What Nudism Exposes

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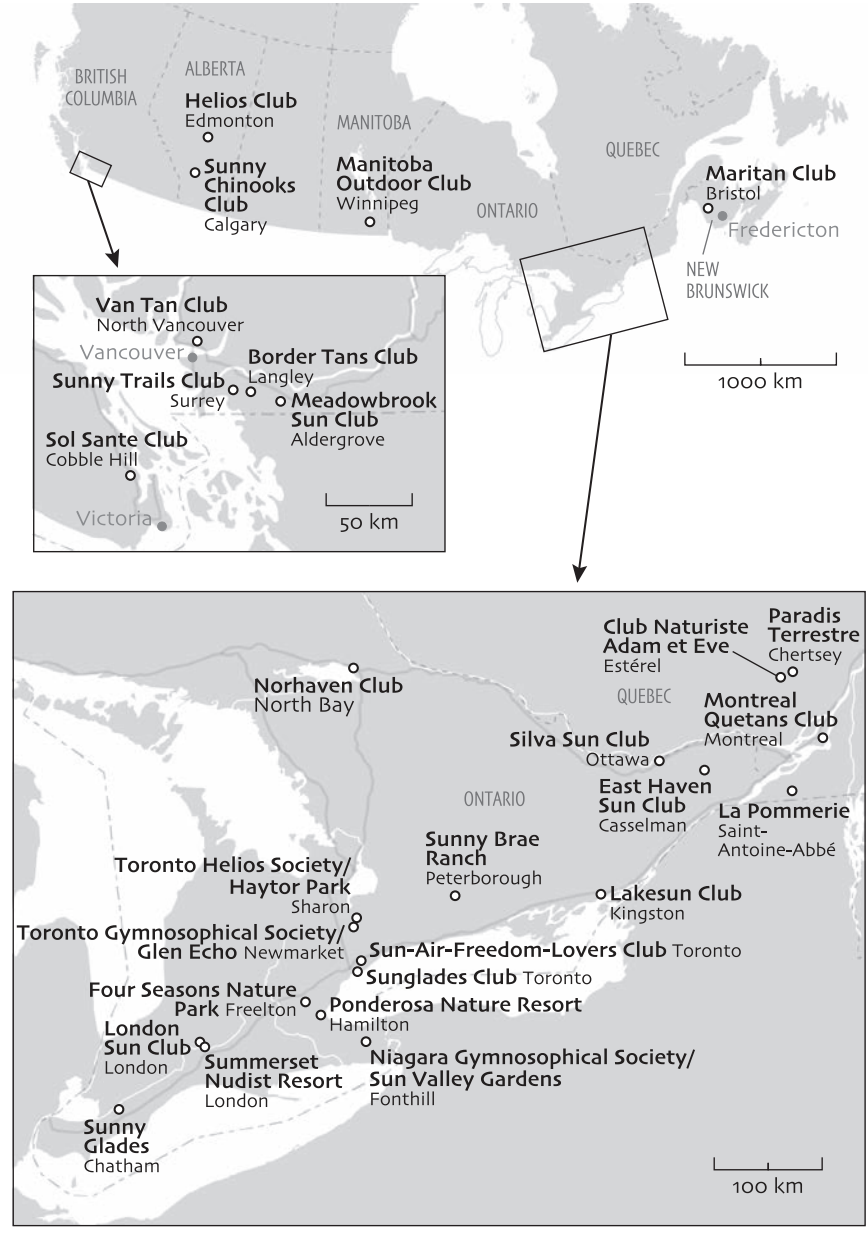

Figure 0.1 Map of nudist clubs referenced in the book

Introduction

In 1958, *Liberty* magazine ran an article by Peggy Parkes entitled "I'm a Nudist Mother." In it, Parkes introduced herself as a forty-year-old woman from Hamilton, Ontario, with a husband, a son, and a part-time job. Her interests, she said, included detective stories, bowling, and ballet. Her good-humoured husband was keen on gardening and parties, and her fifteen-year-old son, a fan of Elvis Presley and Pat Boone, was "allergic to cats, arithmetic and dishwashing." Parkes insisted that she and her husband were "not prudes," but they were "concerned about juvenile delinquency, and lurid magazines with sexy pictures of undraped females over suggestive captions." In summary, she declared, "I am, except for being a nudist, an average working-class Canadian mother."[1]

What drew a woman like Parkes to join the nudist movement, and why did a person affiliated with something so unconventional nonetheless consider herself "an average working-class Canadian mother"? What led *Liberty,* which billed itself as "Canada's Young Family Magazine," to feature her story? And what did nudism have to do with Parkes's worries about juvenile delinquency? "I'm a Nudist Mother" raises a number of questions that underpin this book. But what is especially remarkable about the article is that nudism provided the occasion for this "average" Canadian woman to reflect on the body, nudity, and sexuality in the pages of a national magazine as she described her first-time experience at a nudist club, recounted conversations with fellow club members about their children's involvement,

and explained "how it [was] possible to be clean-minded when beholding the opposite sex in the nude."[2] In short, the nudist movement serves as a lens through which to examine a group of working- and middle-class Canadians reflecting on the place of the body in modern life.

Nudism emerged as part of a far-reaching social movement sweeping Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. Known as *Lebensreform,* or life reform, it also encompassed vegetarianism, hiking, and nature conservation. Common to all of these was the shared objective "to reorient the German people toward nature, and ... thereby to find solutions to the problems of modern [urban-industrial] society." By "nature," as historian John Williams explains, nudists meant "both the nonhuman rural environment and the naked human body."[3] This turn to nature was supposed to address the effects of pollution, overcrowding, and poor working conditions on the health of the German people, problems believed to have physical, mental, and moral consequences.[4] Nudism arose in Wilhelmine Germany as an elitist, middle-class movement, but it blossomed into an ideologically diverse popular phenomenon during the Weimar period that included gymnastics programs, youth hiking groups, and recreational parks.[5] Its pioneers believed that performing these activities without clothes would allow people to take full advantage of sunshine and fresh air, and would also promote greater care for the body. They endorsed social nudism as offering a path to physical, mental, and moral health, with some linking individual renewal to national regeneration.[6] During the interwar period, nudism spread through western Europe as well as to Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.[7]

Although Canada's oldest nudist club, the Van Tan Club, opened in North Vancouver in 1939, the movement became firmly established in Canada only after the Second World War. European immigrants with nudist experience provided an influx of leaders and members to the fledgling movement.[8] The development of Canadian nudism coincided with the postwar public recreation movement, the proliferation of national and provincial parks, and the "golden age" of the family vacation, which were facilitated by increased leisure time, disposable income, and car ownership, as well as ongoing urbanization. Despite the implication of the common misnomer "nudist colony," the clubs were not permanent residential communities, but weekend and summer recreational sites that served as alternatives to public beaches, parks, and campgrounds.[9] They emerged on the outskirts of many cities but were

most numerous in the Greater Vancouver area and southwestern Ontario. By 1960, more than twenty were operating in Canada, ranging in size from ten to more than four hundred members.[10]

This book draws on primary sources created for a non-nudist public, notably the Toronto nudist magazine *Sunbathing for Health,* as well as print, radio, and television coverage of the movement by mainstream media. Though nudism never managed to recruit a significant percentage of Canadians to join its ranks, it did receive considerable press coverage. Twenty-five radio and television interviews from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s are particularly rich, and are valuable for what they reveal of how nudists presented their movement to the public.

