

“Not ... the Same Damaging Effects”?: Unmarried Pregnancy, the State, and First Nations Communities in Early Postwar British Columbia

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This article explores postwar Indigenous, unmarried pregnancy both as perceived by the state and as experienced in reserve communities. It compares Indigenous experiences with those in settler society, finding differences in rates, in reactions, and in the overall context shaping the issue of unmarried pregnancy. Importantly, the federal Indian Affairs Branch regarded the much higher rate of Indigenous illegitimacy as a cultural, rather than age-related, problem. If culture seemed the problem to many observers, it also sustained women and girls who typically did not go to great lengths to hide pregnancies or to flee their communities. Although disapproving attitudes were not unknown, thanks to long-used family strategies, (and a state not yet intent on, or equipped for, mass apprehensions), children generally grew up in the context of extended families and reserve communities.

Cet article se penche sur les grossesses hors-mariage chez les Amérindiennes, telles qu'elles ont été perçues par l'État et telles qu'elles ont été vécues dans les communautés des réserves. Il compare les situations autochtones à celles de la société des colons et dévoile des différences dans les taux de grossesses hors-mariage, dans les réactions et dans le contexte d'ensemble influant sur ce problème particulier. Il est important de noter que pour l'agence fédérale des Affaires indiennes, le taux considérablement plus élevé de grossesses « illégitimes » chez les Autochtones relevait d'un problème culturel plutôt que d'un problème d'âge. Cependant, si pour de nombreux observateurs, c'est la culture qui semblait être le problème, cette même culture a également soutenu des femmes et des filles qui en général ne se donnaient pas grand mal pour cacher leur grossesse ou s'enfuir de leur communauté. Bien que la désapprobation ne fût pas totalement absente, grâce à des stratégies familiales utilisées depuis longtemps (et à un État

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n'ayant ni intentions ni moyens d'appréhender les enfants issus de grossesses « illégitimes »), les enfants, en général, grandissaient dans le contexte des familles élargies et des communautés des réserves.

IN 1955 THE SUPERVISOR of social workers for Canada's Indian Affairs Branch shared her thoughts regarding the impact and, to her mind, the clear problem of children born outside of legal marriage. "The seriousness of the illegitimacy problem," she explained, "is basically the degree of social and emotional damage to the mother ... and also the degree that children are handicapped in growing up as useful citizens because of the circumstances of their birth." By contrast, in reserve communities, she argued, "the unmarried Indian mother and her child do not suffer the same damaging effects as those in similar circumstances in non-Indian communities. It is rarely that [she] is rejected by her family and turned away from her home because of her pregnancy. Rather, a mother and child are usually accepted as members of the family."¹ There was a great deal of truth to this statement, as this article shows, even if not every woman and girl could count on familial assistance. At the same time, such upbeat assessments by state actors often hid their belief that the very problem with reserve communities was that they perceived no problem.

This article proposes to make clear how the Canadian state perceived Indigenous unmarried pregnancy and, to a lesser extent, how women and reserve communities experienced it from roughly 1945-60. The federal state created and policed the category of status Indians, and its record-keeping opens this phenomenon for us to explore.² This article also seeks to shed light on broader topics, including the nature and outlook of the postwar Indian Affairs Branch and the limitations of provincial welfare services vis-à-vis status Indians. Additionally, it provides glimpses of sexuality, heterosexual relations, and family strategies surrounding childcare on reserves. In what follows then, I explore first the state's construction of Indigenous unwed pregnancies, then the options open to Indigenous women and girls, and finally the responses of reserve communities to unmarried mothers and their children.

This work emerged as part of my larger project on postwar unmarried pregnancy in English Canada and from my desire to integrate Indigenous experiences into the total picture. Accordingly, and where possible, I also compare and contrast these experiences with those of non-Indigenous women and girls (based on my findings in mainly British Columbia and Ontario). Overall, this study reveals that, even more than in non-Indigenous communities, the state regarded unmarried pregnancy as a pressing social problem, though not necessarily for the same reasons. As I have argued elsewhere, professionals cast non-Indigenous

1 Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, M. S. Payne, Memorandum to "W," June 20, 1955.

2 Status Indians were entitled, among other things, to live on reserved lands and to receive yearly annuity payments. I use the term "Indian" for this official status; elsewhere I apply the now-more-acceptable terms "First Nations" and "Indigenous," although, strictly speaking, the latter can also encompass non-status, Métis, and Inuit people.

unmarried pregnancy in distinctly age-conscious terms, with teenagers attracting the lion's share of attention and concern.³ By contrast, the state saw Indigenous unmarried pregnancy in terms of culture and race.

What follows is a study of the federal state's interaction with First Nations peoples, mainly in British Columbia, based on both federal and provincial sources. Federal vital statistics suggest the extent of unmarried pregnancy, while Indian Affairs records reveal state perspectives (and sometimes, obliquely, Indigenous experiences). Provincial Child Welfare records allow some decoding of Indigenous experiences in BC, as do notes on interviews with reserve members conducted for the BC Indian Research Project—the (first) Hawthorn Report, 1955. Social scientists like Hawthorn—in effect settler scholars, as am I—focused largely on three regions: the Lower Mainland (in and around Vancouver), the southern interior (in and around Kamloops), and Vancouver Island—all within easy reach of academic bases in Vancouver and Victoria. Their values, outlook and proclivities shape this article, as do my own, and I state my position as settler scholar here openly. Indeed, social locations shape awareness, sensitivities, and quite often the extent of one's insight. I offer this work in the spirit of what Paulette Regan calls “ethical witness,”⁴ and as only one (limited) view of this subject, one which others may well revise.

The historian's view is often dim and always partial; thus, to broaden the view, this article also draws on examples outside of B.C., but not to imply any homogeneity of Indigenous experience. First Nations communities across Canada (and within British Columbia) showed great diversity in language, kinship patterns, cultural practices, and histories. The common thread running through these experiences was the colonial state that governed and controlled reserve communities. That state saw status Indians, individually, as childlike wards and, collectively, as a cultural problem to be solved. Agents of that state—loosely defined—did not always share identical viewpoints, and their locations, personalities, and professions affected their approaches. They did, however, share the power to define what constituted a problem and, too often, to limit possible solutions. An exploration of unmarried pregnancy in the Indigenous context thus also offers a window onto the workings of colonialism in this period.

Provinces played colonizing roles too, and British Columbia offered a distinct context in which to do so. First, unlike in most of Canada (excluding Quebec and Newfoundland), the state acquired most land without signing official treaties. Arguing that BC First Nations were fishers more than farmers, the province rationalized the creation of reserves much smaller than those in the prairie provinces and in neighbouring Washington state, as historical geographer, Cole Harris, has skilfully shown.⁵ Making matters worse, the state later shrank these

3 Sharon Wall, “They're ‘More Children than Adults’: Teens, Unmarried Pregnancy and the Canadian Medical Profession, 1945-61,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* vol. 31, no. 2 (2014), pp. 49-69.

4 On bearing “ethical witness,” see Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

5 The BC state allotted roughly 20 acres of land per family. Meanwhile prairie treaties allotted 160 to 640 acres per family. See Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), p. xvi.

reserves, sometimes exchanging relatively good land for poorer. BC First Nations were never acquiescent in these changes (as Paul Tennant reveals); nonetheless they left them in a precarious situation regarding land. This situation—and the lack of treaties to clarify Aboriginal rights no doubt shaped options as communities dealt with unmarried pregnancies. On the other hand, in the late 1940s and the 1950s, it was still less than sixty years since the time when Indigenous peoples had formed the majority of the province's population. Although contact with Europeans in parts of the province (Vancouver Island in particular) dated back to the late eighteenth century, this shorter history of white demographic and cultural dominance (certainly as compared with regions from Ontario eastward) may also have shaped the outlook and choices of First Nations communities.⁶

“An increasing degree of moral laxity”: Indian Affairs and the Construction of the Problem

Much of the literature on unmarried pregnancy has centred on the maternity home, the institutional embodiment of prevailing attitudes in many settler communities. Studies by historians Andrée Lévesque, Marie-Aimée Cliché, Regina G. Kunzel, Ricki Solinger, and others highlight social and sexual conservatism, family rejection, secrecy, shame, and the resultant need to hide girls from public view. Collectively, these studies recount how, first, religious-minded workers subjected residents to generally punitive treatment and, latterly, increasingly professionalized staff assessed their problems through the psychologizing gaze of modern social work. Findings also indicate that, in contrast to earlier decades, after 1945 non-Indigenous girls and women were under great pressure to relinquish infants for adoption.⁷

Partly due to its focus on the maternity home, this scholarship has yet to explore Indigenous experiences, certainly for the decades before the notorious Sixties Scoop (which saw many white families adopt and foster Indigenous children across the country).⁸ Margaret Jacobs's U.S. study stands as one exception. She finds that, already in the 1920s and 1930s, Indigenous women who became pregnant while working as domestic servants in San Francisco often spent time at the local Salvation Army maternity home, where workers frequently

6 Paul Tennant, “Native Indian Political Organization in British Columbia, 1900-1969: A Response to Internal Colonialism,” *BC Studies* no. 55 (fall 1982), pp. 3-49. On demographics, see Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.), Table 5, p. 429.

7 Andrée Lévesque, “Deviant Anonymity: Single Mothers at the Hôpital de la Miséricorde in Montreal, 1929-39,” *Historical Papers* (1984), pp. 168-184; Marie-Aimée Cliché, “Morale chrétienne et ‘double standard sexuel’: les filles-mères à l’Hôpital de la Miséricorde à Québec, 1874-1972,” *Histoire sociale/Social History* vol. 24, no. 47 (May 1991), pp. 85-125; Regina G. Kunzel, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993); Rickie Solinger, *Wake Up Little Suzie: Single Pregnancy and Race before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Routledge University Press, 1992). For more popular treatments, see Ann H. Fessler, *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades before Roe v. Wade* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); Anne Petrie, *Gone to an Aunt's: Remembering Canada's Homes for Unwed Mothers* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998).

