MAKÚK

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MAKÚK

A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations

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Preface: *Makúk*

M*akúk* may well have been the first word exchanged by Aboriginal and European peoples on North America's Northwest Coast. James Cook, the first European visitor to land on what is now British Columbia, heard it even before he dropped anchor. The Mowachaht, whom the British explorer met at what is now known as Yuquot on Nootka Island, used the word *makúk* to attempt to convey several messages.

First and foremost, *makúk* meant "let's trade." The Mowachaht were keen to exchange their furs and other items for the metal goods Cook carried with him. Second, the word implied that the Mowachaht would not be intimidated by the well-armed white men into giving even so much as their grass away. Finally, in using the word *makúk* the Mowachaht were offering Cook and his crew their first lesson in a language of intercultural communication.

Yuquot, which Cook and later Europeans called Nootka, or Friendly Cove, thanks to the welcome they received there, became the centre for European trade on the Northwest Coast of North America from 1778 to the late 1790s. Every trading vessel stopped there, and the Spanish established a settlement there. Beginning with *makúk*, the Mowachaht, along with their Nuu-chah-nulth relatives along the west coast of Vancouver Island and Cape Flattery to the south, taught the Europeans a basic trading vocabulary. When trade shifted to the territory of the Chinook people at the mouth of the Columbia River after 1800, the traders took this simple jargon with them.

Yuquot and the Chinook villages at the mouth of the Columbia were already established trade centres when Europeans arrived. The Chinook added the "Nootka Jargon" to their own trading jargon, which they then taught to other foreign traders.[1] This Chinook "jargon," or *wawa* (to distinguish it from the language spoken by the Chinook people), then spread to other aboriginal groups via the fur traders. English and French words for introduced items were added to the language (e.g., *polallie*, from the voyageur French "pouderie," for powder; *lahache*, for axe; and *lum*, for rum.) The jargon spread northward and eastward so that, by the late 1880s,

The Moment we landed I sent some [men] to cut grass not thinking that the Natives could or would have the least objection, but it proved otherways for the Moment our people began to cut they stopped them and told them they must *Makook* for it, that is first buy it.

Captain James Cook, Friendly Cove, 1778
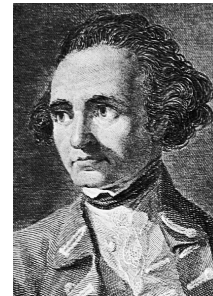
Captain James Cook

Maquinna, Chief of the Mowachaht

◄ Cook's crew exchanging items with the Mowachaht, 1778 (see p. xii)

I've Begun a Vocabulary

I have begun making a vocabulary of the Chenooke gibberish, by which we communicate with the Indians – it is a vile compound of English, French, American & the Chenooke dialect.

William Fraser Tolmie, *The Journals of William Fraser Tolmie,* June 25, 1833

Chinook Dictionary

Now, if the learner will just turn to … "Makook" – "Buy" which also signifies "Sell, etc" this tending to puzzle the person who understands it only in one sense when hears it used by an Indian [meaning?] quite opposite.

Harry Guillod*, Chinook Dictionary* [1862-88]
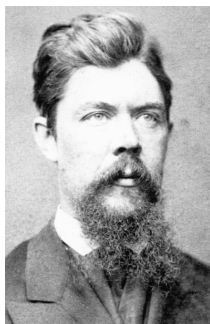
Harry Guillod, ca. 1880

the anthropologist Franz Boas was among many to remark that it would be impossible to get around British Columbia without it.[2]

This "rough-edged tongue with the whiff of commerce about it," as poet Gary Geddes described it, was born of exchange, at the crossroads of cultures, where novel experiences arise and new language is needed. Sites of exchange and translation of languages also become sites of transformation: just the places where the "Trickster" gets involved. In the European tradition, the ancient Greeks attributed the invention of language to Hermes – the Trickster in their pantheon of gods. Plato thought that spoken language was itself a byproduct of bargaining between peoples. On North America's Northwest Coast, a story from the Nuxalk people tells us the Creator thought one language would be enough for all peoples, but Raven (the Trickster), made many languages in order to have more sport in the spaces of misunderstanding.[3] Certainly, the Trickster was at work in Chinook jargon.