I also draw on records held by contemporary nudist organizations such as the Federation of Canadian Naturists (FCN) and the American Nudist Research Library (ANRL), as well as the Naturist Living Podcast hosted by naturist club owner and former FCN president Stéphane Deschênes.[11] These sources include internal club minutes and newsletters, private correspondence, and podcast interviews and offer insight into key individuals, interpersonal and club dynamics, and the degree to which public promotion aligned with private views.

In what follows I take seriously nudist critiques of mainstream attitudes toward the body, nudity, and sexuality, while interrogating nudist perspectives and assumptions, particularly the defence of nudity as "natural." As William Cronon asserts, "What we mean when we use the word 'nature' says as much about ourselves as about the things we label with that word."[12] Ruth Barcan puts it another way: the nude body "is never naked, if naked means stripped of meaning, value and political import."[13] The Canadian movement did not exist in a vacuum; rather, it entered broader conversations about what it means to have a body and to interact with others' bodies. What nudism ultimately exposes is the body's position at the intersection of nature and culture, the individual and the social, the private and the public.

Nudity in Historical Context

German sociologist Norbert Elias's magnum opus *The Civilizing Process,* originally published in 1939, remains the most comprehensive history of body etiquette in Western society. It provides a broad historical context for

nudism's emergence. According to Elias, beginning around the sixteenth century, nudity and bodily functions such as urinating, defecating, bathing, sleeping, and sexual relations became confined to the private sphere and removed from the view of others, first among the nobility and then gradually among the lower classes as well. Elias argued that this "civilizing process" was driven by the needs of a society in which individuals lived in increasingly close proximity. Moreover, these changes in behaviour brought a shift in attitudes regarding the body and its functions, notably feelings of shame and embarrassment, which, in turn, reinforced the self-regulation that came to replace external forms of social control.[14]

Nudity's banishment from public space was a slow and uneven process. In his study of Toronto, Dale Barbour points to the period between 1850 and 1930 as the timing for a shift from "vernacular [nude] bathing and the male-dominated swimming hole to the bathing suit and the mixed gender public beach."[15] The rise of the nudist movement, first in Germany and then in North America, coincided with this era and pushed back against the social taboo against nudity. Its members refused to feel ashamed of the naked body and contested the strong cultural correlation between nudity and sexuality. They argued that clothing should be worn for functional or ornamental purposes, not due to a sense of shame. Ontario club owner Karl Ruehle explained,

> The human body is just a body, and whether it is nude or clothed has no influence upon its moral standard ... Most people have no idea what a wonderful work God did. Generally they do not think about it at all unless they are sick and pain forces it to their attention. Did you ever look in the mirror of your bathroom to see your whole body? Did you ever notice those wonderful lines of your limbs and your chest? All the muscles are in the proper place to fulfil their important functions which keep you moving. There is nothing ugly or superfluous. Even your sexual parts have their functions in relation to your entire life and your body ... Their functions are as decent as those of your heart, stomach, or any other organ of your body ... There is nothing evil or disgusting about the sexual organs except in an evil mind.[16]

Nudists challenged cultural perceptions of the nude body as something inherently obscene, shameful, or transgressive. Committed to dissociating

nudity from sexuality, their clubs created space for men, women, and children to socialize together in the nude.

Nudism posited a circular relationship between mind and body: the body was as pure as the mind made it, and bodily practices could form a new mental attitude. Throughout the twentieth century, many Canadians expressed concern that looking at naked bodies – in the flesh but also in art or literature – would corrupt the mind, but nudists embraced nudity as a means of exposing, and improving, one's mental attitude toward the body and sexuality.[17] They promoted it as a way to satisfy natural curiosity and loosen the hold of social taboos. Belgian historian Evert Peeters contends that the "perception of the body and sexuality within nudist writing did not simply reflect a discursive message; rather, the physical techniques of nudism became a means of cultural criticism."[18] Nudism was a bodily performance that naturalized nakedness in a society in which mixed-sex social nudity was decidedly unnatural. This is an example of what Michel de Certeau calls "the practice of everyday life," by which social groups or individuals "make innumerable and infinitesimal transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy in order to adapt it to their own interests and their own rules."[19] Going nude and looking at the unclothed bodies of others were both critical components of this process.

In their efforts to broaden their appeal while also levelling a critique of Western attitudes regarding the body, nudists have always been engaged in a complex negotiation of social norms. Even as they transgressed the social taboo against nudity, they sought social respectability. Pioneering Canadian nudist organizer Ray Connett explained, "It goes without saying that to inspire others to try a way of life which is still unacceptable to normal society one must in every other way but this be completely normal, above reproach in all things."[20] This was particularly the case with respect to sexuality. Nudists believed that their movement provided the means to overcome both bodily shame and sexual promiscuity by promoting a healthy respect for the body and sexuality. Bell and Holliday explain that in the nudist philosophy, "the body is re-naturalized and simultaneously de-sexualized; rather than casting off culture/civilization to release animalistic or 'natural' (culturally suppressed) passions ... a strict code of morality is instead *naturalized*."[21] Nudists argued that it was clothing, not nudity, that heightened sexual tension and that by reducing "artificial stimulation," nudism restored sex to its "natural place," which generally meant safely contained within mar-

riage.[22] In this manner, they simultaneously lauded nudity as natural and championed sexual self-regulation.

Despite their protestations that nudism was not about sex, they devoted a great deal of attention to the subject. Their philosophy was part of the proliferation of sexual discourses that Foucault identified as arising in the eighteenth century. Moreover, it functioned, as Foucault suggests, "to yield multiple effects of displacement, intensification, re-orientation, and modification of desire itself."[23] In her study of German nude gymnastics regimens, Maren Möhring notes that nudists denounced corsets and urged women to build a "muscle-corset." She explains, "instead of *external* constraint, the nudists emphasized *self*-discipline ... Conforming to aesthetic norms was now to be achieved with and on the body itself, not by wearing a corset."[24] In a striking parallel, Canadian nudist leader Karl Ruehle provided the following account of nudist attitudes toward clothing and nudity: "We are working for the day when nudity will not be an invitation for sexual exploitation but a challenge for self-control which is the root of all good beginnings."[25] Nudists abandoned the crutch of clothing as a means of enhancing, not disrupting, sexual self-regulation.