8 Patrick Johnston, *Native Children and the Child Welfare System* (Toronto: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1983).

pressed them to relinquish infants. We see clear racial bias in this “diversion” of Indigenous women from mothering when, in the same period, workers were typically advising white women to keep offspring. While the present study points in different directions for Indigenous mothers, Jacobs’s assertion that the roots of the 1960s mass apprehensions lie earlier is not without validity north of the border. Certainly, residential schools had been “diverting” thousands of women from mothering for several generations.⁹

A handful of North American scholars look beyond the maternity home. In nineteenth-century English Canada and in post-1945 Nova Scotia, respectively, historians Peter Ward and Suzanne Morton suggest that family ties were the most significant resource for many women facing unwed pregnancy. Likewise, thanks to her careful attention to race, Solinger demonstrates that maternity homes were of minimal relevance for African-American women who were encouraged to keep and not relinquish babies. More relevant to some, as legal historian Lori Chambers shows, was provincial legislation allowing mothers’ to sue for paternal support (although outcomes were rarely satisfactory). Collectively, these works suggest more similarities between First Nations and non-Indigenous communities than my own work has yet revealed, especially vis-à-vis the importance of family. Perhaps future work will help clarify.¹⁰

Turning from the study of non-Indigenous experience to that of First Nations communities, we cannot ignore the role of the federal state and the Indian Act. Parliament passed the first act in 1876 and revised it periodically thereafter, as the blueprint to define, control, and eventually assimilate those it called Indians. Though offering a form of governance to reserve bands, it allowed for the imposition of federal Indian agents (later, “superintendents”) who effectively controlled the daily lives and livelihoods of reserve members. As historian Robin Jarvis Brownlie has shown, these agents regulated everything from members’ movements on and off reserve and their access to employment, to their sexual lives and marriage possibilities. Along with the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1857, the Indian Act also encouraged status Indians to work towards full citizenship (denied within the act itself), but only in exchange for the extinguishment of status. For women, the Indian Act had further, potentially life-changing implications. From its inception—and reversing generations of tradition among many matrilineal communities—the act defined women’s status by their relationship with men. Those with Indian fathers or with (legal) Indian husbands would merit Indian status. Conversely, and until its 1985 amendment, status Indian women who married any other than status Indian men lost Indian status and all its entitlements. Any children of such

9 Margaret D. Jacobs, “Diverted Mothering among American Indian Domestic Servants, 1920-1940,” in Carol Williams, ed., *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), pp. 179-192.

10 Peter Ward, “Unwed Motherhood in Nineteenth Century English Canada,” *Historical Papers* (1981), pp. 34-56; Suzanne Morton, “Nova Scotia and Its Unmarried Mothers, 1945-1975,” in Nancy Christie and Michael Gavreau, eds., *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1975* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), pp. 327-348; Lori Chambers, *Misconceptions: Unmarried Motherhood and the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act, 1921-1969* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

relationships likewise could claim no right to Indian status. Importantly for the issue here at hand, the state could also deny Indian status to children born outside legal marriage, excluding them from band membership, whoever their fathers. Clearly, this was one way to limit growth of the status-Indian population and, simultaneously, the state's financial responsibilities.¹¹

If the state tinkered with federal Indian policy after 1945, scholars find no deviation from the ultimate goal of assimilation. As historian John Milloy explains, on the ideological front, growing awareness of the Holocaust made overt discussion of racial superiority unacceptable and helped "soften" state attitudes towards Indigenous culture, "on paper at least."¹² The state sought to revamp the Indian Act to fit the new rhetoric of cultural tolerance and an emerging welfare state. Officially, the emphasis switched from assimilation to integration. For instance, the state began integrating First Nations kids into public schools and extending Family Allowance programs to their parents. The Indian Act of 1951 also dropped the long-standing ban on Indigenous cultural practices.¹³

As Milloy warns, however, we should not overemphasize the new direction of Indian policy. For example, while Canada's first Citizenship Act (1947) included Indians, it did not give them the right to vote.¹⁴ Likewise, the state facilitated the continuing development of natural resources that resulted in more regular incursion on reserve lands. Meanwhile it greeted the extraordinary growth of Indigenous populations not with pleasure, but alarm.¹⁵ Indeed, such growth intensified pressure on reserve lands and struck fear into a state obsessed with the possibility of ever-spiraling costs. No doubt partly in response to these pressures, revisions to the Indian Act heightened the impact of women's loss of status, as Indigenous-studies scholar Bonita Lawrence points out. While the issuing of so-called red tickets (informal identity cards) had at least allowed widows and deserted wives who lost status to continue receiving treaty monies and (in some cases) to live on reserve, from 1951 on, loss of status now entailed automatic enfranchisement as well. As Lawrence states: "This meant that [women] not only lost band membership, reserve residency, or any property they might have

11 Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Superintendents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), and also "Intimate Surveillance: Indian Affairs, Colonization, and the Regulation of Aboriginal Women's Sexuality," in Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), pp. 160-178; John Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism: A Century of Dishonour, 1869-1969," Research Paper for the National Centre for First Nations Governance, May 2008, http://fngovernance.org/ncfng_research/milloy.pdf <Jun 6, 2016>. On women's loss of Indian status see Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), pp. 45-63, citation p. 51; Lynn Gehl, "Indian Rights for Indian Babies: Canada's 'Unstated Paternity' Policy," *First Peoples Child & Family Review* vol. 8, no. 2 (2013), p. 62.

12 Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism."

13 Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism."

14 John F. Leslie, "Indigenous Suffrage," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/Indigenous-suffrage/> <March 3, 2016>.

15 Between 1941 and 1981 the Indigenous population across Canada increased by 205 % (against only 109% for the broader society). M.J. Norris, "Contemporary Demography of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," in D. A Long and O. P. Dickason, eds., *Visions of the Heart, Canadian Aboriginal Issues* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace 2000), pp. 179-237.

held on the reserve, but also access to any treaty monies or band assets.” The addition of new restrictions—one, the “double-mother” clause—further limited Indian status (for children of those who had gained it by marriage).¹⁶ The deeply gendered nature of the Indian Act would undoubtedly shape women’s thinking about their out-of-marriage pregnancies, and certainly about the relative benefits and drawbacks of marriage, as we see below.

From within this context of change and continuity, Indian Affairs staff brooded over the question of unmarried pregnancy in the early 1950s. Director Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. Jones noted in 1954 what he called the “alarming rate of illegitimacy of Indian births as compared with those of the non-Indian population.”¹⁷ Other officials in the field saw the same issue as “a serious trend on the reservations,” while yet others wondered “if Indian Affairs is giving sufficient consideration to this problem.”¹⁸ Federal vital statistics provided a quantitative point of comparison, at least for part of this period. Reflecting the state’s hyper-racialization of Indigenous peoples, it kept status Indians’ rates of so-called illegitimacy separate from the more global Canadian rates. Its numbers indicated a major discrepancy. As we see in Table I, between 1945 and 1951, Indian rates across the country ranged between roughly 17 and 20 %. Meanwhile, rates for the broader population hovered between only 3.8 and 4.5%.¹⁹

While the state saw cause for concern in many parts of the country, British Columbia again stood out. In fact, national averages for Indians hid even higher numbers in the western provinces, with the BC rate the highest in all but one year between 1945 and 1951. While rates in provinces from Ontario eastward were nowhere higher than the high teens, the further west one travelled, the higher the Indian rates. And, while easterly rates seemed to rise and fall, those in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia saw mainly steady increase (See Table 2 for British Columbia). By 1951, Saskatchewan Indian percentages were at just over 24, and those of Alberta and British Columbia both at over 26. In fact, both Tables 1 and 2 reveal that Indian rates were not only rising in this period, but had been on a steady increase since the 1920s. After 1951, it is harder to compare rates as federal *Vital Statistics* no longer made separate reference to Indians. In personal correspondence, however, Director Jones commented in 1954 that global Indian rates were still “close to 20%,” while social-welfare branch data for late 1950s BC shows that Indian numbers remained high.²⁰

16 The double-mother clause stipulated that at the age of 21, those who had both a mother and a paternal grandmother who had gained status by marriage would lose it. Lawrence, *Real Indians*, p. 53.

17 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, H. M. Jones to Berthe Fortin, May 19, 1954.

18 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, J. S. White to H. M. Jones, May 13, 1954; E.S. Jones to Indian Affairs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Jan. 23, 1956.

19 For “Canadian” rates, see Canada, Statistics Bureau, *Vital Statistics*, Table B8: “Illegitimate Births, Canada and Provinces, 1921-61” (Ottawa, 1962), p. 103. All Indigenous vital statistics from Canada, Statistics Bureau, *Vital Statistics*, Table B: “Legitimate and Illegitimate Births of Indians, (exclusive of stillbirths) in Canada, by provinces, by place of residence of mothers,” (Ottawa, 1946, p. 681; 1947, p. 689; 1948, p. 685; 1949, p. 683; 1950, p. 631; 1951, p. 409; 1952, p/ 413).

20 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, H. M. Jones to Shirley Arnold, May 19, 1954. The high point was 1957, with 535 BC illegitimate Indian births. In 1960/61 the figure fell slightly to 506. British Columbia, *Report of the Social Welfare Branch*, 1958, p. O-48; 1959, p. O-51; 1960, p. L-45; 1961, p. L-40.

Table 1: “Indian Illegitimacy,” Canada, 1926-51

Year	Total Indian Births	Illeg. Indian Births	%
1926	2622	225	8.6
1931	3459	368	10.6
1939	4696	598	12.7
1940	4964	607	12.3
1941	4983	644	12.9
1942	5365	728	13.6
1943	5458	771	14.1
1944	5567	899	16.1
1945	6495	1084	16.7
1946	6513	1119	17.2
1947	7193	1291	17.9
1948	7281	1366	18.8
1949	7553	1410	18.7
1950	7647	1498	19.6
1951	7910	1582	20.0

Source: Canada, Statistics Bureau, “Births of Indians (exclusive of stillbirths) classified as legitimate or illegitimate, by province,” *Vital Statistics* (Ottawa, 1927, 465; 1932, 399; 1940, 411; 1941, 409; 1942, 463; 1943, 471; 1944, 467; 1945, 701; 1946, 681; 1947, 689; 1948, 685; 1949, 683; 1950, 631; 1951, 409; 1952, 413). Percentages tabulated by author.