The Nuu-chah-nulth word *makúk* (*makook, mahkook, ma-kuk, maá-kuk*) was central to this trading jargon. It means "to exchange" – in all possible ways. The expression *náika tík-a makúk kiúu-ten* translates not only as "I want to buy that horse" but also as "I want to sell that horse" and "I want to trade that horse." In response, a potential trading partner might reply: *Kloshe*, which generally means "good" but has forty-five other meanings, including "graceful" and "useful." The buyer-seller might then say, *Maika skookum,* but since *skookum* means both "strong" and "demon," he or she could be saying "he (the horse) is strong" or "he is a demon." Words and phrases that sound alike also caused confusion. *Naika weght chako maika*, sounds very much like *Naika wake chako maika*, but the former means "I will come to you tomorrow" and the latter "I will not come to you."

To make the language simple, but also more confusing, there are no articles, no gendered pronouns, and no tenses. In its role as a medium of communication between different peoples with different ways of putting language together – and with vastly different concepts of time, space, and gender – all such markers were left out. The main preposition in the language, *kopa*, can mean completely opposite things: "to" and "from" as well as "in," "on," "under," "about," and "around." The main conjunction *pi* means "and" as well as "but." Add to this the many regional variations in vocabulary, pronunciation, usage, and spelling, and it is not surprising that the fifty-plus Chinook jargon dictionaries in circulation prior to 1935 sometimes offered contradictory definitions. Charles Buchanan, who taught the language in the late nineteenth century, put it this way: "The Chinook word is elastic and expressed a broad and general idea rather than one altogether specific."[4] It was a language of approximate meaning.

After Cook's landing in 1778, the jargon existed in a negotiated cultural space, neither fully Aboriginal nor fully European. If any one cultural group tried to push the language towards greater specificity, the referents were not available to the others, thus defeating the jargon's purpose. The various groups settled on a language amorphous enough that each could interpret it in a way that made sense within its own cultural framework. It was a language of deliberate ambiguity.

The vagueness that allowed the jargon to connect vastly different worlds led, of course, to misunderstandings. And these had their uses. If the Nlaka'pamux of the Fraser River wanted to interpret the Chinook words used by the Anglican Bishop of Columbia to refer to the Christian God – *Saghalie Tayee Papa* (literally, "the above chief father") – as the Sun and Creator, both sides could feel they had some common ground. Other "misunderstandings" were, of course, counterproductive, or caused offence, such as when a Methodist clergyman, wishing to address a gathering of Aboriginal People as "Children of the Forest," could, through his Chinook lexicon, get no closer than "Little men among big stick."[5]

In a few locations the jargon developed into a full Creole (it became the first language of children growing up in intercultural situations), but it remained largely a pidgin, a second language, used for intercultural communication and miscommunication.[6] From a trading language it became the language of work, used in the mills, canneries, and hop fields where Aboriginal People interacted with European immigrants, other Northwest Coast aboriginal groups with whom they shared no common language, Asians, and Hawaiians.[7] A language of material exchange, it was pressed into service as a language of cultural exchange: missionaries used Chinook to explain the gospel, teachers taught with it, anthropologists studied Aboriginal Peoples with it, treaties were negotiated through it, and court cases were tried in it.[8] It was even used as a medium of artistic expression: homesick Aboriginal People composed songs in it, and romantic non-aboriginal writers composed poetry in it.[9] Harry Assu, a Kwakwaka'wakw hereditary chief from Cape Mudge, recalled that, in the early twentieth century, Chinook "was all that was spoken in dealings between Indian and non-Indian people." As late as the 1930s, the jargon was still the main means of aboriginal/non-aboriginal interaction in the less populated parts of British Columbia, such as the Chilcotin.[10]

Chinook jargon is, itself, an example of *makúk* – exchange – between two cultures. James Cook's uncertainty about the term in 1778 was the opening act of a long and ongoing dialogue. From 1778 to the early twentieth century, virtually every exchange between Northwest Coast Aboriginal People and immigrants – be it to do with religion, the law, work,

Indian Point of View

Chinook ... is not as complicated as it looks ... You have merely to remember the Indian point of view to get the expression of almost any idea.

W.S. Phillips, *The Chinook Book,* 1913

White Man's Talk

They [Indians] have a great aversion to learning the English language, contenting themselves with the jargon which they look upon as a sort of whiteman's talk.

