An anti-racism methodology: The Native Sons and Daughters and racism against Asians in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada

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Key Messages

- It is important to develop methodologies to counter white supremacy and racism against Asians.
- The Native Sons and Daughters of British Columbia were leading organizations engaged in Asian racism during the 20th century.
- The production of knowledge associated with better understanding past racism against Asians can be useful for countering a present-day increase in racism against Asians in British Columbia and beyond.

Over the past number of years there has been increased interest in racism and anti-racism amongst geographers. This paper focuses on one type of anti-racism methodology that relates to critically interrogating my own white colonial settler ancestors and particularly the institutions and structures of which they were a part, and using those understandings to resist the contemporary increase in white supremacy and anti-Asian racism. It also seeks to demonstrate the links between anti-racism and decolonization. Particularly, I examine the Native Sons and Daughters of British Columbia, Canada, in the Nanaimo city area, where my great-grandparents from northern England and Scotland settled as working-class miners at the beginning of the 20th century. I examine white working-class settler racism against Asians, especially as practiced against Chinese and Japanese immigrants. While I do not argue that this is the only or even the most important type of anti-racism methodology, this sort of research and associated production of knowledge can be useful in resisting present-day anti-Asian racism, even though I acknowledge that I am still embedded in colonial structures of racism and white privilege.

Keywords: racism, anti-racism, decolonization, Asian, British Columbia

Une méthodologie antiracisme : les filles et les fils natifs de la province et le racisme à l'endroit des Asiatiques à Nanaimo, Colombie-Britannique, Canada

Au cours des dernières années, on a constaté un intérêt accru pour le racisme et l'antiracisme parmi les géographes. Cet article met l'accent sur un type de méthodologie antiracisme qui est reliée à mon questionnement critique sur mes propres ancêtres colonisateurs blancs, et plus particulièrement, les institutions et les structures dont ils faisaient partie et l'utilisation de cette compréhension pour résister à la hausse contemporaine de la suprématie blanche et du racisme anti-asiatique. Je tente également de démontrer les liens entre l'antiracisme et la décolonisation. J'examine plus particulièrement les filles et les fils natifs de la Colombie-Britannique, au Canada, dans le secteur urbain de Nanaimo, où mes arrières-grands-parents venus du nord de l'Angleterre et d'Ecosse se sont installés comme mineurs de la classe ouvrière au début du vingtième siècle. J'examine le racisme des colons blancs de la classe ouvrière à l'endroit des Asiatiques, plus particulièrement des immigrants chinois et japonais. Bien que je ne soutienne pas que ce soit le seul type ou même le type

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de plus important de méthodologie antiracisme, ce genre de recherche et la production connexe de connaissances peuvent être utiles pour résister au racisme anti-asiatique actuel, même si je reconnais que je suis encore asservi par les structures coloniales du racisme et du privilège des blancs.

Mots clés : racisme, antiracisme, décolonisation, Asiatique, Colombie-Britannique

Introduction

Geography has a long and sometimes problematic history of the study of race and racism, dating back to around the turn of the 20th century (Tyner 2016). In recent years, however, there has been an upsurge of scholarship in geography explicitly addressing anti-racism (Pulido 2002; Nash 2003; Carter et al. 2014; Kobayashi 2014; Alderman and Inwood 2016). There are, however, a number of different ways to approach anti-racism. In this paper, I do so by linking anti-racism with "decolonizing methodologies" (Smith 1999; Shaw 2006; Cupples and Glynn 2014; Deramo 2016), an area that has also drawn interest within geography. In particular, there has been interest in decolonizing geography as a discipline (Shaw et al. 2006; Berg 2012; Sundberg 2013; Kobayashi 2014). But here I intend to approach anti-racism through engaging with ideas linked to decolonizing methodologies.

My argument is that there are various ways of addressing racism and the legacy of uneven power relations, if one is to study one's own links to racist history, which is what I do here. Moreover, these sorts of studies are not only important for people whose family histories are strongly linked to racism, but also for people whose families were more generally a part of societies where racism was pervasive.