It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that the state asked anthropologist Harry Hawthorn to use BC as his test case in measuring the postwar “progress” of Canada’s Indigenous peoples.²¹ As historian Adele Perry has shown, British Columbia, from its inception as a settler colony, was “on the map” for national observers concerned about its “wild and woolly” nature, in terms of its scarcity of (white) women and its overwhelmingly Indigenous population.²² Into the

21 Byron King Plant, “‘A Relationship and Interchange of Experience’: H. B. Hawthorn, Indian Affairs, and the 1955 Indian Research Project,” *BC Studies* vol. 163 (autumn 2009), pp. 5-31.

22 Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871*

Table 2: “Indian Illegitimacy,” B.C., 1926-51

Year	Total Indian Births	Illeg. Indian Births	%
1926	473	37	7.8
1931	553	47	8.5
1939	882	109	12.4
1940	949	119	12.5
1941	896	143	16.0
1942	1020	153	15.0
1943	1136	194	17.1
1944	1202	271	22.5
1945	1231	274	22.3
1946	1313	304	23.2
1947	1380	319	23.1
1948	1342	357	26.6
1949	1411	358	25.4
1950	1400	398	28.4
1951	1430	378	26.4

Source: Canada, Statistics Bureau, “Births of Indians (exclusive of stillbirths) classified as legitimate or illegitimate, by province,” *Vital Statistics* (Ottawa, 1927, 465; 1932, 399; 1940, 411; 1941, 409; 1942, 463; 1943, 471; 1944, 467; 1945, 701; 1946, 681; 1947, 689; 1948, 685; 1949, 683; 1950, 631; 1951, 409; 1952, 413). Percentages tabulated by author.

later nineteenth century, problems in the west largely spurred the state to support residential schooling, which removed children from reserve families and assimilated them in institutions far from home.²³ Even into the late 1950s, though only one of 10 provinces, British Columbia contained 20 % of Canada’s status

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

²³ Nicholas Flood Davin, “Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-breeds” (Ottawa: s.n., 1879); J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

Indians, nearly 2.5% of its total population.²⁴ With rates of birth outside marriage among status Indians close to 30%, the perception of the province as an ongoing problem area persisted after 1945.

Statistics, of course, are notoriously malleable, even highly unreliable, especially as indicators of a phenomenon such as unmarried pregnancy that so many sought to hide. Vis-à-vis status Indians the state was perhaps measuring only the increasing extent of its own bureaucratic reach. Branch files do reveal a concerted campaign during these years to collect fuller and more accurate birth records.²⁵ Viewing the comparison from the non-Indigenous side, rates of *illegitimacy* (recorded, of course, only at birth) did not necessarily reflect a low rate of premarital *pregnancy*; in those communities shot-gun marriages were likely more common as a way of hiding sexual “mistakes,” a tactic that would have effectively lowered official rates. Still, whatever the truth, like the slippery notion of race itself, these statistics had consequences for the people about whom they were collected.

Also of consequence in this period was the state’s tendency to turn increasingly to the social sciences for guidance. As in the past, Indian Affairs was aware that assimilationist policies were not having the desired results; claiming a new pathway forward might well improve its own public image. New hope appeared in the form of academic experts and the burgeoning field of social sciences. The state asked these modern-era “explorers and missionaries,” as social work scholar Hugh Shewell notes, to lead the massive, federally-funded Indian History Project, which promised to legitimize branch initiatives with “official knowledge.”²⁶ The addition of social workers to the staff rosters of Indian Affairs offered another clear example of the turn to social science.

While officials made much of the new direction of Indian policy and the break with moralistic and religious approaches, official rhetoric was again highly misleading. Ottawa intended its nesting of Indian Affairs within the new Department of Citizenship and Immigration to imply that it would treat status Indians as equals with immigrants, although this turned out to be hardly a blessing, as scholars have shown.²⁷ Ultimately, revamping the Indian Act did not end paternalism.²⁸ As for outside advice, the branch refused to implement Hawthorn and his colleagues’ most progressive recommendations; it was also sometimes at odds with its own

24 Only Ontario claimed larger Indigenous populations, but these made up less than one per cent of its total population. Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, *Report of the Indian Affairs Branch*, “Table 1: Indian Population,” 1958, p. 89. <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Census/2011Census/PopulationHousing/BCCanada.aspx>; <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-642-x/2010001/tbl/tbl0211-eng.htm> <May 6, 2015>.

25 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, N. W. Garrard to W. S. Arneil, Jan. 8, 1954.

26 King Plant, “Relationship of Interchange”; Hugh Shewell, “‘What Makes the Indian Tick?’: The Influence of Social Sciences on Canada’s Indian Policy, 1947-64,” *Social History/Histoire sociale* vol. 34, no. 67 (2001), p. 146.

27 See Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, “Making Aboriginal People ‘Immigrants Too’: A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s–1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 90, no. 3 (2009), pp. 427-461.

28 Mary Jane McCallum, “This Last Frontier: ‘Isolation’ and Aboriginal Health,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* vol. 22, no. 1 (2005), pp. 103-120; Bohaker and Iacovetta, “Making Aboriginal People ‘Immigrants Too.’”

new social workers. Overall, as Shewell argues, the branch remained insular and isolated; even other public servants saw it as ‘an anachronism.’²⁹

Further evidence of the weak break with moralism comes in the title of the files that undergird part of this study: “Immorality on Reserves.”³⁰ That rubric apparently included not only (the relatively rare) cases of incest and rape, but also common-law relationships and children born outside legal marriage. Recorded details and commentary show moral judgments and ideas of cultural backwardness still guiding thinking at Indian Affairs. In 1955 one Saskatchewan superintendent, apparently assured his meaning would be clear, spoke of “an increasing degree of moral laxity” among First Nations women.³¹ Saskatchewan’s Department of Social Work took a similar view. In 1956 a prominent worker was said to have stated: “An increasing number of Indian girls were having babies out of wedlock, and were refusing to take any responsibility for them afterwards.”³² As her thinking went, “disclaiming responsibility for her child is just leaving the girl free to repeat her offense.”³³ Certainly, social workers in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts used the term “recidivist”—interesting criminal language for perfectly legal behaviour—as a labeling term for those who experienced more than one unmarried pregnancy.³⁴ Still, Indian Affairs’ long history of regulating the sexuality of status Indian women sets this experience apart. If all women in modern, Western societies experienced a degree of sexual regulation, the racialization of Indigenous women by the colonizing state intensified the criticism and (often) very real control over Indigenous bodies, as the work of scholars has shown all too well.³⁵

If both the state’s moralizing and its collection of vital statistics cast Indigenous unwed pregnancy in a Euro-Canadian light, they also obscured the fact that many children the state considered illegitimate were born within unions reserve members deemed fully legitimate. Today we might call these “common law” marriages (and some people did at the time); some referred to them as “Indian marriages” or, in an earlier era, “marriage in the custom of the country.”³⁶ As historian Sarah Carter has argued, while the colonial state had long encouraged

29 Hugh Shewell, “‘Bitterness behind Every Smiling Face’: Community Development and Canada’s First Nations, 1954-1968,” *Canadian Historical Review* vol. 83, no. 1 (March 2002), pp. 58-84.

30 Joan Sangster partially explored these files in *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family, and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 181-84.

31 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, [R. F. Battle] to H. M. Jones, May 26, 1955.

32 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, E. S. Jones to Indian Affairs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Jan. 23, 1956.

33 E. S. Jones to Indian Affairs. .

34 For example, Helen Dalrymple McCrae, “Recidivism in Unmarried Mothers: Problems of the Social Work Approach” (MSW thesis, University of British Columbia, 1949). Historians also note this tendency. See note 7 above.

35 Jean Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900,” *BC Studies* no. 115/116 (autumn/winter 1997), pp. 237-266; Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye*; Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2008).

36 Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

legal, state-sanctioned marriages, it had also seemed quiet willing to accept these Indian marriages, especially if they were monogamous and lifelong.³⁷

My research reveals that extra-legal forms of marriage continued after 1945 and were home to untold numbers of children. Take the case of a middle-aged Gitksan woman in Hazelton to whom Hawthorn attributed seven illegitimate children ranging in age from 2 to 24, or that of a Nuu-chah-nulth woman on Vancouver Island with five such children.³⁸ More broadly, anthropologist Claudia Lewis found almost half her Vancouver Island sample had lived in common-law unions, while almost 30% of Hawthorn's sample involved cases where fathers of so-called illegitimates were living with the mother and children.³⁹ The fact that the postwar branch worked to orchestrate the marriage of a 60-year-old Bella Coola woman to her common-law partner (of 28 years!) and the "legitimation" of her five children, well into their 20s and 30s, reveals that both common-law unions and state pressure to marry were continuing realities.⁴⁰

If common-law marriage persisted, the state's willingness to accept it - in the legal sense - did not. With a stroke of the legalistic pen, the state recast likely thousands of reserve children living with two cohabiting parents as illegitimate. Officials then sought to explain the illegitimacy and immorality that, in large part, they themselves had constructed. This is not to say there were no reserve children born outside of cohabiting partnerships (of whatever sort), but the state made accurate quantification difficult by blending together situations that Indigenous people understood and experienced as distinct.

Strikingly, officials tended to regard Indigenous common-law marriage and other issues not as matters of individual choice, but rather as indicators of collective cultural depravity. According to Director Jones, the state needed to find "a means whereby the responsibility of parenthood may be more forcibly brought to the attention of the Indians,"⁴¹ referring presumably not just to unmarried mothers, but to entire reserve communities. (Historian Mary Jane McCallum finds the same patronizing emphasis on "taking responsibility" in the case of the state's handling of Indigenous health.)⁴² Likewise, in contrast to professional treatment of many white women and girls, whose behaviour was endlessly individualized and psychologized,⁴³ Indian Affairs' treatment of reserve women suggested it saw Indigenous unmarried pregnancies as reflecting again the backwardness of seemingly less evolved cultures.