James Swan, *The Northwest Coast*, 1857

James Swan with his Haida collaborator Johnny Kit Elswa in Victoria, 1883

James Cook's crew exchanges items with the Mowachaht at Friendly Cove, 1778

The Lingua Franca

Hundreds of Indians of the Comox and Cowichan tribes work on steamers, in saw mills and factories; their language is Chinook, originally pure language of the Chinook Indian, today so mixed with Spanish, French, and English words that Europeans can learn it easily. In British Columbia Chinook is what the *lingua franca* is in the Levant. To the traveller in regions as far north as the Aleutian, it may be more useful than all modern languages combined.

Ernest von Hesse-Wartegg, "A Visit to the Anglo Saxon Antipodes from Canada and Newfoundland, 1889," ca. 1887

barter, sex, or love – was consummated in a language whose very construction guaranteed misunderstandings.[11] These misunderstandings became the basis for subsequent conventions and relationships. When English, which was taught to Aboriginal Peoples in schools, eclipsed Chinook as the language of intercultural exchange, the ambiguities and misunderstandings were already well entrenched in aboriginal/non-aboriginal relations. This book is all about makúk and how those misunderstandings still shape relations today.

MAKÚK

Introduction: Molasses Stick Legs

What is today Vancouver's financial district was clothed in giant red cedars when Englishman John Morton and two friends hammered the last spike into their shanty. Soon after, three Aboriginal People arrived on the scene:

> The Indian and two klootchmen approached the cabin and started to talk Chinook. They [the three Englishmen] did not understand the Indians and could not make the Indians understand them …
>
> This may not be correct but it is as near as I can recall it. The Indians were trying to impart some information but could make no headway, so at last, how they managed it I don't know, but the Indians got them to leave the form on which they were sitting …
>
> Then the two Indian girls started bouncing about, jumping in the air backwards and forwards over the form like two wild things, and they could jump like deer. This went on for fifteen minutes with the White Men very much puzzled, not understanding what it all meant.
>
> Eventually the girls tired themselves out and had to give up the performance. Neither succeeded in making themselves understood, and, bye and bye the Indians walked off in disgust.[1]

John Morton

In this first encounter, in the summer of 1862, the misunderstandings were obvious. At first the Aboriginal People tried to speak with Morton in the lingua franca of the territory, Chinook jargon. When words failed, the aboriginal visitors turned to gestures, then action. Still no comprehension. John Morton and his friends were left wondering: "what did it all mean?"

Discussion between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People seems so much easier today. All across the world, settler populations are involved in historic and ongoing conversations with Indigenous Peoples. This dialogue takes many forms: treaty talks; Royal Commissions; armed stand-offs; parliamentary hearings; Congressional hearings; court challenges; local, provincial, state and national negotiations; and casual conversation in our homes and workplaces.
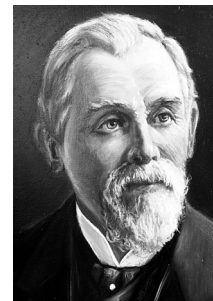
◄ Detail of Stan Greene exchange painting (see p. 6)

We no longer have the vast cultural gaps that Morton and his Musqueam visitors had to overcome. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal People generally dress the same way, live in similar houses, shop in the same malls, and watch the same TV shows. In conversation with each other, we now use the same language. Or do we? As we come to grips with major issues of the day – racism, aboriginal title, self-government, treaties, reserve poverty, the legacy of residential schools – are we really engaged in the same conversation with the same points of reference? The gap in communication is more subtle than it was in 1862 and, consequently, more difficult to see. In looking back to the earliest encounters between Europeans and indigenous people, a history of misunderstanding comes into focus.

That 1862 meeting between the newcomer Morton and the long-time owners of the land had the potential for tension and violence. What was it that the aboriginal visitors were so anxious to convey? Was it a welcome? A warning? Apparently neither. It was a job interview. Morton was later told that the male was simply trying to *makúk mamook* – to hire out the young women who were "young and supple, and who proved it by [their] agility."[2]

This book is about *makúk* – exchanges – between Aboriginal People and immigrants, and the misunderstandings that have arisen from them. It is a historical study of a particular kind of exchange – *mamook*, meaning "work for pay" in Chinook jargon – and its connections with race, family, and economy. *Makúk* focuses on British Columbia, Canada, to look at an international process – the displacement of Aboriginal Peoples from control of resources, the resettlement of land by people of European descent, and the partial incorporation of Aboriginal Peoples into the new Euro-Canadian economy and into the modern welfare state. The rationale behind the displacement of Aboriginal Peoples was one that Europeans invoked across the globe, although the techniques of dispossession have surely differed from place to place.