While outlining the long-term trend of removing nudity and bodily functions from public view, Norbert Elias observed a recent "relaxation" of attitudes in some areas. In his opinion, this was "only possible because the level of habitual, technically and institutionally consolidated self-control, the individual capacity to restrain one's urges and behaviour in correspondence with the more advanced feelings for what is offensive, has been on the whole secured. It is a relaxation within the framework of an already established standard."[26] This explanation certainly applies in the Canadian context of the 1950s and 1960s, where the practice of nudism occurred within a highly regulated environment. As Ray Connett declared, "It's total freedom we want, but this does not mean permissiveness." Indeed, nudist clubs had a "Sunday school picnic ... morality."[27] Clubs demanded that people regulate themselves even more carefully than they would in public. As individuals shed their clothes, they substituted other forms of containment, notably their club screening process, strict standards of behaviour, and an emphasis on gender and sexual norms. Respectful of the Canadian Criminal Code, which made it a criminal offence to be nude in a public place or in a place visible to the public, they confined their activities to shielded private properties.

Nudism and Health

The nudist movement has consistently attempted to rehabilitate the nude body and render it compatible with modern life, but it also evolved over time. Prior to the Second World War, its predominant focus was physical health. Early nudist writers extolled the health-giving effects of the sun and fresh air and endorsed nude sunbathing as the way to obtain optimum benefit. Nude hiking and gymnastics were especially popular. In Weimar Germany and interwar England, nudists claimed that performing these activities without clothes enabled men and women to adopt a "rational," "objective" view of their own bodies and those of others by exposing them to the "scrutinizing gaze."[28] This, they believed, would motivate members to work to achieve idealized strong and healthy bodies, and also allow them to completely and honestly assess the physical fitness of potential marriage partners. Together, these measures would lead to a stronger, healthier society by promoting individual physical health and "eugenically purposeful sexuality."[29]

This interwar preoccupation with physical health reflected the values of society more broadly. The era saw the advent of heliotherapists, who embraced "sun cures" as a means of treating diseases such as rickets and tuberculosis. Citizens also formed Sunlight Leagues in industrial cities such as London to agitate for the reduction of coal pollution and to champion urban planning that would maximize the presence of sunlight.[30] Open-air schooling, rural recreation, and camping movements were all initiated during this period, with the shared goal of improving health through a reconnection with nature. At the same time, physical culture and amateur sport emerged as popular forms of leisure. Charlotte Macdonald explains,

> So central had the pursuit of the "better body" become by the 1930s that it seemed almost to define the modern condition ... What was portrayed as new-found freedom for the body was celebrated in enthusiasm for "natural" places and pursuits. Exercising with bare feet; exposing skin to fresh air and sunlight; walking, hiking, camping and cycling in the outdoors were all taken up with gusto.[31]

Physical fitness and outdoor recreation became modern obsessions, what one scholar has labelled an "extraordinary modernist preoccupation with physicality."[32]

If the interwar period was focused on improving bodies, the era that followed the Second World War was concerned with improving minds. This was a result of parallel developments: better standards of living and overall physical health, and heightened attention to the warnings of psychologists that modernity brought both benefits and new problems. Improved sanitation and the development and availability of antibiotics and vaccines to treat and prevent infectious disease meant that Canadians enjoyed better health and longer lives than ever before. But as the field of psychology ascended to a position of social authority, it raised public anxiety that mental health, juvenile delinquency, and sexual "deviance" were critical problems in modern society.[33]

Postwar Canada presented more opportunities than ever to pursue recreation, and the health justification for doing so nude was increasingly tenuous. Anne-Marie Châtelet suggests that the curing of tuberculosis through the use of antibiotics rendered open-air schooling obsolete – and by extension, dealt a blow to the practice of "nature cures."[34] Gymnastics, which in Weimar Germany had been "the least controversial and most accepted and practiced of all the nudists' reform ideas," was almost entirely absent from Canadian nudism, which tended to embrace a philosophy of bodily acceptance (though physical attractiveness was not without import, especially for women).[35] As the language of eugenics dropped out of popular usage in the aftermath of the Holocaust, nudists likewise abandoned any discussion of racial improvement.[36] Nevertheless, the whiteness of Canadian clubs shored up their claims to normalcy and respectability, and was perpetuated by the screening practices of some clubs.

Moving away from the physical culture of early nudism, postwar Canadian nudists engaged with contemporary psychological discourse to present their movement as encouraging healthy, "normal" psychological development. They argued that delinquency and deviance were rooted in repressive social attitudes that cultivated shame and inhibitions, and they offered nudism as the antidote – a way of becoming comfortable in one's own skin. Furthering society's romance with the nuclear family, they cast their practice as strengthening, not undermining, marriage and family life.[37] In the midst of the baby boom, they promoted themselves as family friendly and offered nudism as a means of raising psychologically healthy, well-adjusted citizens – and therefore something that every parent should be willing to try.

Although they were not primarily concerned with reshaping the body, they did situate it as an important source of self-identity. Over the course

of the twentieth century, the rise of physical culture and amateur sport and the democratization of fashion and beauty culture increasingly defined the body as a source of self-identity and pleasure. One individual described the attraction of nudism as being the

> deep experience that I haven't lost myself in the crowd – that I am still an individual ... that detached from all the trappings of civilization there is a me left, not just a cog in a wheel ... something to offer as proof of individuality, some reason to feel that I have a life, a being, apart from the civilization of which I am an infinitesimal part.[38]

Nudists were engaged in a balancing act, offering people the chance to take part in a unique social practice while simultaneously asserting their normalcy and respectability. Ironically, sociologist Joanne Entwistle argues that fashion exhibits this same tension, "express[ing] the contradictory desires to fit in and stand out."[39]

A New History of Postwar Canada

On first glance, it may be surprising that nudism blossomed in Canada in the 1950s, given that the decade is often associated with conformity and conservatism. L.B. Kuffert explains that "modern life connotes a set of conditions in which the social foundations of culture undergo significant and accelerated changes, and culture itself becomes on the whole more uniform."[40] Although these developments emerged out of industrialization, which began in Canada after about 1850, they were accentuated by improved standards of living, rising consumerism, and the growth of mass culture that followed the Second World War. The ultimate symbol of social homogeneity was the sprawling suburb, and Richard Harris characterizes suburbanization as a process of "creeping conformity, not only of the suburbs but also of certain aspects of Canadian society."[41] The baby boom and the "intense pro-family climate" that developed in the aftermath of the Great Depression and the Second World War were closely related elements of this process.[42]

The postwar period was also the age of the expert; psychologists and physicians, among others, enjoyed a particularly influential place in society and, as scholars Mary Louise Adams and Mona Gleason demonstrate, many of them reinforced hegemonic social values through the promotion of

"normal" socialization. Gleason argues, "the normal family that was constructed through psychological discourse ... entrenched and reproduced the dominance of Anglo/Celtic, middle-class, heterosexual, and patriarchal values."[43] In other words, the "ideal" family became the standard against which all others were judged. Moreover, conformity itself became a shared value. In both private and public life, the ability to find consensus, to fit in, and to get along was highly prized. Conversely, "deviance from any number of mainstream norms" was seen as threatening to the social order.[44]

Canadian nudists sought public approval and embraced the normalizing discourses analyzed by scholars such as Gleason and Adams. But *What Nudism Exposes* complicates the image of the postwar years as dominated by conformity and reveals that groups such as nudists could employ the rhetoric for their own ends. Their use of psychology to reinforce their philosophy speaks to the pervasiveness of that discourse and of contemporary concerns about mental health, juvenile delinquency, and deviant sexuality. But it also demonstrates that they navigated normalizing discourses to promote something that psychologists did not endorse. Adams observes that "the point of studying dominant cultural discourses – mainstream ideals ... is that we all have to negotiate them, whether we subscribe to them, are marginalized by them, or actively resist them."[45] Despite its unconventionality, the nudist movement serves as a case study of how a group of working- and middle-class Canadians responded to, and made use of, expert advice. At the same time, the tolerance extended to nudists by Canadians who did not engage in their practice undoubtedly rested on the whiteness of the movement and the limited nature of its cultural critique.