At least some social workers showed similar lack of interest in the individual circumstances and psychologies of Indigenous women and girls, a surprising stance for a discipline that typically touted the wonders of casework. According to

37 Carter, *Being Monogamous*, 232-237.

38 University of British Columbia Archives (hereafter UBCA), Harry Hawthorn Papers (hereafter HHP), box 28-22, file: "Illegitimacy tables," "Illegitimacy by Numbers, Age, Residence, etc.: Hazelton; Ucluelet."

39 Claudia Lewis, *Indian Families of the Northwest Coast: The Impact of Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 129; UBCA, HHP, box 28-22, file: "Illegitimacy tables."

40 UBCA, HHP, box 28-22, file: "Illegitimacy tables," "Illegitimacy by Numbers, Age, Residence, etc.: Bella Colla."

41 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, H. M. Jones to J. S. White, May 21, 1954.

42 McCallum, "This Last Frontier."

43 See Solinger, *Wake Up Little Suzie*, chap. 3; Kunzel, *Fallen Women*, chap. 6.

Patricia Massey's 1961 critique, Vancouver social workers were failing to apply normal casework practices to Indigenous girls and women:

This case history, and many others like it, confirms that the service given to Indians by social agencies is sometimes not casework. The record of this Indian girl shows that few facts were ever gathered about her, about her past, and those who had been an influence in her life. There is little evidence to support that a diagnostic assessment of her personality and her problems was attempted; and a plan, made with her approval and cooperation, was notably lacking.⁴⁴

Once again, for Indigenous pregnancy, whole cultures, even the supposed race, appeared more at fault than particular individuals. While the psychologizing gaze was not necessarily beneficent, the notion that Indigenous girls' problems did not merit such individual attention still sprang from racist assumptions. A social worker accused of breaching the confidentiality of a northern BC woman in the Fort St John district in 1964 reportedly replied that she was "just an Indian."⁴⁵ On the other hand, if unlikely that social workers ever completely rid themselves of colonial assumptions, they were not all cut from the same cloth.⁴⁶ Massey, who wrote the critical thesis above, was herself a BC social worker and also clearly capable of self-criticism.

The persistent racialization of this issue also helps explain why the federal state virtually ignored the question of age, a contrast again with the treatment of non-Indigenous pregnancy. Indian Affairs bureaucrats were not unaware that teens—and sometimes even younger girls—were bearing children, but generally Indian Affairs' approach was not particularly age-conscious. It was at the provincial level that a BC child-welfare worker remarked in 1954, "Indian girls of younger years have given birth to children out of wedlock."⁴⁷ Likewise, it was the Vancouver Welfare Council that noted that teens were responsible for the largest share of illegitimate births among Indians.⁴⁸ Indian Affairs, I would argue, regarded unmarried pregnancy (at whatever age) as only one among many problems of immoral behaviour. Relating closely to it was the perceived problem of common-law marriage, whose prevalence I have noted above. Since not just teens, but women of all ages, were continuing to have children outside legal marriage, age was less likely to stand out as a causal factor. Ultimately,

44 Patricia Graham Massey, "Foster Home Planning for the Indian Child: A Casework Study of Foster Children, Parents, Foster Parents, and Agency Service, Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, 1959-61" (MSW thesis, University of British Columbia, 1962), p. 45.

45 British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), GR-888, box 11, file 16, "Memorandum from the Children's Aid Society of the Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver to Miss Mary K. King," April 7, 1964.

46 Megan Davies, "Welfare Amazons or Handmaidens of the State? Welfare Field Workers in Rural British Columbia," and Marilyn Callahan, "Beyond Stereotypes of Old Maids and Grand Dames: Women as Insurgents in Child Welfare in British Columbia," both in Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley, eds., *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History* (Calgary: Detselig, 2005), pp. 195-233 and 235-258; Marilyn Callahan and Christopher Walmsley, "Rethinking Child Welfare Reform in British Columbia, 1900-60," in Lesley T. Foster and Brian Wharf, eds., *People, Politics and Child Welfare in B.C.* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), pp. 10-33.

47 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, R.I. Murray to Child Welfare Division, Sept. 27, 1956.

48 Welfare Council, "Illegitimacy Increases."

problematizing youthful premarital pregnancy presupposed eventual marriage. By contrast, a visible minority of reserve members remained indifferent to legal marriage.

If teen pregnancy was not the state's sole problem, unmarried pregnancy remained, and state actors put forward various solutions. Some advocated increased coercion. In a (perhaps extreme) case where prostitution was thought to be a factor, one Nova Scotia superintendent called for the incarceration of an entire family in "corrective institutions" when he found several of their daughters "once again in the family way."⁴⁹ This case mirrors Chambers's finding that Indigenous unwed mothers were more likely to be institutionalized than others.⁵⁰ In different settings, others echoed the call for coercive approaches. Less to prevent pregnancies than to deal with their results, for instance, some suggested enlisting the aid of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in securing declarations of paternity, although officials admitted this might not be possible.⁵¹ However, if some officials called for strong-arm solutions, the broader consensus was that prevention was more desirable than coercive measures after the fact. Unfortunately, these preventive solutions were often vague restatements of existing branch policies, especially, of the educational (read assimilationist) approach. Staff members considered formal schooling, "healthy recreational outlets," and church influence as key to "stable home life"; presumably, these would also encourage conservative sexual behaviour.⁵² To note: social workers dealing with non-Indigenous girls regarded these same activities as key to healthy families. As scholars have argued, there could be overlaps in treatment of Indigenous peoples and other so-called problematic populations.⁵³ The proposal that all-female Homemakers clubs on the reserves hold "open forums" on this subject perhaps suggests another parallel, namely, that experts in many settings considered sexual gatekeeping to reduce pregnancies as a female responsibility.⁵⁴

One solution proposed uniquely for Indigenous communities was increased urbanization. As urban geographer Evelyn Peters has shown, in these early years, increasing (if small) numbers of reserve residents were settling in Canadian cities. The federal Placement and Relocation program of 1957 encouraged the trend, especially among Indigenous youth. Director Jones praised those "Canadians of the Indian race who choose to leave the *protective confines* of their home reserve and *venture out* into the competitive world of their fellow Canadians."⁵⁵ Branch

49 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8507, file 50/18-16, Terrance W. Boone to F. B. MacKinnon, Nov. 15, 1956.

50 Chambers, *Misconceptions*.

51 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, H. M. Jones to R. F. Battle, June 7, 1955.

52 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, Margaret S. Payne to H. M. Jones, May 26, 1954.

53 Sangster, "Native Women, Sexuality," 170; Bohaker and Iacovetta, "Making Aboriginal People 'Immigrants Too.'"

54 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, H. M. Jones to Shirley Arnold, May 19, 1954. On girls as "gatekeepers," see Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 87-96. On more radical uses of the homemakers clubs, see Aroha Harris and Mary Jane Logan McCallum, "Assaulting the Ears of Government": The Work of the Maori Women's Welfare League and the Indian Homemakers' Clubs in the 1950s and 60s," in Carol Williams, ed., *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), pp. 225-239.

55 LAC, RG 10, vol. 9037, no file listed, part 3, Lt. Col. H. M. Jones, Director of Indian Affairs, Address given

social workers seemed to share Jones's heroic view of urbanization; one of them called for "measures to help young people become established in towns and cities," apparently to help address problems such as unmarried pregnancy.⁵⁶

And yet the city represented no straightforward solution to Indigenous challenges; to some eyes, it seemed to spawn new problems. Apparently mindful of this, social workers both encouraged integration, yet also feared its consequences, not unlike missionaries of an earlier era. Accordingly, as McCallum shows, the branch kept close tabs on the young women in its relocation program, social workers being especially invasive in policing women's heterosexual contacts. Partly due to the incidence of pregnancy in Vancouver, Children's Aid workers concluded the urban setting was simply not healthy for young, unmarried Indigenous women. "[T]he problems of rehabilitation with these girls is very great," their 1960 report stated. "[O]n the whole we have not thought that Vancouver was a good environment for such single girls away from friends and family."⁵⁷ Such portrayals were part of typical narratives that both McCallum and Sangster note cast Indigenous women as typically vulnerable and tragically unable to adapt to urban life without a great deal of state surveillance.⁵⁸

"He promised to marry her if anything like that happened": Situations Leading to Pregnancy and What to Do Next

As in other communities, a wide variety of relationships and experiences led to the Indigenous unwed pregnancies that so worried the state, although the majority likely involved Indigenous partners. No doubt many pregnancies occurred in common-law unions, as we saw above. Hawthorn's 1954 "Illegitimacy Tables" listed 55% of "Indian" fathers as living with the child's mother.⁵⁹ Other types of cases existed as well. Not unlike families of an earlier era, some North American bands allowed for sexual activity among youths before more formally partnering, and some attached no stigma to pregnancy, although they might then arrange unions.⁶⁰ Testimony in a 1953 paternity case of a young Okanagan woman indicated that her parents were well aware she shared a bed with a male partner under their roof. After a year, during which, reportedly, "she had not gone out

to the National Superintendents' Conference, Banff, Sept. 14, 1959, 13 (emphasis added).

56 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, M. S. Payne, Memorandum to "W," June 20, 1955; on urbanization, see Evelyn J. Peters, "'Our City Indians': Negotiating the Meaning of First Nations Urbanization in Canada, 1945-1975," *Historical Geography* vol. 30 (2002), pp. 75-92. On the federal placement program, see Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work and History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), pp. 66-119, and Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), pp. 218-228.

57 City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), Add. MSS 849, Series: Committee on the Canadian Indian in an Urban Community, 618-C-1, file 8, "Problems of Indians and Half-Breeds as Experienced by the Children's Aid society of Vancouver, B.C." March 17, 1960, p. 5.

58 John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, pp. 59-61, 85-97. South of the border on similar urban placements, as many as 25 per cent of domestic servants in Jacob's San Francisco study had become pregnant, apparently realizing the state's worst fears. Jacobs, "Diverted Mothering."