This book also focuses on the work-for-pay exchange between Aboriginal People and immigrants of European stock, the two most prominent cultural groups in colonial British Columbia, and follows the patterns of this exchange from its origins through to the present. In following these patterns over the long term, a surprising fact emerges: the high rates of unemployment and welfare dependency among contemporary aboriginal communities are recent historical phenomena, with observable roots and causes. In 1996, the annual income of registered Indians in Canada was half of that of non-Indians. If we compare Aboriginal People to others who live in comparable communities, economists can show that about 42 percent of this difference is the result of geographical and locational factors.

NORTHWEST PEOPLES:
KASKA, TAKU RIVER TLINGIT,
TAGISH, and CHAMPAGNE-AISHIHIK

TLINGIT

TAHLTAN
and ISKUT

TREATY 8 PEOPLES:
SEKANI, DUNNE-ZA, DENE-THAH,
SAULTEAUX, and CREE

GITXSAN

NISGA'A

HAIDA

TSMS'YEN

WET'SUWET'EN

DAKELH (CARRIER):
SOUTH, CENTRAL,
and NAT'OOT'EN

HAISLA and
HENAAKSIALA

OWEEKENO, NUXALK,
and HEILTSUK

KWAKWAKA'WAKW

TSILHQOT'IN

SECWEPEMC

ST'AT'IMC

NUU-CHAH-NULTH

SHÍSHÁLH , SLIAMMON,
HOMALCO, and KLAHOOSE

NLAKA'PAMUX

HUL'QUMI'NUM

KTUNAXA
and
KINBASKET

PACHEENAHT

OKANAGAN

MAKAH

SEMIAHMOO

HALQ'EMEYLEM
(including STO:LO and MUSQUEAM)

STRAITS PEOPLES:
LEKWUNGEN, BEECHER BAY,
T'SOU-KE,and WSANEC

SQUAMISH
and
TSLEIL WAUTUTH

MAP 1.1 Aboriginal British Columbia

Exchange of fish for blankets, the main commodities exchanged at Fort Langley until the gold rush, as drawn by Stó:lō artist Stan Greene

Another 5 percent of this gap can be explained by the younger age structure and lower educational levels of Aboriginal People.[3] The explanation of the other half of this difference lies in our history.

As a theme, *makúk* (exchange) is at the heart of many of the diverse interactions between indigenous peoples worldwide and Europeans. Even before Aboriginal people and Europeans learned to converse, they established a connection based on the trading of goods, a relationship that formed the foundation for more complex exchanges: conversation, wage labour, treaties, and marriage, to name a few. Viral, genetic, and biological exchanges accompanied these new interactions.[4] Of all these forms of exchange, I focus on wages and welfare because aboriginal work for pay, or the lack of it, is central to an understanding of Euro-Canadian expansion into British Columbia and is the core of the discussion about what others have called the "Indian problem" – the place of Aboriginal People in Canadian society today.

Ideas about what constitutes "real" work are at the heart of Canadian history and colonial histories worldwide. To eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans, labour was the source of all value and provided the right to ownership. Europeans invoked the philosophy of John Locke: "Whatsoever, then, he removes out of a state that nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with ... [he] thereby makes it his property." The argument was that the fishing, hunting, gathering, building,

and even farming that Aboriginal Peoples did was not labour – at least not in a way that met the definition of classical economics. Such efforts did not sufficiently remove items from their "state of nature."[5] European fishing, trapping, farming, and manufacturing, on the other hand, *were* considered to mix labour with nature and so were invoked as justification for making the land, waters, and resources European "property."