As Canada underwent dramatic social and cultural changes during the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the movement suffered something of an identity crisis. It had made a point of affirming sexual and gender norms and of enforcing strict standards of behaviour on club grounds. Now it risked being perceived as behind the times. In response to the "swinging" sixties, clubs began to re-evaluate their messaging and policies. In particular, they grappled with how to deal with social drinking, the sexual revolution, second-wave feminism, and environmentalism. Many loosened their restrictions on alcohol and their bans on separated or divorced individuals. Some launched provocative pageants that attracted publicity and helped fund extensive property development, emphasizing greater openness to sexuality while doubling down on the objectification of women. Other nudists found their purpose through re-emphasizing the connection between nudity and

the natural world, vaguely aligning themselves with environmentalism. By 1980, Canadian clubs had settled into a new normal, abandoning some of their most radical innovations while permanently relaxing rules regarding drinking and heterosexual marital norms. Nudism resists simple "liberal" or "conservative" labels; instead, the clubs adopted a range of responses to cultural change and the challenge of moving with the times while maintaining social respectability.

My purpose is not to offer an organizational history of nudism, but instead to provide a cultural history of the movement and of postwar attitudes toward the body more generally. Although it never entered the mainstream of Canadian life, this examination of the nudist movement reveals how a subset of Canadians navigated the social and cultural changes of the postwar period – stretching from the immediate postwar years through the end of the 1970s – and in doing so offers new perspectives on society at large.

PART I

Nudism Comes to Canada

1
Building a Movement

> When we were still in Germany we tried to get some land to start our own camp somewhere in Germany, but land was so scarce, and the trouble to be a club in the bigger cities took quite a bit of time. So after quite a few things came together we decided to go to Canada, where there was plenty of land and immigrants were welcome. So we came in '53 to Canada. Not actually planning to have a camp here in Canada, but to live somewhere in Canada on a piece of land, in the nude as much as possible, make a living, and go from there. That it developed into what we have now we have never dreamt about.
>
> – Karl Ruehle, *Identities*

Canadian nudism emerged as part of a transnational movement. This included the circulation of nudist books and periodicals, as well as the flow of people through travel and immigration. The most significant factor in its growth was the arrival of hundreds of thousands of European immigrants in the aftermath of the Second World War. A national movement took shape with the creation of the Canadian Sunbathing Association (CSA) in 1947, aided by the publication of *Sunbathing for Health* magazine in Toronto from 1947 to 1959. At the local level, individual clubs played an important role in promoting nudism, and a few of the more ambitious ones launched publicity campaigns such as open house events that put a spotlight on nudism. Clubs

varied significantly in size, amenities, and atmosphere. They also had the largest impact on individual Canadians' experiences with nudism. The chapter that follows explores the Canadian movement as an international, national, and local phenomenon, and how it became established on a firm footing in the decades after World War II.

Canada in a Transnational Context

Prior to the establishment of the organized movement in Canada, some Canadians encountered nudism through literature. For example, they may have read *Among the Nudists* and *Nudism Comes to America,* published in the early 1930s by Americans Frances and Mason Merrill. Or they may have perused Maurice Parmelee's *Nudism in Modern Life* (featuring a foreword by noted psychologist Havelock Ellis) and works by British nudists Reverend C.E. Norwood and William Welby.[1] Ray Connett, the most influential nudist in western Canada during the 1940s and 1950s, first encountered the movement when he picked up a copy of *The Nudist,* an American magazine, while on a cross-border trip from his Vancouver home to Bellingham, Washington in the 1930s.[2] He also became a reader of *Health and Efficiency,* an English nudist magazine, which enabled him to decode a discreetly worded ad in the personals section of a 1939 issue of the *Vancouver Province:* "Member of N.S.A.A. wishes to form similar club here."[3] The ad alluded to the British National Sun-Air Association. This sort of coded language was a means of overcoming the refusal of many publications to openly advertise nudist activities or groups. In responding to the ad, Connett became a founding member of the Van Tan Club, Canada's oldest operating nudist club. As more Canadian clubs were established, many developed small library collections to make nudist literature available to members, which connected them to a wider network of like-minded people.

Just as the publications circulated internationally, so did nudists themselves. Besides Connett, other founding members of the Van Tan Club were Hardy and Lenore Kaye. According to James Woycke, "He was English, she Australian; both were en route from a vacation in England – where they had just experienced nudism for the first time at the Arcadians club – back to Australia when they got stranded in Canada at the outbreak of the war."[4] Though the declaration of hostilities meant that the Kayes became early members of the Van Tans, the war soon interrupted the club's development by limiting the resources and leisure time of its members. At the same time,

some Canadians serving overseas had the opportunity to visit British clubs, including Ray Connett.

But it was European immigration, especially from Germany, that played the greatest role in advancing the nudist movement in Canada. Between 1946 and 1962, 2.1 million migrants came to Canada, the vast majority of them from Europe, a massive influx of people into a country whose 1941 population consisted of just 11.5 million. Across Europe, millions had been displaced by the war, and farms, factories, and infrastructure lay in ruins. Franca Iacovetta explains that though the federal government was cautious in its approach, "a combination of factors – including economic self-interest, labour shortages, international pressures, and pro-refugee lobbies – eventually encouraged and cajoled the Canadian government into prying open its doors to immigrants."[5] Initially, Canadian officials were reluctant to admit Germans, but in 1950 Canada removed them from the "enemy alien" class – the wartime designation for citizens of hostile nations. By the early 1960s, approximately 270,000 Germans had come to Canada, making Germany the third-largest source of immigrants in this period, surpassed only by Britain and Italy. In part, the policy shift was driven by the growing tendency to distinguish between culpable war criminals and average Germans.[6] But Alexander Freund explains that it also reflected "the privileges [Canadian] bureaucrats conferred upon [Germans] as white, Christian, Northwest Europeans," considering them "first-class citizenship material" at a time when Canadian immigration policy openly persisted in the objective of keeping Canada white.[7] This approach stands in marked contrast to Canadian attitudes regarding another class of enemy aliens, people of Japanese descent living in Canada. Ottawa eventually stepped back from forcefully "repatriating" British Columbians of Japanese origin to Japan following the war, most of whom were in fact Canadian-born, and in 1949 it ended its 1942 prohibition against anyone of Japanese descent living in the coastal province. But as Pamela Sugiman explains, "the government's racialized [postwar] policy of repatriation and its unmaking of this community both rested upon and reinforced a belief in the sameness of all persons 'of the Japanese race.'" It was "guided by the notion that transnational loyalties [to Japan] cross[ed] generations."[8]