59 UBCA, HHP, box 28-22, file: "Illegitimacy tables."

60 John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 21-3; Carter, *Being Monogamous*, pp. 110, 114.

with any other men,” pregnancy resulted, although the man disappeared.⁶¹ If older customs were thus sometimes still in place, their consequences were not always clear. Finally, a minority of pregnancies were the outcome of abuse. In the case of a 14-year-old who made a false paternity statement, authorities discovered the girl was fearful of exposing sexual abuse by her brother.⁶² Hawthorn records described another such case where both brother and father abused one young girl.⁶³ There is no recorded discussion of these cases’ outcomes; we know social workers typically dealt poorly with situations of sexual abuse in this period.⁶⁴ Explaining such incidents is beyond challenging even in our own day, but scholars argue that colonialism exacerbated violence of many kinds, while fuelling the denigration of women and dysfunctional family relationships.⁶⁵ Other Hawthorn records refer to possibly coercive situations outside the family. For instance, field researchers on Vancouver Island marked the racial identity of one putative father with only a question mark, the phrase “‘accident’ at the berry fields” providing the only further explanation.⁶⁶

Relationships between Indigenous partners—consensual or otherwise—may have been most common, but those between reserve women and white men were increasing. Not surprising, postwar economic developments and greater freedom to leave the reserve led to increasing Indigenous–white contact. Domestic servants were prime examples of those with increased chance of white contact, as both Jacobs and McCallum suggest.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, as they approached these, Indigenous women were far less advantageously placed than earlier generations. In contrast to women who became cultural brokers by contracting unions with European furtraders,⁶⁸ women and (especially) girls now drew the state’s pity as the victims of unscrupulous white men. A 1935 public-health nurse in the BC interior confided that it “seemed so appalling” to find one “girl” pregnant by a white man (although it is unclear whether her age or his race most offended the observer).⁶⁹ Almost twenty years later, it equally troubled a Kamloops-area

61 BCA, GR-3131, box 14003, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, file re: defendant: [Name removed] (Indian, Okanagan Indian Reserve), March 27, 1953.

62 LAC, RG 10, vol. 11415, series B-3-f, file 984/18-16.

63 UBCA, HHP, box 15-12, File: “Alberni—Family,” “Alberni—Incest,” c. 1954.

64 Brian Wharf, “Social Work Education at UBC in the 1950s: A Student Perspective,” in Diane Purvey and Christopher Walmsley, eds., *Child and Family Welfare in British Columbia: A History* (Calgary: Detselig, 2005), p. 296.

65 Roslyn Ing demonstrates that residential schools harmed self-perception, communication, emotional expression, and family dynamics in ways that have affected generations. “Canada’s Indian Residential Schools and Their Impacts on Mothering,” in D. Meme Lavell-Harvard and Jeanette Corbiere Lavell, eds., *“Until our hearts are on the ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth* (Toronto: Demeter Press, 2006) pp. 157-172; Emma D. LaRocque, “Violence in Aboriginal Communities” (Ottawa: Health Canada, 1994), <http://publications.gc.ca/site/archivée-archived.html?url=http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H72-21-100-1994E.pdf> <July 4, 2016>

66 UBCA, HHP, box 15-12, file: “Alberni—Family,” “Alberni—How to Get a Husband.”

67 McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, pp. 51-61; Jacobs, “Diverted Mothering.”

68 On sexual relationships and Indigenous-white marriages in the fur-trade era see Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Brown, *Strangers in Blood*.

69 Rita M. Mahon, RN, “Inkameep Indian Reserve—Oliver District,” *Public Health Nurses Bulletin* vol. 2, no. 2 (April 1935), p. 13.

child-welfare supervisor to find that “two Indian girls ... have both had babies and named the same whiteman [sic] as the Putative Father.”⁷⁰ Some such fathers were already married, although men easily hid this fact.⁷¹ In the hot political context of the North American Red Power movement of the late 1960s and 70s, Indigenous activists would become highly critical of such connections. In *The Unjust Society*, Harold Cardinal insisted, “In too many areas Indian women are regarded by every passing stray white tomcat as easy prey.”⁷² While such critiques pointed to the very real objectification of Indigenous women, they also may have overlooked some more enduring relationships. Hawthorn, at least, found roughly 13% of Indigenous-white relationships in his sample to be quite lasting. In two cases, men were living with the women with whom they had children (possibly even on the reserve).⁷³

Finally, prostitution furnished another context in which pregnancies occurred and (sometimes) from within which women devised strategies to confront them. Branch files reveal that prostitution was, indeed, a source of income for some women.⁷⁴ Given the unique BC demographic mix, women found clients (and sometimes relationships) among not only white, but also Chinese men. In 1942 a teenaged “unmarried crippled girl” from the BC interior found herself pregnant by a Chinese man who made some attempt to support her. When such funds were not sufficient, however, according to police reports, “she ... made a little money prostituting herself with [the] Chinese.”⁷⁵

For women who sought to terminate pregnancy, abortion was apparently an option. According to one BC study, between 1955 and 1965 almost 12% of Indigenous maternal deaths (three of 26 cases) related to abortion. Although non-Indigenous women had a much lower maternal mortality rate overall, their abortion-related deaths were more than double that, at 28% (or 37 of 134 deaths).⁷⁶ It is hard to know for sure, but one wonders: did many fewer Indigenous women attempt abortions, or did their connection to traditional knowledge mean that the abortions they secured resulted less frequently in death?⁷⁷

For those who continued with pregnancies, the most pressing question was organizing care of the child, a process that only minimally involved the state. Given Indian Affairs’ negative view of Indigenous families and cultures, it is interesting the state rarely turned to foster care and adoption outside the reserve

70 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, Miss W. M. Urquhart, District Supervisor, to Ruby McKay, Nov. 25, 1954.

71 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, Miss W. R. Broderick to Miss M. Payne, Feb. 14, 1957.

72 Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishing Ltd, 1969), p. 77.

73 UBCA, HHP, box 28-22, file: “Illegitimacy tables.”

74 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8507, file 50/18-16, Terrance W. Boone to F B. MacKinnon, Nov. 15, 1956.

75 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, Sergt. J. W. Hooker, “Report: Re-Indian Women and ‘Children of Unmarried Parents’ Act,” Jan. 22, 1943. On nineteenth-century relationships, see Jean Barman, “Beyond Chinatown: Chinese Men and Indigenous Women in Early British Columbia,” *BC Studies* no. 177 (spring 2013), pp. 39-64.

76 W. D. S. Thomas, MD, “Maternal Mortality in Native British Columbia Indians, a High-Risk Group,” *Canadian Medical Association Journal* vol. 99, no. 2 (1968), pp. 65-67.

77 Jessica Yee of the Toronto Native Youth Sexual Health Network argues that traditional midwifery encompassed knowledge of pregnancy termination. “A Helping Hand, Far from Home, in a Time of Need,” *Toronto Star*, May 10, 2010. www.thestar.com/news/canada/2010/05/31/a_helping_hand_far_from_home_in_a_time_of_need.html <July 16, 2016>

in early years. As late as 1955 in British Columbia and across the country, less than 1% of children in state care were of Indigenous origin (although that number would balloon to over 30 % in the mid-1960s).⁷⁸ As Solinger found in African-American cases, interracial adoption was simply not favoured in 1950s' Canada. Infants available for adoption were typically relinquished by white, and not racialized, mothers and placed with white families.⁷⁹

Further complicating matters, provinces, which had no responsibility for status Indians, ran the child-welfare departments in charge of adoption and fostering. Accordingly, a Saskatchewan official could state in 1954, "we do not wish to take an Indian child into care."⁸⁰ Other provincial officials (and some Indian superintendents) complained about Indian women who did seek adoption, returning again to the mantra that women were evading "responsibility."⁸¹ Responding to this situation, the state considered how it might devolve some of the responsibility (and the burgeoning costs) of Indian welfare onto the provinces. Among its other changes, the amended Indian Act of 1951 urged provinces to extend their services to status Indians. Social workers also pushed for this change, although they framed the issue as one of ensuring equality with other citizens. Ultimately, it took years to get all provinces to sign on.⁸² For their part, BC child-welfare services were reluctant to involve themselves, owing to already heavy caseloads and inadequate budgets.⁸³ At least some social workers were also aware—if at a simplistic level—that they would need "special training to ... deal adequately with this different cultural group."⁸⁴

As Ottawa waited for provinces to take up the challenge, Indian Affairs began to offer its own inadequate and underfunded child-welfare services. As Indigenous studies scholar Jessa Chupik-Hall has shown, since the number of branch social workers was so abysmally low (some six to ten workers for roughly 150,000 people), untrained Indian superintendents carried out much of the work. Workers and agents then found homes for children largely within the reserve setting, a contrast with later practice. In fact, before the 1960s, not only did few white families take in Indigenous kids, interracial adoption sometimes worked "in reverse," as historian Allyson Stevenson shows. In one case, a status Indian family's adoption of a Metis child brought him Indian status.⁸⁵

78 Johnston, *Native Children*, p. 145.

79 Solinger, *Wake Up*. Patti Phillips, "Financially Irresponsible and Obviously Neurotic Need not Apply": Social Work, Parental Fitness, and the Production of Adoptive Families in Ontario, 1940-1965." *Histoire sociale/Social History* vol. 39, no 78 (Nov. 2006), pp. 329-361.

80 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, J. S. White to H. M. Jones, May 13, 1954.

81 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, [R. F. Battle] to H. M. Jones, May 26, 1955; E. S. Jones to Indian Affairs, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, Jan. 23, 1956.

82 Jessa Chupik-Hall, "Good Families Do Not Just Happen: Indigenous People and Child Welfare Services in Canada, 1950-1965: (MA thesis, Trent University, 2001), pp. 34-38.

83 Callahan and Walmsley, "Rethinking," p. 25.

84 BCA, GR-883, box 9, file 11, H. E. Blanchard, Paper given to the Sectional Meeting on Health and Welfare Services for the Native Indian, at the Second Biennial Western Regional Social Work Convention, Victoria, May 5, 1949; Milloy, "Indian Act Colonialism"; Shewell, "Bitterness."

