk's death were intrinsically linked: the Gitxsan would not accept the reserve until Kamalmuk's death received suitable compensation, but the government would not offer compensation until the people accepted the reserve.[96] The repeated failure of the provincial government to acknowledge Gitxsan traditional values was not the only cause for resentment. The establishment of the agency resulted in the administrative amalgamation of the Upper Skeena and Babine peoples, a shift that affected Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en relations with neighboring indigenous and settler communities well into the twentieth century.[97]

By 1890, the aggressive military action Gough termed "Gunboat Diplomacy" had virtually ceased, making the Skeena Uprising one of the last incidents in British Columbia in which an indigenous population was subdued by the threat of overt violence. Although both the press and the DIA later admitted that the reports of violence in the uprising were greatly exaggerated,[98] public and provincial fears of an "Indian Rebellion" in the Skeena region transcended local discourse and reflected concerns about the vulnerability of all distant settler communities. In 1891, a stockade was erected around Fort Hazelton, but the balance of power had already shifted. By 1892, the majority of the reserves on the Upper Skeena had been established. While the Gitxsan peoples continued to assert themselves in both legal and resource-based conflicts with settler communities and the provincial government, an important transfer of authority had occurred in

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[96] Marius Barbeau and William Benyon, informant George Derrick, "Gitksan Narratives," CMC, Northwest Coast Files (1924)(B- F-89.3).
[97] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 63; Galois, "The History of the Upper Skeena Region," 139, 140.
[98] *ARDIA* 1889; "Northern Indians" *Victoria Daily Colonist* 1 May, 1891.

response to disease and the further encroachment of settlement in the Skeena region. As Williams argued, the Gitxsan themselves were an important part of the growth of Canadian law after 1888 and an acknowledgement of this transition is necessary to understand how the Gitxsan maintained a significant degree of legal autonomy beyond the colonial period, a defining factor of contemporary Gitxsan-provincial relations.[99] Although no comprehensive approach has been taken to the Skeena River uprising, the increased integration of the 1888 measles epidemic into the broader historical narrative of the Skeena Forks region has revealed the complexity of Gitxsan-settler relations during a period of great economic and cultural challenge. The epidemic must be recognized as a central facet of this narrative, as it was a key part of the settler uprising, and a strong influence in the creation of settler identity in the Skeena Region.

[99] Williams, "A History of Gitxsan Relations," 5, 8, 85. Williams points to the Delgamuukw trials, but a more recent example can be found in Gitxsan resistance to the construction of the Enbridge pipeline.

Conclusion

"Patterns of Diffusion" is the first step in the inclusion of the 1886-1888 measles epidemic in British Columbia's historical narrative. The exploration of this epidemic contributes to an improved understanding of the expansion of white settlement and colonial authority in British Columbia's Central Interior region, as well as the influence of epidemic disease upon indigenous communities at the end of the nineteenth century. The inclusion of the epidemic into British Columbia's historical narrative has important implications for historians of both indigenous history and epidemics. "Patterns of Diffusion" shows that epidemics and disease continued to be influential factors in colonialism long after concepts of contact and "virgin soil" became irrelevant, and that these later-period epidemics have complex implications with important ties to the changing environment and political landscape. This is particularly true of the period examined here. The 1886-88 measles epidemic occurred during a period of great economic hardship and resource scarcity, and had a significant impact on the subsistence patterns of the indigenous peoples of the Central Interior. Studies of newcomer expansion and settlement—particularly in the Skeena Region—are incomplete without the acknowledgement of this epidemic and the events that surrounded it. Moreover, "Patterns of Diffusion" examines an often ignored period of Hudson's Bay Company history, showing that the 1886-1888 measles epidemic became deeply involved with company business in central British Columbia even as modernization and changes in policy shifted company priorities away from the fur economy.

Perhaps most importantly, "Patterns of Diffusion" sheds light on British Columbia's often overlooked epidemiological history. Many nineteenth-century

epidemics are either almost or wholly absent from British Columbia's broader historical narrative. Acknowledging this alone has the potential to expand the historiography greatly, but much further study is needed.

Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of this work, much remains unknown about the 1886-1888 measles epidemic. The scarcity of evidence and the fragmented nature of the historical record have limited a fuller exploration of the scope and impact of the epidemic, as have the ever-present constraints of time and space. Many important questions remain unanswered. For example, only one settler region is examined in this study. How did other settler communities react to the epidemic? Did the epidemic permanently disrupt indigenous subsistence patterns, or was the disruption only temporary? What was the broader impact on wage labour and seasonal economies? Moreover, it is unclear how far the epidemic spread, how many people died or were ill, and what many of the longer-term impacts on indigenous health, administration, and reserve creation were. It is unlikely that many of these questions will ever be fully answered, but asking them reveals the necessity of further epidemiological history in British Columbia. "Patterns of Diffusion" provides a starting point for future research by showing that the 1886-1888 epidemic was highly significant in both settler and Aboriginal communities and was deeply intertwined with both the environmental and economic history of the Central Interior.

"Patterns of Diffusion" is the first step of a broader examination of disease and settlement in British Columbia's Central Interior. Nineteenth century epidemics need to be considered fully as industrial-era phenomena and as part of British Columbia's historical narrative before a full picture of indigenous-newcomer relationships can

develop. The inclusion of these narratives into the broader history of British Columbia will substantially expand the way historians think about the relationship between disease, colonialism, and indigenous peoples.

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