In contrast, after a brief wartime interruption, Ottawa renewed its longstanding belief that Germans were generally ideal immigrants who would readily adapt to their new environment. According to the white settler mythology that informed Canadian immigration policies, to be Canadian was

to be of European origin. Sherene Razack describes the rationale: "It is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal people are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus *become* the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship."[9] While introducing amendments to the Immigration Act in 1947, Prime Minister King stated that "large-scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population" in a way that European immigration would not.[10] Franca Iacovetta indicates that the Canadian press also generally expressed a high regard for German immigrants: "The cheerful reports on the many happy arrivals met by excited crowds of relatives and compatriots largely sidestepped the complex subjects of Italy's Fascist and Germany's Nazi past." Germans were frequently praised for their work ethic and ability to assimilate.[11]

Despite the assumption that Europeans easily became Canadian, they brought cultural differences with them, including nudism. Lisa Stein, a German immigrant who established two nudist clubs in Ontario with her husband during the 1960s, told a CBC interviewer that nudism in the United States originated with German immigrants. Unwilling to relinquish the practice, they "decided to not give it up but to show North America what nudism is all about."[12] This was also true of many German nudists who came to Canada after the war. Rather than give up nudism, they cultivated a movement in Canada as they uprooted their lives and re-established themselves in a new country. In Canada they encountered a society in which "a fundamentally conservative Cold War consensus had taken hold ... one that transformed all forms of criticism and nonconformist behaviour into attacks on democratic decency," according to Dirk Hoerder. Yet German immigrants played a critical role in establishing an unconventional, and potentially threatening, movement on a firm footing. They provide an apt example of the "transcultural agency" of migrants, in this case ones who operated from the position of a preferred white immigrant group, though no doubt facing significant challenges in building new lives.[13]

Although they became active in nudist clubs across Canada, it was in Ontario in particular that they led the transformation of nudism from a couple of clubs comprised of just a few individuals to a full-fledged movement that attracted thousands of members and visitors. Beginning with Karl and Marlies Ruehle, German immigrants spearheaded the establishment of nudist camps and resorts across southern Ontario during the 1950s and

1960s. After relocating to Canada in 1953, the Ruehles acquired property in the Niagara peninsula the following year, named it Sun Valley Gardens, and took over leadership of the local nudist group, the recently formed Niagara Gymnosophical Society. The Sun Valley club was launched in the 1954 summer season with eighteen adult members. By the end of the 1950s, it boasted more than three hundred, making it Canada's largest nudist club.[14] Its members went on to found clubs of their own throughout southwestern Ontario, including the London Sun Club in 1955, Ponderosa Nature Resort, which opened outside Hamilton in 1964, and the Four Seasons Nature Park, which opened near Guelph in 1969.[15] Ponderosa and the Four Seasons were also established by German immigrant couples. In addition, Hans and Maria Behrmann, who came to Canada in 1951, opened the Lakesun Club outside Kingston, Ontario, in 1959, though Woycke numbers them among "the few nudists of German/Austrian background to learn of nudism *after* reaching Canada." The Behrmanns became acquainted with nudism through a Hamilton radio program on the subject, probably one of a number of programs that featured Karl Ruehle or Sun Valley member Peggy Parkes.[16] German immigrants also helped the movement along in western Canada. Helga and Dietrich Wesemann, for example, met at a German nudist camp before emigrating to Canada and founding the Helios Club outside Edmonton in 1963.[17]

Historian Pascal Maeder recounts the story of a postwar Eastern European immigrant who redefined her DP (displaced person) status as "delayed pioneer." This definition aptly characterizes the attitude of several German Canadian nudist club owners in Ontario.[18] Karl Ruehle took pride in the fact that when he and Marlies acquired the twenty-five-acre property for Sun Valley Gardens in 1954, "it was for the most part thorn-filled bush and some swampy areas, and there was a lot of clearing out and weeding and hard work to do to get something out of it."[19] Hans Stein, who founded the Ponderosa Nature Resort with his wife, sister, and brother-in-law, explained,

> There was absolutely nothing here. The volleyball and the tennis courts and all these things, this was one big field with oats planted ... And there was not even a road coming in here ... a car could never get through. So then we started building, building a road first, then we did a clubhouse and a swimming pool ... It was all solid rock here, bedrock, so we had to blast a swimming pool, 14 feet deep, out of the rock with dynamite.[20]

In 1971, Lakesun owner Hans Behrmann reflected, "Looking back on our eleven-year history we have come a long way. Out of sheer rock we have over the years created a haven for naturists to spend their weekends and holidays."[21] In relaying the history of their clubs, Ruehle, Stein, and Behrmann cast themselves in the tradition of Canadian pioneers, clearing land and domesticating space. Some Canadian-born nudists also subscribed to this rhetoric. Stan Wortner, who founded the Sunny Glades club near Chatham, Ontario, in 1959, described his early days as its owner:

> I've got two kids, one dog, and a wife, I'm living in a little cottage 16×24, with my running water consisting of a pipe coming up through the floor running cold water, my outdoor toilet was on skids and I dug a hole underneath of it. I actually virtually pioneered ... really and truly pioneered. You know, we enjoyed it, but we were without a lot of things. We had one telephone and one television, you know, that type of thing.[22]

But German Canadian nudists took particular pride in simultaneously laying the foundation for successful clubs while building new lives in Canada. Reflecting on the beginning of the Ponderosa Nature Resort fifty years earlier, Hans Stein noted, "I don't think we could have done any better than we really did, because we started off with basically nothing, it was just hard work. You know, we worked seven days a week, and we worked 14 and 16 hours every day, all of us, in the teamwork here."[23] German Canadian nudist leaders laid claim to a settler Canadian identity even as they transplanted a European practice to North America.

German and other European immigrants also provided a pool of members for the new clubs. In a 1974 CBC Radio interview, for example, the Ruehles noted that they first advertised their club in German-language newspapers. Ontario leaders observed a strong European presence at their clubs, counting German, Dutch, French, English, and Scottish immigrants among their members.[24] Doug Beckett recalled the first time he and his wife visited Glen Echo Nudist Park, outside Toronto, in 1958, to which they would belong for fifty years:

> We were family number twenty-three. And they, uh, one of the chaps that we were talking to, because we were new to the group, said, "Well, where did you come from?" Well we said, "We're Canadians. We've always been here." And he turned around and shouted out to the gang, "Hey

> gang, this thing's going to catch on. Here come a couple of Canadians!" Because at that time the membership was English, German, French, a few French ... and Dutch.[25]

The growth of nudism in Canada was fed by postwar immigration, but as it slowed and the profile of the movement grew, the ratio of European to Canadian-born members would shift.