85 Chupik-Hall, "Good Families"; Allyson Stevenson, "The Adoption of Frances T: Blood, Belonging, and Aboriginal Transracial Adoption in Twentieth-Century Canada," *Canadian Journal of History* vol. 50, no. 3 (2015), pp. 469-491.

If apprehension of Indigenous children was not yet the state's preferred practice, cases did occur, as Jacobs found in San Francisco. Social worker Patricia Massey documented the details in her thesis, "Foster Home Planning for the Indian Child," based on 43 Children's Aid cases in late 1950s Vancouver. In her view, mothers of children who came into care were among the most marginalized of their communities, individuals having "neither place nor purpose in life."⁸⁶ These included "unmarried juveniles," sex workers, and women with serious medical problems. Frequently, officials seized the children of the youngest mothers at birth and took others as mothers proved unable to cope. Department records reveal that some girls and their families did attempt to raise children, but could not always afford to do so.

Very young mothers of babies who were apprehended at birth may well have been those who ended up in maternity homes, although institutional records suggest such cases were rare. Administrators at the Burnaby, BC, home regularly included "native Indian" as a descriptor of certain residents of the home, but, in truth, numbers were low. Together with another Vancouver home, they counted 16 "Indian or part-Indian" residents in 1959, clearly very few for the incidence of B.C.'s Indigenous out-of-marriage births.⁸⁷ There is evidence that Indian Affairs sent some of these girls, in one case directly from residential school. This seemingly minimal use of the maternity home contrasts with Jacobs's findings for urban domestic servants, but suggests that the girls most likely to end up in the homes, in both countries, were those living farthest from the reserves.⁸⁸

Turning to women who chose to keep and raise children, one might wonder about their options for economic survival. First, surviving on their own—outside of family or state assistance—was not too likely, as Indigenous women's employment options suggest. Historian John Lutz shows that cannery work—since the late nineteenth century one of the main wage options for BC reserve women—was rapidly disappearing, as refrigeration made possible the relocation of processing plants to large urban centres far from (most) reserves. Where, in other provinces, agricultural work—harvesting sugarbeets in Manitoba, picking corn and berries in Ontario—offered at least some seasonal income for women, mechanization was reducing labour needs for at least one of the main BC options—hop-picking. Across the country, Indian Affairs promoted the new federal Placement and Relocation program as providing new work opportunities (mainly for domestics, hairdressers, and other service workers). However, despite bubbly state rhetoric, historians Joan Sangster and Mary Jane Logan McCallum come to similar conclusions: this work targeted only young, single women willing

⁸⁶ Massey, "Foster Home Planning," 22.

⁸⁷ CVA, Add. MSS 849, Series: Committee on the Canadian Indian in an Urban Community, 618-C-1, file 8, C.A.S. of Vancouver, Response to Interview Questionnaire: "Exploratory Survey for the Study of the Canadian Indian in an Urban Community," c. 1961, p. 2. Five Toronto homes had even lower numbers; a mere .8 per cent over a six-month period. Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Survey Committee, "A Report on Maternity Homes in Metropolitan Toronto" (Toronto, 1960), p. 12.

⁸⁸ United Church of Canada, BC Conference Archives, United Church (Burnaby) Home for Girls, Monthly Reports of the Superintendent, box 1477, file 12, Muriel C. Richardson, "October Report to the Board of Control" [1954].

to move off reserve, was generally low-paid, and absorbed very few individuals overall. While Brownlie shows that in southern Ontario urban work—in domestic, clerical, and government employment—did bring some single women a level of independence even before the federal program was in place, for the unmarried mother, childcare remained a problem. Further, and perhaps more to the point, employers and governments' obsession with character effectively excluded such women from the program. These combined realities may well explain why women and girls were unlikely to become what today we might call "single mothers."⁸⁹

The limits of other state programs also weighed against the likelihood of young women making it on their own. Since 1927 the Indian Act had ensured that the federal state would not be responsible for the care of illegitimate children.⁹⁰ Brownlie's Ontario work suggests enfranchisement might have offered a more indirect pathway to aid, one which, in exchange for relinquishment of Indian status, could bring substantial lump-sum payments. While open only to unmarried women, the process also demanded that applicants prove their moral worthiness on settler terms, a near impossible task in this case. It also required that they forfeit their right to live on reserve, the likely source of assistance with childcare.⁹¹ At the provincial level, another option for aid remained. In fact, BC was the first province to enforce a Children of Unmarried Parents Act (CUPA) in 1920, which empowered women to name fathers and to launch paternity suits in the aim of securing financial assistance.⁹² Status Indian women, however, would find there were distinct repercussions, depending on which type of father they named. Again, the Indian Act dictated that the state would not recognize children of non-Indian fathers as Indian, whoever their mothers. These women, then, could name non-Indian fathers and try to win support but, according to law, by doing so were sure to lose Indian status for their child. The fact that the majority of all CUPA cases ended in men denying paternity or failing to make payments rendered the process even less attractive. As the director of Indian Affairs admitted in 1955, "it is to be expected that in only a small percentage of cases would we manage to secure an acknowledgement of paternity."⁹³

Clearly laws around proving paternity were generally weak, yet some women still chose to use them. Indian superintendents compiled lists of cases, along with signed affidavits, in the "immorality files"—proof that some women did choose the legal route, in cases of both white and status-Indian fathers. At times parents of young women might instigate the process. "My daughter is in trouble," wrote an Ontario woman to her superintendent. "She is pregnant and she says its [name omitted] he promised to marry her if anything like that happened and he refuses

89 John Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), pp. 163-231; McCallum, *Indigenous Women*; Sangster, *Transforming Labour*; Robin Jarvis Brownlie, "Living the Same as the White People: Mohawk and Anishinabe Women's Labour in Southern Ontario, 1920-1940," *Labour/Le Travail* vol. 61 (spring 2008), pp. 41-68.

90 L. Gilbert, *Entitlement to Indian Status and Membership Codes in Canada* (Scarborough, Ont.: Carswell Thomson Canada Ltd., 1996), as cited in Gehl, "Indian Rights," p. 62.

91 Brownlie, "Living the Same as the White People."

92 The same would become possible in other provinces thereafter. Chambers, *Misconceptions*, pp. 33-56.

93 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, H. M. Jones to R. F. Battle, June 7, 1955.

since he found out his [sic] been going out with another girl ... Please help me with the law.”⁹⁴ As Chambers’ work shows, the real rub may well have come after settlements were signed, when men so frequently failed to pay up. A case in point: after signing an admission of paternity, one white man was later impossible to locate, and the superintendent noted him as being “apparently ... in trouble with the police.”⁹⁵ Likewise, a (Chinese) father in BC agreed to pay nine dollars per week in 1960, but a year and a half later he had not made a single payment.⁹⁶

With legal solutions minimally effective, many women didn’t bother to use them. The BC superintendent of child welfare admitted that, in reserve communities, “agreements made under the Children of Unmarried Parents Act are few.”⁹⁷ One superintendent offered that bands simply didn’t need the law. Instead, informal agreements were reached “to the mutual satisfaction of all parties ... without recourse to the courts.”⁹⁸ Less positive, there were real risks in coming forward and being officially recognized as pregnant and unmarried. One might end up being labelled delinquent and institutionalized. One might also be sterilized; as gender studies scholar Karen Stote demonstrates, in both Alberta and British Columbia Aboriginal women were overrepresented in cases of legal sterilization, while doctors also sterilized them without seeking legal approbation.⁹⁹ Thus turning to the law might be not only unhelpful, it could be downright harmful for unmarried mothers.

If the state generally managed to avoid supplying concrete aid, there are also examples that defy this general rule. As Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci once argued, states are not monoliths; they consist of multiple actors, whose aims may conflict.¹⁰⁰ It was indeed in defiance of official policy that superintendents sometimes did accept children of unmarried mothers into the band; indeed, Barman’s work shows earlier cases of those without status sometimes “slipping into the band.”¹⁰¹ In 1954, one branch official explained quite openly, “Up to this point our policy has been to include all illegitimate children as Band members unless we have been successful in securing a statutory declaration from a non-Indian father admitting paternity.”¹⁰² To be clear, even where women named white fathers, if they denied paternity, officials admitted, “invariably such children ... end up ... being declared of Indian status.”¹⁰³ It is unclear why such discrepancies between official policy and practice existed; this *modus operandi* was even more

94 LAC, RG 10, vol. 11346, file 18/16, undated letter.

95 LAC, RG 10, vol. 10353, file 577/3-3-13, part 1, J. H. Staunton to R. S. Davis, May 12, 1955.

96 BCA, GR-3131, box 14003, City Prosecutor to Gilbert Kennedy, Deputy Attorney-General, Sept. 30, 1961.

97 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, Ruby McKay to C. W. Lundy, Aug. 19, 1946.

98 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, J. P. B. Ostrander to R. F. Battle, March 5, 1956.

99 Joan Sangster, “Incarcerating ‘Bad Girls’: The Regulation of Sexuality through the Female Refuges Act in Ontario, 1920-1945,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 7, no. 2 (Oct. 1996), pp. 239-275; Sangster, “Native Women, Sexuality”; Karen Ann Stote, “The Coercive Sterilization of Aboriginal Women,” *American Indian Culture & Research Journal* vol. 36, no. 3 (2012), pp. 117-150.

100 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971).

101 On non-status, mixed-race men (of white fathers) sometimes marrying into First Nations and settling on reserves, see Barman, *West beyond the West*, 183.

102 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, L. L. Brown to J. P. B. Ostrander, July 6, 1954.