Anti-racism methodologies, which I think can productively be linked with ideas associated with decolonizing methodologies, involve a particular positionality, and are suited for white geographers from colonial settler societies, like me, who want to investigate and unpack, in a reflexive and non-defensive way, the colonial and racist histories and legacies of our ancestors. This can contribute to promoting resistance against contemporary white supremacism and anti-Asian movements. While historical geographical research can productively focus on oppressive colonial power against Indigenous peoples, such as Cole Harris (2011) did in *Making Native Spaces*, and which I do only to a limited degree here, it can also productively engage with oppressive racist relations involving other groups of peoples who have been subjected to white power and oppression (Nash 2003; Kobayashi 2014; Alderman and Inwood 2016). In this case, I am focused on racism directed against people of Asian descent who have been victimized by the same colonial powers that oppressed Indigenous peoples, even if the relationships in which they were embedded and their positionalities have not been the same. Therefore, it is useful to frame this paper in relation to anti-racist theory, such as that which is presented in *Orienting Canada* by Price (2012), or more directly, but implicitly, through accounts of injustices against Japanese Canadians in the 1940s by people such as Adachi ([1979] 1991) and Hickman and Fukawa (2012). Indeed, an important anti-racism action that one can take is to recognize, acknowledge, and demonstrate how racism has been crucially important in the construction of society as we know it today.

Linking anti-racism with decolonizing methodologies is useful, but what are decolonizing methodologies? Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), in her now well-known and highly regarded book, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples,* emphasizes the importance of positionality in relation to research by and for Indigenous peoples. Privileging the voices of disempowered peoples is often crucial (Deramo 2016). Various authors, including Brun (2010), Larsen and Johnson (2012), Runk (2014), Sundberg (2013), and others have focused on the types of relationships and collaborations that emerge in research environments. Geographers have similarly considered decolonizing methods in relation to race and "whiteness" (Shaw 2006; Berg 2012; Kobayashi 2014), something important considering the overwhelming whiteness of geography as a discipline. This is a crucial part of the anti-racist tradition that I intend to draw upon. In addition, geographers have shown a particular interest in decolonizing methods related to cartography and maps (Pickles 2005; Khoury and Da'Na 2012). Others in the soft social sciences have examined decolonizing education, both in post-colonial situations (Abdi 2013; Cupples and Glynn

2014) and in places where colonialism continues (Castleden et al. 2013; Sloan Morgan and Castleden 2014; Wråkberg and Granqvist 2014). Dutta (2015) has written specifically about "decolonizing communication for social change," Di Pietro (2016) has demonstrated the usefulness of considering how race and sexuality intersect in particular circumstances and spaces, and Daza (2008) has engaged with the decolonization of researcher authenticity. Bradley and Herrara (2016) have written about decolonizing efforts within the food justice movement. Tuck and Yang (2012, 1) have, however, usefully pushed back against using the idea of decolonization as a metaphor, due to the belief that the term decolonization should be focused explicitly on the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life," and that using it as a metaphor tends to distract from its main purpose. In that this paper primarily deals with racism and anti-racism, rather than decolonization per se, it makes more sense to position myself in relation to anti-racism rather than decolonization, but there is clearly overlap between the two.

Reflexivity is an important aspect of anti-racism and decolonizing methodologies, I would argue, as are questions related to the production of knowledge, including geographical knowledge (Gibson 2006; Johnson et al. 2007). Crucially for this paper, Kobayashi (1991) has written about the role of academics, including herself as a Japanese-Canadian geographer, in addressing the Japanese-Canadian movement. Kobayashi (2003) has also, however, strongly criticized much of the positionality research led by feminist geographers because she feels that it tends to turn the topic to "me" and thus unintentionally reinforces the "them." To avoid this trap, I have tried to take an interactive rather than a me-focused approach, while still recognizing the important contributions of feminist geographers more generally to thinking about positionality.

Appropriately, much of the scholarship related to decolonization has specifically focused on Indigenous peoples (Gibson 2006; Johnson et al. 2007; Louis 2007; Larsen and Johnson 2012; Sundberg 2013; Castleden et al. 2013; Sloan Morgan and Castleden 2014; Morton et al. 2016), and rightly so, especially considering that the Americas continue to be dominated by white settler societies. I am inspired by this work, but since I primarily deal with how a white settler colonial society oppressed Asian immigrant societies, thinking about anti-racism makes more sense for this particular paper. I still, however, think the literature on decolonizing methodologies is useful for thinking about anti-racism, or more generally, the decentring of whiteness, as it goes beyond simply describing racism and instead looks at how to resist it, thus being implicitly action-oriented.