Historical geographer Cole Harris reminds us that culture and space are not separate categories. Land only becomes divisible and ownable when labour is applied to survey and fence it.[6]

Labour is also at the core of how Europeans and, later, North Americans, valued themselves. Before the Reformation, work was tied to need, profit was unclean, and merchants were outcasts – un-Christian because of their selfishness. Beginning with the Protestants in sixteenth-century Europe (earlier among the Jews) and later spreading to Catholic countries and all of Europe's outposts, peoples' worth has been valued according to their conformity with what Max Weber called the "Protestant work ethic." By the new standards, a person's value as a human being was related to his or her willingness to work long hours, to sacrifice leisure, and to pursue wealth beyond her/his basic material needs. From pariahs, merchants became the pillars of the church and the leaders of the community. Since then, Western culture has generally reserved the highest status to those most successful at hoarding wealth.

Aboriginal cultures, which, culturally and economically, valued "leisure time" did not measure up to this "work ethic." In the words of the eighteenth-century legal theorist E. de Vattel, "There are those who, to avoid labour, choose to live by hunting" and, because of that choice, have no reason to complain when their land is usurped by farmers – productive and worthy members of society.[7] The myth of the "lazy Indian," derived from peculiar views about labour that were prevalent in European culture of the time, was invoked to transfer lands from Aboriginal Peoples to colonial states and then to colonists.

There is a widespread misconception that, after the arrival of Europeans in British Columbia, Aboriginal Peoples remained outside the capitalist economy in what Cardell Jacobsen has called, within an American context, an "economy of uselessness." Canadian authors such as Noel Dyck have likewise argued that "this situation is quite different from that of colonial regimes ... where the exploitation of native labour was from the outset a fundamental feature of the economy." Dyck makes the same point as does Robin Fisher in his pioneering work on aboriginal/non-aboriginal relations in British Columbia. Fisher argued that, with the 1858 gold rush, the colonies that comprise modern British Columbia changed from "colonies

No Reason to Complain

Those who still persue this idle mode of life [fishing and hunting] usurp more extensive territories than, with a reasonable share of labour, they would have occassion for, and have, therefore, no reason to complain if other nations, more industrious and too closely confined come and take possession of a part of those lands.

Emmerich de Vattel, *The Law of Nations,* 1861

In a *Victoria Times* cartoon, lazy Indians are depicted as impeding progress (May 16, 1910)

of exploitation, which made use of indigenous manpower, to colonies of settlement, where the Indians became at best, irrelevant."[8]

One of the goals of this book is to reverse this idea. The European economy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended on aboriginal labour. A closer look shows that Aboriginal Peoples never became irrelevant, not even in the twentieth century, not even to the Euro-Canadian immigrants who tried to make them invisible. In fact, the attempt to "vanish the Indians," ironically, brought them into national visibility. The efforts to marginalize them made them, paradoxically, a central preoccupation of the Canadian state. Aboriginal People were drawn into peaceful exchange and paid-work relationships, and this is important, not least because this made them unwitting participants in the very process that was transforming and displacing their own economies. Ignoring aboriginal participation in the workforce misses the role that wage labour played in the larger project of the "peaceable subordination" of Canadian Aboriginal Peoples and the establishment of modern Canada.

By "peaceable subordination" I am referring to strategies used by certain European colonists and colonial states to dominate occupied lands while publicly deploring the violence of conquest. The dispossession of Aboriginal Peoples was cloaked in this language of incorporation, through which they were supposed to be brought into a state of civilization by the extension of Christianity, education, private property, capitalist social relations, British justice, and, ultimately, the social welfare state. In Canada, compared to many other settler colonies, the dislocation of Aboriginal Peoples was a largely peaceable process that declared, with Psalm 72, "precious shall be their blood in his sight." But if violence was not often visible, it was not too far below the horizon. The same Psalm 72, from which the name "Dominion" for the Dominion of Canada was taken, also says that those who do not bow down before Him shall "lick the dust."[9]

It has been too easy to link the historical characterization of the "irrelevant Indian" with current reports of high unemployment and high rates of welfare dependency. It is easy to assume (as surveys show many Canadians do) that, ever since the fur trade, "lazy Indians" have been sidelined on their reserves collecting government handouts. This assumption, based on a particular interpretation of the past, plays a prominent role in current policy debate. It is visible in public and editorial responses to the ongoing treaty process in British Columbia. As Elizabeth Furniss shows, it plays itself out in the politics and personal relations of rural British Columbia. It has also manifested itself in the learned opinions of the court. In a landmark 1990 court case, BC Chief Justice Allan McEachern incorporated a variant of this view into his decision to deny aboriginal title.[10]