103 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, [R. F. Battle] to H. M. Jones, May 26, 1955.

generous than would be the case after late-twentieth-century revisions of the Indian Act.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps certain superintendents empathized with women and their children. Perhaps some governed reserves where population pressure was not yet too great. Perhaps numerous children without support would have complicated their management of reserves. Whatever the case, for Indigenous mothers, there was little benefit in naming white fathers and much to gain by either naming Indian fathers or leaving children's origins a mystery. Not surprising then that social workers sometimes noted that the "girl and her family are unconcerned about taking [legal] action."¹⁰⁵

Did Practical Aid Mean Unmitigated Acceptance? Responses of Family and Community

Whether women and girls sought legal, informal, or no agreements at all, most, it seems, dealt with their pregnancies, quite simply, by staying put. Indeed, all kinds of evidence—from British Columbia and other provinces—shows that women tended to remain on the reserve to care for their infants, typically with the help of female kin. Of 70 cases in Hawthorn's BC records, almost three-quarters kept their babies. Of the minority of kids listed as adopted, 60% were living with close relatives (in ten cases, the child's grandparents, in one, a great-aunt). In only five cases (or less than 10%) were children's circumstances "unknown"; presumably they lived off reserve. Data from all available cases in the "immorality files" of Indian Affairs reveal similar patterns, while Quebec researcher, Philip Bock, observed the same trend: "If the unwed mother is young, the usual pattern is for her and the child to remain with her parents."¹⁰⁶

Even for difficult teens who tried the patience of reserve members, community help was often available as one 1956 case suggests. Alma (as we'll call her), 14, was from a small Kwakwaka'wakw community of northern Vancouver Island. Sadly, her difficult childhood was not atypical of these years. Motherless since a year old, she quite possibly spent time at the nearby residential school at Alert Bay. At 14, she had moved in with her grandmother, who unfortunately soon died, but not before Alma had become pregnant. Child-welfare records described Alma as already sexually active "with several Indian boys" and as known for "her cruelty to other children and to the older Indian women" (another possible indicator of residential-school experience).¹⁰⁷ A fostering home on the reserve was secured; in fact, just five months later, difficult Alma had moved between four reserve homes. Although at one point welfare workers concluded the village "d[id] not

104 Activists are still fighting the impact of Bill C-31 (1985), which while ending the repeal of women's Indian status on marriage to non-Indians, still denies Indian status to children of unknown paternity. Gehl, "Indian Rights," p. 62.

105 BCA, GR888, box 11, file 23, Miss W. M. Urquhart, District Supervisor, to Ruby McKay, Nov. 25, 1954.

106 Adoptions in this Quebec sample involved "childless couples on the Reserve" or "Indian couples at other reserves." Philip K. Bock, "Patterns of Illegitimacy on a Canadian Indian Reserve: 1860-1960," *Journal of Marriage and Family* vol. 26, no. 2 (May 1964), p. 144.

107 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, R. I. Murray to Child Welfare Division, Sept. 27, 1956.; Amy Bombay et al., "Origins of Lateral Violence in Aboriginal Communities: A Preliminary Study of Student-to-Student Abuse in Residential Schools," Report for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2014. <http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/lateral-violence-english.pdf> <July 16, 2016>

particularly want [her] back,”¹⁰⁸ members apparently “completely changed their minds” when she threatened to commit suicide if her baby were apprehended.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, both Alma and baby remained on the reserve. The field worker posed a final rhetorical question: “As a matter of interest, if we apprehended [Alma] and her child, what would we have done with them?” pointing up again the challenge of finding—or disinclination to seek—foster homes outside the reserve.

As this case shows, kin and community members became significant caregivers in situations of need. Tellingly, some North American bands apply the words “mother” and “father” not only to biological parents, but also to maternal “aunties,” paternal uncles, and even more distant relations.¹¹⁰ The comments of a doctor who interacted with a Bella Coola band along the BC north coast reveal that grandparents frequently came to girls’ aid. “Dr. [X] said that no baby lacks a good home or loving care in the village,” interview notes related. “In the case of illegits [sic], he said: ‘the child always finds a real welcome in the mother’s parents [sic] home. The grandparents take the baby right to their hearts.’”¹¹¹ Others observed that grandparents’ roles were often more than temporary. According to Bock, even when girls married, they at times left their offspring with parents, creating “skipped-generation families.”¹¹² In fact, in her Vancouver Island research, Lewis found grandparents frequently stepped in when illness or drinking caused family breakdown. In her view, children being raised by grandparents would not have stood out on the reserve.¹¹³

The observations of these reserve outsiders find support in Indigenous (and other) scholarship, which shows that Indigenous children in many times and places have grown up within a wide circle of care. As Native-studies scholar Marlene Brant Castellano states, “The extended family distributed responsibilities for care and nurture of its members over a large network of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.” Some scholars have usefully qualified the generalization regarding relatives, noting that it was usually female kin—primarily grandmothers and secondarily aunties—who provided the care. Beatrice Marie Anderson, a Nlakapmux social worker (and a grandmother), reveals that in her own BC-interior community, twentieth-century grandmothers played (and are playing) vital roles not only in caring for infants, but in sharing traditional knowledge and leisure time with grandchildren throughout their childhoods. Clearly, though postwar child-welfare workers may have regarded young mothers as neglectful for leaving offspring with grandparents, this was a long-standing family strategy in many bands, one still vital today.¹¹⁴

108 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, R. I. Murray to Child Welfare Division, Sept. 27, 1956.

109 BCA, GR-888, box 11, file 23, R. I. Murray to Child Welfare Division, Oct. 11, 1956.

110 Mary C. Marino, “Aboriginals: Siouans,” in Paul Magosci, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1999), p. 96, cited in Veronica Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation? Canada Confronts Its History of Childhood Disadvantage* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), p. 19.

111 UBCA, HHP, box 16-10, file: “Bella Coola—Family,” “Adoption,” Aug. 26, [1954].

112 Bock, “Patterns of Illegitimacy”; Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation*, p. 22.

113 Lewis, *Indian Families*, p. 139.

114 Marlene Brant Castellano, “Extended Families, Nuclear Families, Families of the Heart,” Vanier Institute of the Family, 2002 urbancentre.utoronto.ca/pdfs/elibrary/VIFAboriginal.pdf <September 15, 2017>.

The tendency for children to receive care within reserve communities also continues a longer history of Indigenous openness to absorbing children. Historically, the impact of disease and war often made such absorptions demographically necessary.¹¹⁵ In the twentieth century, these custom (“customary,” “traditional,” or “informal”) adoptions resulted more from the needs of children and families, but the circle of care could similarly extend beyond blood relations. As historian Allyson Stevenson notes, this form of adoption has worked, “to enlarge families, to care for orphaned children and to incorporate members from outside the community.”¹¹⁶ The work and personal experience of social-work scholar Daren Keewatin also reveals that children have frequently moved among families (and sometimes non-family community members) in search of the best arrangement for both child and parents.¹¹⁷ These “adoptions” (in fact, the word finds no actual translation in many Indigenous languages) typically did not entail any severing of ties between child and biological parent, but rather children could move easily between households, retaining relationships with numerous caregivers. Ultimately, many might agree with Indigenous-studies scholar Pamela Palmater that, “[B]lood is not only unnecessary as an indicator of our identities; it is completely irrelevant.”¹¹⁸ Young mothers facing unexpected pregnancy no doubt benefited from these more fluid definitions of family and belonging.

If we take stock for a moment, it is clear that Indigenous handling of unwed pregnancy contrasted notably with what we know of approaches in other parts of Canadian society. Perhaps most striking, the obsession with *hiding* that so marked the experience of those who sought institutional escapes did not play the same role here. As I have argued for British Columbia and Ontario, hiding was the maternity home’s *raison d’être*.¹¹⁹ And even if most women (of whatever origins) did not end up at maternity homes (which were generally full to bursting in this decade), neither did they typically live out their pregnancies in full public view. Non-Indigenous girls and women intent on hiding moved from small towns to big cities or from big cities to other big cities, went underground as wage-workers

Beatrice Marie Anderson, “Nlakapmox Grandmothers’ Traditional Teachings and Learnings” (EdD thesis, University of British Columbia, 2011). The work of Cree educational scholar Rosalyn Ing on the impact of residential schools also indirectly shows the importance of grandmothers. Ing, “The Effects of Residential Schools on Native Child-Rearing Patterns” (MEd thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990); Strong-Boag, *Fostering Nation*, pp. 21-29. On the continuing importance of Indigenous grandmothers, see The Na gan ts’i’stk Grandmothers et al., “Na gan ts’i’stk Grandmothers’ Group of Lax kw’alaams,” *First Peoples Child & Family Review* vol. 10, no. 1 (2015), pp. 116-123; Nicole Muir and Yvonne Bohr, “Contemporary Practice of Traditional Aboriginal Child Rearing: A Review,” *First Peoples Child & Family Review* vol. 9, no. 1 (2014), pp. 66-79; Esme Fuller-Thomson, “Canadian First Nations Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: A Portrait in Resiliency,” *Aging and Human Development* vol. 60, no. 4 (2005), pp. 331-342.

115 Gehl, “Indian Rights,” p. 62.

116 Stevenson, “Adoption of Frances T,” p. 479.

117 Darin Keewatin, “An Indigenous Perspective on Custom Adoption” (MSW thesis, University of Manitoba, 2004). See also Lara di Tomasso and Sandrina de Finney, “Discussion Paper on Indigenous Custom Adoption Part 2,” *First Peoples Child & Family Review* vol. 10, no. 1 (2015), pp. 19-38.

118 Pamela Palmater, *Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2011), cited in Gehl, “Indian Rights,” 62.

119 Sharon Wall, “Making Room(s) for Teenagers: Space and Place at Maternity Homes in Postwar BC and Ontario,” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* vol. 7, no. 3 (fall 2014), pp. 509-533.

in strangers' families, stayed with far-off, distant relatives, or remained in the family home while passing off infants as their parents' offspring. Contrast this with what we have seen here: unmarried mothers and infants remaining in their own communities, typically within their families of origin, in many cases with the full knowledge of reserve members.