In this paper, I offer reflections concerning one particular white settler society on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (BC), Canada, but more specifically, I am interested in a particular "anti-racism methodology" (borrowing from "decolonizing methodologies"). My goal is to reflexively but interactively investigate the oppressive relationships that existed between my white ancestors of European descent, through the institutions to which they belonged, and people of Asian descent who lived within a sphere of white European colonial power. In particular, my focus is on investigating an institution to which my paternal grandmother belonged, the Nanaimo chapter of the Native Daughters of British Columbia (Native Daughters), and its gender-based cognate, the Native Sons of British Columbia (Native Sons).

In the next section I briefly review my overall anti-racism research methodology. I then turn to the history of my own family's colonial settler history in Nanaimo, including a description of the changes that have occurred in my family over five generations. This is followed by a general history of the Native Sons and Native Daughters. Based on archival materials found in the Nanaimo Community Archives, I outline efforts, prior to the establishment of these two organizations, to oppress people of Chinese descent. Subsequently, I discuss the oppression unleashed on peoples of Asian descent by the Native Sons and Native Daughters during the mid-20th century. I conclude by reflecting on how my findings can potentially contribute to resisting a recent upsurge in white supremacist and anti-Asian activism in BC and beyond.

Anti-racism methodology

Supporting anti-racism is a multi-faceted process, requiring many approaches and perspectives to be effective over the long term. This research does not necessarily represent the most important part of the larger process of anti-racism or the only possible anti-racism methodology. Nor do I claim

that it is sufficient to replace other crucial aspects of anti-racism or decolonization, including encouragement of those oppressed by colonial power to conduct their own research and to tell their own histories. I believe that the above is probably the most important step forward in the process of countering racism and colonialism, but supporting various types of knowledge production associated with anti-racism makes sense. We must attend to the narratives and rebalance power relations. This is also a fundamental part of anti-racism and decolonization more generally.

This does not, however, mean that engaging research subjects as researchers is the only component of anti-racism or decolonization. For those of us who have family histories as colonial power-holders, there is work to be done in liberating our own minds, and exposing the colonial histories that have oppressed other peoples over time—even up to the present. Crucially, colonizers need to be recognized as not only having a history of oppressing Indigenous peoples, but also other immigrant communities, including Asian immigrants, the focus of this paper. Therefore, linking anti-racism with decolonization is crucial. This is the area to which I wish to contribute through this research.

There are many ways in which the latter type of research could occur. I wish to reiterate that I am not claiming that this research in any more important than any other, but it is a useful path forward for me, and potentially others. Rather than studying others in colonial relationships, I want to take the potentially awkward step of examining my own paternal roots and the role of my ancestors and the institutions that they were part of, so as to support the decolonization process. This sort of positionality seems particularly useful to me.

First, I relied on stories and histories related to my father's side of the family, including memories of my relatives. Second, I conducted interviews with family members who continue to live on Vancouver Island, including my father, a great aunt, a cousin, and my mother. I draw upon memories of ideas my paternal grandmother conveyed to me when I was a child. Crucially, however, I use information I generated from four days of archival work at the Nanaimo Community Archives in July 2016, and a number of additional days reviewing materials collected at the archives. This includes assessing details from documents I read and scanned, but also from verbal information I received from people I met at the archives.

Before continuing, I want to make it clear that this paper represents neither the beginning nor the end of a much broader personal journey associated with decolonization and anti-racism. But it will, I suspect, contribute one small but useful avenue for geographers such as me to support a broader anti-racism decolonization process.