The history of aboriginal work-for-pay connects the extension of European colonialism with the social history of Aboriginal Peoples. Work-for-pay is connected to all other aspects of social life because it always exists in a relationship with other kinds of work – harvesting wild foods, maintaining a household, raising children. How families take shape, how children are raised, how men and women relate to one another are all linked to what work is done and how it is shared. The amount a household participated in a subsistence economy also dramatically affected how it functioned in the labour market since a viable "bush economy" (or what I call moditional economy) meant that wage work was optional.[11]

From today's vantage point, work-for-pay seems to be a straightforward form of exchange, but labour historians have revealed that our current wage-labour system is not a "natural" form of social relations. In Europe an intensive period of indoctrination and coercion was necessary before workers accepted wage labour and its accompanying work ethic, and a similar process occurred during the industrialization of North America.[12] In fact, work for pay is a complicated exchange involving, for the worker: class-relations, subordination, work discipline, and a specialized division of labour. A close study of the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and the European capitalist economy offers insights about the relationship between Canadians generally, work, and the welfare state.[13]

Even the simplest form of exchange – barter – cannot be taken for granted when it involves crossing cultural boundaries. Consider this *makúk*, which took place on Burrard Inlet (seventy years before Morton's failed attempt at communication) when Captain George Vancouver and his crew became the first Europeans to enter the inlet and meet the Musqueam people. Vancouver recorded the following in his log:

> Here we were met by about fifty Indians in canoes, who conducted themselves with great decorum and civility, presenting us with several fish cooked and undressed of a sort ... resembling smelt. These good people, finding we were inclined to make some return for their hospitality showed much understanding in preferring iron to copper ... The major part of the canoes twice paddled forward, assembled before us, and each time a conference was held ... The subject matter, which remained a profound secret to us, did not appear to be of an unfriendly nature, as they soon returned, and, if possible, expressed additional cordiality and respect ... they possessed no European commodities or trinkets, excepting some rude ornaments apparently made from sheet copper; this circumstance and the general tenor of their behaviour gave us reason to conclude that we were the first white people from a civilized country that they had yet seen.[14]

Indians Choose Not to Work on Sunday

[Christian] teaching has civilised and evangelized these men, and prepared them to become docile and industrious, whereas before they were fierce and indolent.

Rev. W.H. Collison, *In the Wake of the War Canoe*, 1915
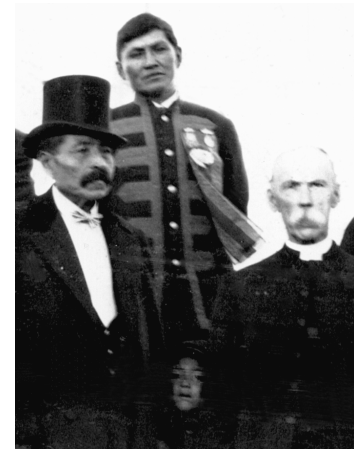
Rev. Collison with parishioners Kincolith Chief Paul Klaydach (Claytha) and Councillor James Robinson at Royal Commission Hearings in Kincolith, October 1915

Conquered by Relentless Energy

[Aboriginal People] were not as industrious in the new economic climate as was thought to be necessary by the newcomers in the Colony ... They became a conquered people, not by force of arms ... but by an invading culture and a relentless energy with which they would not, or could not compete.

Chief Justice Allan McEachern, *Reasons for Judgement*, 1991
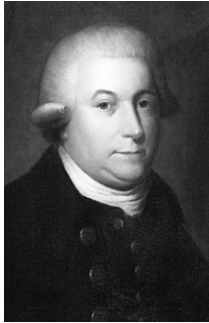
Captain George
Vancouver

Now, compare this to an aboriginal account told by August Jack Khahtsahlano of the encounter with Vancouver in the same region. Like Vancouver's account, it focuses on the exchange of goods:

> Old people say Indians see first ship they think it an island with three dead trees, might be a schooner, might be a sloop; two masts and bowsprit, sails tied up. Indian braves in about twenty canoes come down Squamish River, go see. Get nearer, see men on island, men have black clothes with high hat coming to point at top ... Whitemans give Indians ship bisquit Indian not know what bisquit for. Before whitemans come Indians have little balls, not very big; roll them along ground, shot at them with bow and arrow for prac-tice, teach young Indian so as not to miss deer. Indian not know ship's bisquit good to eat, so roll them along ground like little practice balls shoot at them, break them up. Then whitemans on schooner give molasses same time bisquit. Indian not know what it of, so Indian rub on leg for medicine. You know Indian sit on legs for long time in canoe; legs get stiff. Rub molasses on legs make stiffness not so bad. Molasses stick legs bottom of canoe.[15]

There are a few parallels in the two accounts.[16] What is more striking, however, are the conflicting realities represented in the accounts – realities rooted in radically different cultural premises. The Musqueam were en-gaged in a ritual greeting, making speeches and presenting gifts. The ex-plorers were surveying and glad to have the chance to acquire a few fish, unaware that the cordial conferences to which they were being treated were formal welcome speeches.[17] The explorers perceived that iron was the most significant exchange item for the Aboriginal People, but the local people remembered the biscuits and molasses. These ship staples offer the best example of different realities. What had been food to the Europeans be-came targets and ointment to the locals. It is tempting to dismiss the abo-riginal story as an attempt to tell a joke at their own expense, but that would miss an important point: *what was given may not be what was received.*

These contrasting interpretations are key to the argument that under-lies this book. Exchange is a process that involves the translation of mean-ing as well as goods. When goods changed hands, "what they were good for" was also transformed. The "molasses stick legs" story is one example among many of how objects in circulation from one culture to another are often transformed by the act of exchange itself. This type of story recurs frequently in indigenous accounts of first contact in British Columbia and elsewhere. In Nuu-chah-nulth oral histories biscuits and molasses were understood to be bones and blood; by one account the Skidegate Haida took soap offered by the traders to be food; in stories from Massett the first

August Jack Khahtsahlano

axe-head traded was used as an ornament by the wife of the main chief, "Coneyea," who suspended it from her neck.[18] Chinese coins, fancy boxes from the Sandwich Islands, and woollen blankets knitted in the mills of Lancashire all acquired new meanings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as part of the art and ritual of the indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest.[19]

Transformational exchange worked both ways as aboriginal goods that were brought into circulation within a European environment also acquired new meanings. Furs from the Northwest Coast became markers of status in France and Britain, as British woollen blankets did in villages in the Pacific Northwest. In Europeans' hands, sacred ceremonial regalia became commodities and curios. Some became "exhibits" and were used as proof of the "skill and industry" of Aboriginal Peoples, while others were used as proof of the savageness of the very people from whom they were bought.[20]

The idea that exchange involved transformation would have been familiar to the indigenous people of the Northwest Coast, where each cultural group had a transformer figure, often a trickster, at the centre of its cosmology. Among Nuxalk people, who live on the central coast of British Columbia, transformative exchange was built into their language and how they understood the world. In their language the root/stem *ay*, *ayaw*, and *ayu*, which means "to exchange and trade," also means "to become changed."[21]

If something as simple as the exchange of an object involves a transformation, what about the more complex meanings embedded in the exchange of labour for goods? Thinking about the exchange of labour as a cross-cultural exchange allows us to take a fresh perspective on aboriginal/non-aboriginal relations. What if, when European merchants and capitalists hired aboriginal labour, Aboriginal People were selling them something else? What if, when merchants paid aboriginal labourers in blankets or in currency, Aboriginal People received something else? And, when the government paid "relief" or "welfare" to Aboriginal People, did they receive something else?[22]

Makúk is an extended answer to these questions. And, as this answer comes from several points of observation, the organization of what follows might best be described as telescopic. The different sections examine overlapping time periods at different levels of magnification: a single community, a region, a nation, a language, a discourse.