Creating a National Movement

Belonging to a transnational movement, Canadian nudism also developed into a national community. *Sunbathing for Health*, published in Toronto between 1947 and 1959, played a prominent role in its creation. The magazine sold on select newsstands across the country and was also available by subscription.[26] It was published by the Rex Book Company, a division of the Sinnott News Company based in Scarborough, Ontario. Between 1939 and 1947, Sinnott had produced *Sunbathing and Health,* a magazine comprised of reprinted articles by English nudists and stock nude photographs. But in 1946, Ray Connett, back from overseas service and employed by Canada Post, approached Sinnott about the possibility of contributing an original column. Titled "Sunny Trails: A Nudist Call to Canada," it first appeared in the December 1946 issue, and it ran in every issue thereafter. The following April the magazine was relaunched with significant Canadian content under the slightly modified title of *Sunbathing for Health.* It also featured Connett's wife, Mildred Harris (writing under her maiden name), as contributor of the "Woman's Page." Together, the two reported on the state of nudism in Canada, offered advice on its practice and club organization, and responded to readers' questions, some of which were published on the "Readers' Page." The magazine provided a forum for individuals and small, isolated groups from across Canada to exchange news and ideas, to organize, and to promote their philosophy to a wider public audience. During the interwar period, there had been rumoured nudist activity in locales ranging from Vancouver Island to Edmonton to Toronto, though little evidence remains of these. In his first *Sunbathing for Health* column, Connett put out a cross-Canada query: "Is there a nudist in the house?" At the time, the country had only two formal clubs, the Van Tans in BC and the Sun-Air-Freedom Lovers in Ontario.[27] But individual nudists, would-be nudists, and small, informal sunbathing groups of three or four also responded to

Connett. He began forwarding letters from prospective nudists to club organizers in their areas, and eventually club listings and contact information were published in the magazine. Over the years, club leaders such as Gaetan Couture from Montreal and Karl Ruehle contributed reports and articles on nudism, but Connett was the dominant voice of the movement in *Sunbathing for Health.* When it folded in 1959, he declared, "What there is of the Canadian nudist movement probably owes its existence to this magazine."[28] Though his claim is perhaps something of an overstatement, *Sunbathing for Health* certainly played an important role in the growth of Canadian nudism during the postwar years.

In the fall of 1947, less than a year after Connett's column debuted, he also participated in the creation of a national nudist body, the Canadian Sunbathing Association (CSA), in Vancouver. Those present at this gathering composed a constitution and elected an executive, including a president and national secretary. Connett was chosen as national secretary, a role he held for close to a decade. During this time, his advice was frequently sought by national and local nudist leaders (and was sometimes offered unsolicited). As a founding member of the Van Tan Club and the CSA, and as someone who had attended American and English clubs and conventions, he had a wide experience with the movement. The formation of the CSA signalled the development of a national nudist community. The association gathered annually, with conventions held in eastern or western Canada on an alternating basis. However, given the vast size of the country only a few members were able to attend any given convention. Thus, the community was largely maintained through correspondence. The CSA executive and club leaders exchanged letters updating one another on developments in their clubs and regions, and discussed ideas and concerns about the challenges of nudist organization in Canada.

One shared concern was the Criminal Code prohibition against public nudity. Section 205A made it a criminal offence to be nude in a public place or in a place visible to the public. This clause was a legacy of the federal response to the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors, who used public nudity to protest state authority and to express community dissent.[29] John McLaren explains that Section 205A was a 1931 amendment to the Criminal Code that resulted from pressure by the British Columbia and Saskatchewan governments, whose provinces were home to Doukhobor communities. It "effectively made public nudity a political crime" by increasing the maximum penalty from six months to three years of jail time.[30] Canadian nudists had

no desire to challenge the law. In his *Sunbathing for Health* column, Ray Connett frequently outlined the Criminal Code provision on nudity and explained how clubs and individuals could ensure that they obeyed the law while practising nudism in the club setting and at home. He advised leaders to select secluded grounds for their clubs that were naturally screened from the view of neighbouring property, public roads, and waterways. At home, he suggested that nudists take care to pull their blinds and plant trees or build fences to shield their backyards from the eyes of neighbours. Stan Wortner, owner of the Ontario Sunny Glades club, noted that before establishing his club in 1959, he took the step of consulting a lawyer and visiting the local Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachment:

> I had a lawyer in Chatham go through the statutes to see what the Canadian law had to say about nudity in public or private, and uh, you know, its consequences. So he researched it. And there was nothing that said, there was a lot of things that said if you were an exhibitionist or in view from public property, then you could be charged, but not on private property. We also ... went around to see the, he was district inspector of the OPP headquarters for ... Essex and Kent County. Had an audience with him, told him who we were and what we were going to do. And he said, oh, he said, wouldn't have any problem from their side of the force. Thanked us for coming in, and gave us a word of advice. And his advice was, if you can get along with your neighbours you'll get along with us.[31]

Many clubs specifically mandated that their members respect the law. The Toronto Gymnosophical Society, for example, required them to "abide by the Laws of Canada, taking no risk of exposing themselves, while nude, to view from adjoining property or public places."[32] So long as CSA members were "properly engaged in private or group sunbathing," the association would provide legal aid and advice if they were arrested or prosecuted.[33]

Because they took such careful precautions, Canadian nudists rarely faced criminal charges. Their main concern, in this respect, was to distance themselves from the Doukhobors and the association of nudity with political dissent. Canadian nudism's emergence coincided with renewed Sons of Freedom activism in the late 1940s, including nude demonstrations, which culminated in the seizure of Doukhobor children by the British Columbia government in 1953.[34] Although the Sons of Freedom were a small religious

group, their protests and the institutionalization of their children were widely reported across Canada. According to Ashleigh Androsoff, "*Time, Life, Newsweek, Maclean's,* and *Saturday Night* printed over 40 articles about Canadian Doukhobors during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s," and newspaper coverage was also extensive.[35] Members of the Canadian nudist movement objected to media characterization of Doukhobors as "nudists" and wished to rehabilitate the meaning of the term. A man who hoped to found a club in the Kootenays, where the Sons of Freedom were most numerous, informed CSA secretary Hazel McKague, "We will have to be very careful not to get any landowners against us as they will surely brand us as the Sons of Freedom."[36] This meant establishing an identity of who nudists were as well as who they were not. Mildred Harris declared, "Most of all we wish to be law abiding people who may enjoy the goodwill of the general public. We cannot expect tolerance if we flout the law like Doukhobors."[37] Nudists defined themselves as law abiding and respectful of Canadian institutions. They were not Doukhobors and did not espouse what that stood for in the public mind: politically dissident, exhibitionist, alien.[38]

The cultural context in which clubs operated varied across the country. The only criminal prosecution for club activity occurred in Montreal, then Canada's largest city, following a police raid on the Montreal Quetans Club in 1951. The Quetans had formed in the fall of 1948, after prospective members from the Montreal area were put in touch with one another via *Sunbathing for Health* and Ray Connett.[39] Lacking property, the group visited the Sun-Air-Freedom Lovers at their newly-acquired North Bay–area campground in the summer of 1949. In spring 1950, leader Gaetan Couture was happy to inform *Sunbathing for Health* readers that they had secured a property and begun developing it. Thirty-five adults and twenty children belonged to the club, and he expressed optimism that it would have as many as a hundred members by the end of the summer season.[40] But a police raid in July 1951 brought an abrupt end to its activities. Nine undercover officers conducted a covert operation, reportedly crawling through the grass of the seventy-acre property to reach the clearing where six club members were raking and cutting hay. Connett offered a dramatic interpretation of events for *Sunbathing for Health* readers based on the account he had received from Couture:

> As the ladies ran screaming to their tent to hide from the foul intruders, nine stalwart Provincial Police arose from the bushes, and bravely advanced

> upon the lone man who remained to face them. Gaetan Couture, leader of the Quetans, clutched a towel about his middle and challenged them. His only thought was that they must be reporters and cameramen from some scandal sheet. He shouted that they were trespassing on private property, that they had no right to be taking pictures, and that they should leave at once. Finally, after what seemed minutes, one flashed a badge that showed him to be a police officer.[41]

Couture was arrested on the charge of "promenading in the nude on his property in public view." He was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison; upon finding him guilty, Judge Oscar Gagnon offered the legal interpretation that a group of unrelated persons, such as those at the club, constituted "the public." He also made a point of noting that "this is a Catholic province, and here we observe certain beliefs and adhere to certain practices."[42] On appeal, Couture's conviction was quashed on a technicality: charges under Section 205A of the Criminal Code required prior approval of the attorney general, which had not been obtained.[43] Despite Couture's acquittal, Quebec nudist organization abruptly ceased in the wake of the incident, and for nearly twenty years afterward Quebec nudists travelled to Ontario and the United States rather than establishing new local clubs.[44] As a result, several clubs near the Quebec border drew a large number of members from Quebec during the fifties and sixties.[45] Clubs began to re-emerge in Quebec only in 1969, following significant political and cultural shifts.[46] Expressing concern for Couture and the implications for nudism in Quebec, CSA members established a defence fund to cover his legal costs. Despite the lower court conviction, nudists remained confident that club activities were legal and that unique factors were at play in Quebec.[47] In fact, Couture's trial remains Canada's only instance of criminal prosecution for nudist activity on private club property.

In Toronto, nudists faced different obstacles. Small groups had gathered there since the mid-1940s, but evidence suggests that the city's reputation as "Toronto the Good" and its enthusiastic policing of morality laws posed challenges. Nudist Doug Beckett recalled that *Sunbathing for Health* could not be sold in city limits: "It was published in Toronto, but … you couldn't buy it in Toronto, but you could buy it in Thunder Bay and you could buy it in Barrie. You could buy it just about anywhere then, speaking [of] Canada, but Toronto."[48] For one early organizer, harassment by the Toronto tabloid *Flash* resulted in his loss of employment as an artist at *Maclean's*

magazine.[49] The threatened exposure of other local nudists, high property values in the region, and internal club conflict stymied organization. After years of stops and starts, the Toronto Gymnosophical Society (TGS) formed in 1954 and found a home the following year when member couple Eddy and Mary Todorowsky purchased a hundred acres outside Newmarket, Ontario. Once established at this site, known as Glen Echo, TGS experienced rapid growth. By 1958, its records listed 134 members, and by 1971 it had expanded to more than 400.[50]

Unlike in Montreal and Toronto, the Maritan Club was well received in the small town of Bristol, New Brunswick. Its organizer, Marcus Meed, ran a machine shop, served as a church deacon, and was a respected member of his community, and when the Maritan grounds were not being used by the club they were occasionally used by local school groups.[51] The Maritans, however, remained small, and they existed only as long as Meed offered space and leadership to the group.

Despite shared objectives and concerns, the challenge of developing a nationally integrated movement in a country as vast and regionally diverse as Canada was great. The end of the 1950s proved to be a turning point. In 1959, losing money on the venture, Sinnott News ceased publication of *Sunbathing for Health,* and almost thirty years would elapse before another national nudist periodical was produced in Canada.

The following year, in another blow to national organizing, the CSA was dissolved and replaced by two bodies, the Western Canadian Sunbathing Association (WCSA) and the Eastern Canadian Sunbathing Association (ECSA). By this time, small clubs had been established on Vancouver Island, in the prairie cities of Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg, in Kingston and Ottawa, and in New Brunswick, but the BC Lower Mainland and southwestern Ontario were the clear hubs of Canadian nudism. They were two of Canada's most population-dense areas, they were the destination of most postwar European immigrants, and they subsequently had the largest pool of potential nudists from which to draw.[52] Furthermore, clubs tended to spring up in clusters, as members broke off to form new ventures of their own, either to serve an outlying area or because of dissatisfaction with the original club. During the postwar decade, two new clubs had branched off from North Vancouver's Van Tan Club: former members Ron and Stella Walker founded the Border Tans Club in Langley in 1948, and Ray and Mildred Connett spearheaded the establishment of the Sunny Trails Club in Surrey in 1952. In Ontario, Glen Echo outside Toronto and Sun

Valley Gardens in the Niagara region both opened in the mid-1950s; the latter gave rise to a number of clubs in the Golden Horseshoe, as noted above. The displacement of the CSA by the WCSA and the ECSA reflected the geographical gulf separating BC and Ontario nudists. It was also driven by a lack of organizational cohesion. The change was initiated by Ontario nudists, who disliked the bureaucracy, the membership fees, and the internal dissension of both the CSA and the American Sunbathing Association (ASA), with which it was affiliated. The split occurred at the 1959 eastern CSA convention, whose minutes record,

> It was stated that Club Members resent the rule of officials who do not represent their Clubs, and who have been elected or appointed by Conventions which only a fraction of the Membership can attend. It was stated that CSA had been spoiled by squabbling and by publication of squabbling. A feeling was expressed that trouble results from appointing or electing people to mind other people's business; that Clubs should run their own business, and be represented in all business concerning them.[53]

However, the new organizations were no more successful than their national predecessor at avoiding infighting or negotiating a structure that would satisfy the various member clubs, and they would play a largely inconsequential part in growing the Canadian movement.