Outsiders to reserve communities noted their relative acceptance of pregnant daughters, but may not always have decoded the meaning of such actions (as is still the risk and the challenge of historical research today). One Hawthorn researcher, for instance, concluded this issue simply "d[id] not seem to matter" to reserve communities.¹²⁰ A BC nurse working on reserve similarly stated: "Illegitimacy is fairly common and does not seem to arouse much concern. The child is taken into the home and looked upon with as much favour as any other member of the family."¹²¹ Members' frequent openness about birth origins especially struck one Hawthorn researcher: "We had one woman tell us that her first was illegitimate. Other people don't tell you themselves, but don't seem disturbed if you find out." Such experiences didn't appear to hurt the future life chances of either mothers or children. The researcher added that, "The one adult I knew of [a grown illegitimate son, one presumes] ... seemed to be having no trouble ... he was a very fine sport, seemed intelligent and is progressive."¹²² Incidentally, while surprising these researchers, this information should not startle historians. What needs more explaining is how a simple fact - that one's parents were not legally married - came to have such substantive social meaning that one's moral worth, character, and even intelligence were judged against it. Indeed, the Indigenous case highlights the extent to which shame itself, like all other emotions, is socially, culturally, and historically constructed.¹²³

As for whether family assistance signalled complete acceptance, communities, families, even members within families could differ. Social scientists may well have missed some of the parallels with their own Euro-Canadian cultures, attuned as they were to see cultural difference. Evidence clearly reveals that attitudes were not always as "matter-of-fact" and "tolerant" as observers assumed. Hawthorn's own notes suggest as much. One (likely Cowichan) woman described her neighbours on Vancouver Island in the following manner: "[T]here are two family's [sic] living there. There's one girl there who's not married who has a baby every year—it's awful. There are too many of them there."¹²⁴ Similarly, the words of an older (likely Nuxalk) woman from northern BC suggested that not all men were ready to marry women who had already had children. She confided that her son had admitted: "I don't want to marry that woman ... and get a child that's not my own." When the interviewer pointed out she had other grandchildren blended into her family via remarriage, she stated, "That's different. Th[at] ... family is closely related to [ours] ... and those three children are just like our own

¹²⁰ UBCA, HHP, box 17-30, Untitled document, c. 1954.

¹²¹ Mahon, "Inkameep Indian Reserve," p. 13.

¹²² UBCA, HHP, box 17-30, Unspecified document, c. 1954.

¹²³ Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *American Historical Review* vol. 107, no. 3 (2002), pp. 821-845.

¹²⁴ UBCA, HHP, box 18-18, "Duncan—Somenos, Mrs. [name removed]," July 15, 1954.

anyway.”¹²⁵ Clearly, community members did not always embrace all children equally and could make distinctions between cases.

The behaviour of some unmarried mothers and their families also suggests that some were wary of community disapproval. One branch social worker was adamant that some women did indeed seek to hide pregnancies. In 1956, she insisted that “the unmarried Indian mother is reluctant ... sometimes outright resistant to giving information on the birth of her child.” In one Alberta case, she believed the issue was fear—fear that the woman’s situation would “finally become known to her local band council and ultimately to her whole community.”¹²⁶ Hawthorn also found several BC families hiding the fact of adoption. Speaking of his adopted son, a Nuxalk man from northern BC indicated that “he thinks we’re his real mommy and daddy.”¹²⁷ In another case, a woman from Vancouver Island’s northeast coast discovered only when she married that she was adopted, that the “aunt” she went to live with periodically was, in fact, her biological mother.¹²⁸ Overall, Hawthorn’s data suggest that many more families may have been hiding unmarried pregnancies. Why, for instance, were only four of the 70 mothers on his illegitimacy rolls teenagers, while statistics indicate teens were responsible for the highest percentage of illegitimate births?¹²⁹

Certainly, the possibility that individuals had adopted Christian views of births outside marriage is in keeping with what others have found regarding morality, sexuality, and twentieth-century Indigenous communities. As religious scholars show, some Indigenous populations had aligned themselves with one or another of the denominations available already in the nineteenth century and had accepted Christian mores to varying degrees.¹³⁰ Indeed, Bock noted his Quebec subjects had been “Roman Catholic for at least 300 years.”¹³¹ Although one should be careful in assuming the level of devotion official religious adherence denotes, in some cases bands adopted Christian mores. In Ontario, at any rate, some reserve communities regulated women’s sexual behaviour as much as did the state, according to historian Joan Sangster.¹³²

Community disapproval may also have stemmed from economic, not just moral, grounds. Clearly, more children meant more pressure on band resources, and that during a period of general economic distress. In earlier twentieth-century BC, as historians Jean Barman and John Lutz have separately documented, rich natural resources and First Nations’ willing implication in the capitalist economy led to stable, mixed or “moditional” family economies (Lutz’s term), a mix of wages, income from commodity production, and vital sustenance from the non-wage subsistence economy. To achieve this balance, families were often mobile and engaged seasonally in several sectors. Over the century, however, increasing

125 UBCA, HHP, box 16-10, file: “Bella Coola—Family,” Aug. 26, 1954.

126 LAC, RG 10, vol. 8869, file 1/18-16-2, part 1, Miss W. R. Broderick to Miss Payne, Feb. 14, 1957.

127 UBCA, HHP, box 16-10, file: “Bella Coola—Family”: “Adoption,” Aug. 26 [1954].

128 UBCA, HHP, box 16-10, file: “Alert Bay—Family”: “Name removed,” Aug. 5, 1954.

129 CVA, Hanging files, Welfare Council of G. Vancouver, “Illegitimacy Increases:,” May 1946.

130 Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*.

131 Bock, “Patterns of Illegitimacy,” p. 142.

132 Sangster, “Native Women, Sexuality,” pp. 182-184.

white settlement and legislation chipped away at communities' prosperity. In the spheres that Indigenous people had once dominated, new white settlers demanded a place, and restrictions on Indigenous trapping, hunting, and fishing helped assure them of it. The results were a depletion of game in trapping and hunting and First Nations' marginalization within fishing. Where sawmill and longshoring work had once provided good wages for Indigenous men, white labour gradually (though not entirely) replaced them as the work became less casual and as employers recast their labour as unreliable. Barman sums up the dichotomous BC economic situation: "The postwar boom was transforming the province, but the Native people were standing still." According to both Hawthorn's 1954 field work and Lutz's more recent study, mixed economies continued to operate, but wages (and insufficient ones, at that) now formed the majority of household income. In Shewell's view, new federal community-development schemes initiated to offset these conditions had little measurable effect.¹³³

With all of these realities (and the limitations on women's paid work), one understands the possible frustration of families with daughters whose pregnancies would further drain scarce resources. These families were also aware that such conditions made it challenging for Indigenous men to become true family breadwinners, thus limiting marriage as an economic solution. Ultimately, the wonder is perhaps not the limits, but rather the extent, of family support. In the end, communities were possibly more accepting where pressure on resources was less intense.

To sum up the range of responses from First Nations communities, in some cases, shaming and intolerance were evident; in many others, a good deal of familial acceptance was the norm. It is certainly possible that even families that provided economic sustenance to daughters also harboured (or sometimes expressed) critical views of their offspring's behaviour; families, then and now, are complex mixtures of compassion and critique. Perhaps it is actions and not attitudes that should draw our final attention. It appears most families took in and sustained unwed mothers and their infants, and in many communities there was no need to hide this fact. It is well documented that Indigenous communities suffered all kinds of "damaging effects" from colonialism in this period, whether economic, social, or cultural. Coping with these other very real challenges may have made welcoming a new dependant difficult, but perhaps it also disinclined many families to make moral problems of social facts they had long approached with the use of practical family strategies.

¹³³ Lutz, *Makuk*; Barman, *West Beyond the West*, pp. 169-179. To make up for declining commodity production and narrowing options for wage work, Indigenous families relied on subsistence production (fishing, hunting, and berry-picking for family consumption) and increasingly on relief. Hawthorn's BC sample shows relief was bringing in 16 per cent of household income by 1954, a significant increase from earlier years, according to Lutz' data. Hawthorn, *Indians*, Table XVI, p. 221; Lutz, *Makuk*, Table 6.4, p. 209; Shewell, "Bitterness..." pp. 58-84. On wage work prior to 1930, see also Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia* 2nd ed. (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1996).

Conclusion

A comparison of unmarried pregnancy in Indigenous and in non-Indigenous communities has revealed notable contrasts, but also some similarities. Officially, there were clear statistical differences. More important, expert views of the issue and community treatment of unmarried mothers differed. The category of age—in particular the focus on teenagers that so marked discussions about non-Indigenous populations—did not have the same relevance here. Instead, Indian Affairs eyed with more worry the cultures of Indigenous peoples and the fact of their population recovery. This was hardly surprising of an entity—Indian Affairs—that owed its very existence to the racialization of Indigenous peoples and whose aim was their eventual assimilation. As for First Nations, despite the Indian Affairs' characterization of them as lacking in responsibility, it is clear that communities as a whole took collective responsibility for child rearing. Although judgment and shame were not always absent from reserve communities, that so many girls stayed living with parents who were willing to help raise the third generation suggests that disapproval rarely reached the proportions it did in so many white-settler families. Unmarried pregnancy no doubt presented economic problems to families, but the notion of it as a social disaster, a transgression that families would go to any lengths to hide and for which some girls might be thrown out of parental homes, did not have the same salience here. If, to some, culture was to blame for the problem, culture also offered the solutions. As for similarities, pregnancies in all populations originated in circumstances ranging from consensual to coercive, fathers reacted in similarly evasive, though sometimes supportive ways, and efforts to reform young women were not altogether dissimilar. Ultimately, even the stark differences vital statistics imply are open to interpretation.

Taken together, these differences and similarities reflect that this was, in many ways, a transitional period for reserve communities. Urbanization was low, but cities were having more impact; interracial adoption was rare, but it was starting to occur; families took girls in, but some could be critical. This is not to imply that a normal or inevitable path of development was gradually unfolding; Indigenous experiences of modernity were unique, even as they evinced parallels with other communities. I hope this article has given glimpses of that uniqueness and also shifted the spotlight away from the imaginary animal the state called "illegitimacy." What we really need to know more about is the wider social, cultural, and economic contexts shaping the experience of postwar reserve communities and their dealings with a state that remained firmly colonial. As the period continued, the most damaging effects on Indigenous children would flow not from the circumstances of their birth, but from provincial child-welfare "machines" that disrupted the family strategies explored here and validated only the most narrow definition of family and care.