A brief account of my family's colonial history

I want to focus on my father's family, who immigrated to Nanaimo at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1908, my great-grandparents on my paternal grandfather's side, Thomas Baird and his wife Margaret Robertson, migrated from the borderlands region of northeastern England for work in the Nanaimo coal mines. Two years later, in 1910, my great-grandparents on my paternal grandmother's side, Joseph Jardine and his wife Martha Ann Steele, emigrated from northern England for the same reason. They were poor coal miners. Indicative of their precarious circumstances is the story of my great-grandfather, Joseph Jardine, who apparently broke his back during a mining accident in 1918. He died shortly afterwards at home, but his death was recorded as having been due to influenza (it was the time of the great flu epidemic). His relatives believed that the undocumented mining accident killed him, and that his death was unscrupulously recorded in order to spare the mining company from having to provide his wife and six children with compensation. My grandmother, Edith Jardine (later Baird), was two years old when her father died. My great-grandmother was impoverished and had to wash clothes for a living.

My paternal grandfather's side of the family started in Nanaimo as miners, as well. In time, Thomas Baird succeeded in establishing a trucking business in the company of two of his sons, my great-uncle, Jimmy Baird, and my grandfather, George Baird. In 1944 Jimmy Baird died, and in 1946, Thomas Baird followed. My grandfather was left to take over the business, called "Baird's Transfer." He hauled coal from mines operating outside of Nanaimo, in Harewood and Extension, and sold it to people in Nanaimo for home heating. It

was hard work, as my father, who sometimes shoveled coal into trucks by hand, often attests.

My grandfather died in 1976, leaving behind one of the most important people in my childhood, my paternal grandmother, Edith Baird. I lived in Victoria with my mother and had quite different ideas from my father's side of the family, but each weekend and during most summers, my father would drive me and my younger brother to stay with my grandmother in Nanaimo. She did everything for us, even though she was far from wealthy. Although this is a decolonizing story, one that might trouble some of my relatives, I want to be clear that I will always appreciate my grandmother for what she did for me, and for how much she loved me. Nevertheless, she was a part of a particular society, and racism, particularly against Asians, was prevalent.

There are two brief childhood stories that are worth telling. My grandmother liked to play cards when I was a child, and I remember her calling the game that we now know as solitaire, "Beat the Chink." Even then my brother and I were conscious of its obvious racist meaning (probably due to living with our mother), and we used to frequently tell my grandmother not to call it that. She would not object to our protests, but would say things like, "Sorry, but that's what we always called it when I was young."

The second story relates to my father. When he was a young child, if he went to a restaurant and saw a Chinese cook, he would refuse to eat the food. This apparently went on for some time, and my father acknowledges that this was the case. He undoubtedly picked up this negative idea about Asians from his relatives or friends. The origin is not clear, but this response indicates something about the racist nature of the white settler society in which he was brought up.

My father went through a dramatic transition during the course of his adult life. In 1970, when he worked for the Bank of Montreal in Victoria, BC, he met a Chinese businessman named Ed Chu. In 1971, Ed introduced him to a friend named Jim Wong. Soon the three men went into the real estate business together. They got along well, and my Dad gained a great admiration for Jim and Ed. Their partnership lasted over 30 years, until my father retired in 2004. They never had a disagreement, and my Dad never said anything racist about them. He respected them as fellow businessmen, ones whom he could trust, and who trusted him. So how did my father move from refusing to eat food prepared by Chinese cooks, to having Chinese-Canadians as his closest business partners and friends? First, in the early 1960s he was posted at the Bank of Montreal in Soest, West Germany, an eye-opening experience that exposed him to diverse peoples. Second, he was partially influenced by my mother. Indeed, he was under strict orders from my mother to never utter racial slurs, for fear of influencing their children.

In 1986, at the age of 19, I first travelled to Thailand and India. In 1990, after having taught English in Thailand for a couple of years, I married my wife, who came from a poor farming family in northeastern Thailand. We have been married for over 27 years, and have two children, who are growing up in Madison, Wisconsin, as Asian Americans. As I am fluent in Lao and Thai, having lived in both countries for over 20 years, we frequently speak Lao at home. We are practicing Theravada Buddhists, strongly involved in the Lao community in Madison. Moreover, I conduct research about, and interact a great deal with Hmong people, both in the United States and in Southeast Asia.