This book is also a deliberate attempt to be part of a broader dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. Throughout I present fragments of the dialogue upon which my argument is based. These are themselves pieces of evidence and capture key themes. They also say something

The Chief of Langara Point (present-day Point Grey), who met with Vancouver in 1792

about alternative ways of thinking and speaking. Ultimately, history is ex-perienced and created by individuals as the historical forces of their time weave through specific events in their lives. These asides tell of individuals making and encountering history. They are also a way of acknowledging that writing, "like any cultural performance, involves appropriating, ab-sorbing and transforming the text of others."[23]

The first section, the preface, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 provide a pano-ramic view and set the stage for the story/argument. Chapter 2, "Pomo Wawa: The Other Jargon" is directed at those readers who would like to explore the analytic foundations of the arguments that are largely implicit in the rest of the book. Chapter 3 examines how "Indians" have been vanished and why we know so little about this aspect of aboriginal/non-aboriginal relations. It discusses how the "Indian" has been defined as lazy. This examination of how Aboriginal Peoples were racialized in the source material is important to understanding the evidence presented in later chapters.

The book's second section shifts the focus from the macro to the mi-cro level. Chapters 4 and 5 are microhistories of two different peoples and places, and in them we see that the histories of place and identity overlap and shape each other in reciprocal ways. The Tsilhqot'in and the Straits Salish, the latter including the Lekwungen (Songhees), Esquimalt, and Wsanec (Saanich) peoples, represent two extremes of aboriginal responses to European colonialism.[24]

The Straits Salish groups welcomed the Europeans. They helped build their trading fort and the city that grew up around it. If any Aboriginal Peoples in the country were interested in working for the settlers, it was the Straits Salish, and if any had access to employment, it was them. The Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin) took the opposite approach. They used threats and intimidation to drive the fur traders away, and when settlers attempted to build a road through their territory, they drove them out in one of only two cases of open warfare between aboriginals and whites in British Co-lumbia.[25] Little interested in the European economy, the Tsilhqot'in effec-tively kept immigrants out of the core of their territory until the 1920s, when a few ranchers began to co-exist with them. Today, because of their early resistance to roads, they live in what is geographically central British Columbia and yet what is also one of the most isolated pockets of the province. Comparing the Tsilhqot'in history with Straits Salish history answers the question: was accommodation more effective than resistance in dealing with the Europeans?

While macrohistory is better at answering the question "what?" microhistory reveals, and to some extent unravels, the complexity of

historical events and helps us answer the question "why?" The idea behind microhistory is that close observation reveals insights that are often missed at a more general, or macro, level.[26] Microhistory locates (often unique) local circumstances in relation to more general historical questions, and it is this focus on the interaction between local and regional, national, and global levels of action that distinguishes microhistory from local history. In this case the questions are about work, race, gender, colonialism, welfare, and power.

Chapters 6 to 8 return the discussion to a more macro level, situating the micro-studies within the BC context. Chapter 6 looks at the incorporation of aboriginal labour into the capitalist workforce in two parts. The first covers 1849 to 1885, the era before the state had begun to collect systematic data on employment. This section discusses aboriginal labour, presenting information taken from a range of aboriginal voices and archival material, one detail at a time. The second part of the chapter charts aboriginal labour patterns between 1885 and 1970, when it was possible to compare statistical data gathered by the state and employers with a range of manuscript and biographical accounts of aboriginal labourers. For several reasons 1970 appears as a major watershed, now sufficiently distant that it is possible to get a historical perspective on the events that occurred at that time.

Chapter 7 examines the state's effect on aboriginal work for pay around the province, while Chapter 8 looks at the general experience of substituting paid and subsistence work for state welfare payments. These patterns, important in their own right, also help illustrate which elements of the Tsilhqot'in and Straits Salish experiences were purely local and which were part of a larger process of change and exchange. Finally, the conclusion looks at the last thirty years of aboriginal/non-aboriginal interactions, and a "pomo postscript" returns to the panoramic level from which we started. I hope that, taken as a whole, the different levels of analysis capture the dynamic linkages between local conditions, local cultures, and global processes.

In the account of the 1862 meeting that opened this introduction, John Morton failed to establish communication with Aboriginal People. Ninety years previously, the crew of Vancouver's ship, the *Discovery*, and the Musqueam had no more success in understanding each other. *Makúk* is another attempt at cross-cultural communication. As John Morton's son Joseph said, "it may not be correct but it is near as I can recall it." Conversation is a form of exchange, and I invite you to join this *makúk*. We start, in Chapter 2, by looking at some of the places where the discussion has gone awry.

The Reader Is Involved ...

In microhistory ... the researcher's point of view becomes an intrinsic part of the account ... The reader is involved in a sort of dialogue and participates in the whole process of constructing the historical argument.

Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," 1991

Giovanni Levi