Finally, a third significant change occurred around this time: Ray and Mildred Connett left their jobs and home in the Vancouver area and travelled around Canada and the United States before settling in California, where they founded the Glen Eden Sun Club in 1963. Although they maintained ties with the Canadian movement, their relocation south of the border brought an end to an era, as the pair no longer played the integral leadership and promotional roles that they had held within the Canadian movement through the forties and fifties.[54]

Nudism at the Local Level

The most significant form of nudist community before and after 1960 was the local club. Regional, national, and international organizations were loose affiliations of independent clubs that cooperated in promoting the philosophy and agreed to uphold a shared standard of behaviour. But the clubs acted as gatekeepers – determining who was, and was not, granted entry –

and they played the most prominent part in shaping people's experiences of nudism. They also proved most active in attracting new members. During the 1950s, Sunny Trails and Sun Valley Gardens undertook particularly bold promotional campaigns. Ray Connett had left the Van Tan Club in part because he wished to advertise nudism more openly than some of his fellow Van Tans. At Sunny Trails, he played a leading role in promoting an attitude of openness and transparency to public scrutiny. Connett believed that secrecy implied shame, the very thing nudists claimed to reject. He therefore encouraged clubs to cultivate respectful and open relationships with local officials and the community. He also suggested that club leaders build connections with the media by issuing press releases and inviting journalists to attend their major events. At its official opening in July 1953, Sunny Trails hosted its first annual open house. It was attended by 250 members of the public and 125 nudists, whose numbers were bolstered by visitors from nearby Canadian and American clubs.[55] The nudists wore clothes for the occasion. However, the following day an invited group of clergy and municipal leaders toured the camp while its members went nude. Both events were widely reported in local media and nationally broadcast on CBC Radio. The shift from concern over privacy and anonymity to more open public relations parallels the changing strategy of American gay and lesbian organizations in the 1950s, something that historian Martin Meeker sees as indicative of a changing cultural climate.[56]

In Ontario, Karl Ruehle took inspiration from Connett's methods, launching an extensive publicity drive of his own in the Hamilton area. Like Connett, he issued press releases and gave interviews with local media. Sun Valley Gardens staged its first open house in 1956, and the club held its largest public relations event when it hosted Canada's first nude open house in May 1959. Before being granted admission, guests signed a declaration that "at no time and in no way will we object to – or feel offended by – the nudity and activities of the people whom we see or meet."[57] Two years later, in a televised interview with June Callwood that aired on *Close Up,* a CBC prime time current affairs program, the Ruehles outlined the reasoning behind hosting the event. Marlies Ruehle told Callwood that at the original open houses,

> we admitted the general public and we found lots of just fellows coming in and it wasn't the kind of material we wanted for members, so we thought we could try it out and be in the nude as we really are because some people

> asked, well why did you get dressed when we come? Do you do something that we don't see, you know? ... So we figured if we admit couples only and have them sign a statement that they won't be offended we'd give it a try. And we did last year for the first time and it has been a tremendous success ... Over a thousand people signed in. And most of them were so much interested when they came that a big percentage joined within the course of that summer.[58]

The Ruehles reported that more than ninety people joined Sun Valley Gardens as a result of its first nude open house.[59] This time, Sunny Trails followed Sun Valley Gardens' lead and held its own nude open house a few months later, in the summer of 1959. Whereas the original clothed open houses had drawn hundreds of visitors, the first nude open houses reportedly attracted thousands.[60] These events were designed to fulfill a dual purpose: to serve as a membership drive and to cultivate a good public image for the movement. The March 1960 Sun Valley Gardens newsletter noted, "We would be fools not to repeat Nude Open House, and we hope that more and more clubs take up this idea for the good of gaining new members and to demonstrate how clean and natural it is to be nude for recreational purposes."[61] Nudists wanted to win the acceptance of mainstream society, and they hoped that opening their grounds to public view would provide reassurance that they were ordinary, respectable people.

At the same time, clubs sought to balance publicity campaigns with the protection of members' privacy. Nudists combined their club involvement with jobs, family responsibilities, and other social activities. In many cases, their extended family, friends, co-workers, and neighbours were unaware of their nudist affiliation. Fear of social censure or loss of employment were motives for keeping their membership under wraps. For every nudist like Ray Connett or Karl Ruehle there were many more who were less forthcoming about how they passed their leisure time. Sunny Glades owner Stan Wortner observed,

> I had some couples, some people from the United States, driving great big Cadillacs and things like that, and they'd park their car and cover their license plates. That's one of the things that you kind of wonder whether their positions were in jeopardy. But we had some people here too that wanted anonymity, just absolutely total anonymity. And I think it's still, there's still a twinge of that here ... They may live in Chatham,

> and they'll go to the Four Seasons, the United States someplace, down in Florida, and they never come here. Simply because they're either business people, or it's too close to home, and what if somebody sees them who knows them?[62]

Club protocol was to use first names only, and discussion about places of employment was discouraged to protect members' identities, even from each other. Some clubs even kept their location private. In 1958, two families who were TGS members caused consternation to Peterborough's Sunny Brae Ranch when they sought directions to the property from the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and local and provincial police, unaware that its location was not public knowledge. After learning of the incident, the TGS secretary apologized on their behalf: "I think there are very few among us who do not realize the discretion which has to be observed in Nudist matters in Canada. Certainly the strictness of our own enrolment procedure and other rules would demonstrate this to all."[63] Within the club context, nudists substituted their private location and the confidentiality of membership for the privacy of clothing.

Sensitive to the countercultural aspects of their movement, they took great pains to stress that they were not socially deviant. In her 1961 interview with the Ruehles, Callwood gave them the opportunity to correct this perception. She remarked, "You are regarded in many places as uh, people practicing some strange kind of cult, or that, perhaps there is a great many orgies, or strange behaviour goes on in nudist camps. How do you answer this sort of charge?" Karl replied, "That's all in the mind of those people. If these people would go and find out for themselves they would find out very soon it's so different. People who come for open houses also, they see it really different and they go home with a different idea."[64] In his club newsletter, he also informed prospective Sun Valley Gardens members that "you will find that we are just average and normal people, but claim that we have overcome the complex of false shame by accepting nudity as the natural state of our body and nothing else."[65] The Silva Sun Club presented a similar explanation to potential members, describing a nudist park as "very similar to a country club or public resort, offering swimming and recreational facilities of all descriptions. The main difference is that clothing is not required."[66] Nudists believed that if they could "cease to be strange" in the public imagination, they would make great progress toward widespread acceptance. Connett's advice to them was "Be ordinary! People resent outsiders because

they are *different.*"[67] Interviewed just prior to the first open house at Sunny Trails, Connett declared, "We're ready to show people that after all there was nothing to be afraid of and that we're really very ordinary people. In fact, when they come down Saturday night, they'll have a hard time deciding who are nudists and who aren't, because of course we'll be wearing clothes also."[68] Lisa Stein told a CBC Radio reporter that she was won over on her first visit to a nudist club when she found that "the people were very nice, they were my kind of people, they weren't dirty old men or dirty old women, they were just ordinary people, like my neighbours."[69]

Although the movement stressed the ordinariness of its members, its difference appealed to some. One *Sunbathing for Health* contributor extolled the joy of finding freedom from the "struggle for survival" and the conventional "narrow-minded outlook."[70] Connett too noted that the clubs possessed "a spirit of gaiety generated by taking part in something which is a little unusual."[71] In the midst of modern life, these individuals found nudism to be a refreshing respite and a source of a distinctive identity and community.

Nudism found a foothold in Canada in the years following the Second World War, spurred on by the promotional activity of Ray Connett, Karl Ruehle, and the pool of leaders and members who emigrated from Europe. A national magazine, *Sunbathing for Health,* and a national organization, the Canadian Sunbathing Association, facilitated its growth through the 1950s. By the end of 1960, both no longer existed, reflecting the challenges of organizational unity in such a large country. Nevertheless, local clubs took the reins, some pursuing innovative public relations campaigns while others were content with slower growth. Local clubs acted as gatekeepers and offered varied experiences of nudism at camp sites across the country.

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