When I married my wife and brought her to Canada, she could speak very little English. My grandmother wanted me to be happy and was thus very polite to my wife, never causing her to feel unwanted. But I could tell, since I knew her so well from my childhood, that she was disappointed that I had married an Asian woman. But she never said anything. She knew it would have been wrong.

Later I became an activist in support of Indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged peoples in Southeast Asia. I became interested in the ways that different societies have come to understand who is indigenous or native, and who is not.

A few years ago, I remembered that my grandmother had been a member of the Nanaimo chapter of an association called the Native Daughters of British Columbia. I knew that her mother and father had emigrated from England just a few years before she was born, so I wondered why she was claiming to be a "native" daughter. Weren't the First Nations the only really "native" people of Vancouver Island? My anti-racism scholarship, and support for Indigenous peoples and Asians more generally, prompted me to investigate my grandmother's membership in the Native Daughters. My archival investigations did not reveal that she was a particularly important member. However, on May 3, 1955, she was registered as being on the membership committee of the organization (Native Daughters of B.C. 1955), which

meant she recruited for the organization. According to a great aunt, who was 87 years old in July 2016 when I interviewed her, my grandmother was active in that role. However, according to my aunt, the Native Daughters was a social club for white working-class women in Nanaimo. They did not fundraise in support of any particular causes, at least when she was a member.

In July 2016, when I started to investigate the organization at the Nanaimo Community Archives, the archivist suggested that I look at their male equivalent, the Native Sons of British Columbia, who, as will become evident, were much more politically active than their women's equivalent.

The Native Sons and Native Daughters of British Columbia

Modelled on the Native Sons of the Golden West, a patriotic order established in California, the first chapter of the Native Sons was founded in 1899 in Victoria by British Columbian–born middle-class sons of British settlers. In 1900, second and third chapters were established in Vancouver and Nanaimo, respectively (Pass 2006). The Native Daughters was established in 1919 (Crockford 2009), with the chapter in Nanaimo being organized in March 1920 (Native Daughters of B.C., n.d.a. [c. 1920]). It was soon considered to be "one of the most active and most influential organizations in the city [of Nanaimo]" (Native Daughters of B.C., n.d.b. [c. 1920]). At its height, the Native Sons had 13 chapters around BC (Pass 2006), while the Native Daughters had eight (Underwood 2008). Most members were from the working class, and included clerks, labourers, shopkeepers (Pass 2006), as well as miners and loggers in the Nanaimo area.

My grandmother was eligible to become a Native Daughter by virtue of having been born in Nanaimo. According to the colonial definition of the day—which erased, at least in some ways, the First Nations who preceded them—she could call herself a "native," meaning simply someone born in BC.

However, there was an option for British-born patriots in Nanaimo. It was called the Pioneer's Society of Nanaimo and was originally established in 1920, but shortly afterwards, for an unspecified reason, it was discontinued until it was revived in 1931. Its explicit purpose was to bring "old-timers together." My step great-grandmother, Ada Baird, the second wife of Thomas Baird, was a member. There is a record of her paying dues to the Pioneer Society every year between 1950 until 1958 (Pioneer Society, n.d.), and she finally passed away in Nanaimo in 1960. The Pioneer Society held many of the same racist and colonial structures and ideas as the Native Sons and Daughters, and it was even proposed in 1934 that the Native Sons and Daughters and the Pioneer Society establish a joint hall (McGregor 1934). The Pioneer Society also did not allow "Asiatics" to be members, but differed in that one did not have to be born in BC to become a member. One did, however, have to live in BC for at least 40 years to apply for membership, and had to be "of good character" (Pioneer Society 1937). According to the 1911 Census, Ada Baird immigrated to Canada in 1907 (1911 Census Information), so she could have been a member as early as 1947, and records at the Nanaimo Community Archives indicate that she did indeed apply to join around that time (Christine Meutzner, Archivist, Nanaimo Community Archives, pers. comm.). This is another way my family was linked to groups in Nanaimo that were racist against people of Asian descent.

The Native Sons, by contemporary standards, was unusual. As Ross Crockford (2009) writes, "The Native Sons of British Columbia was the kind of weird organization you'd get if you crossed the Hallmark Society with the Loyal Order of Water Buffalos—or the Ku Klux Klan." Chad Reimer (1995) similarly considers the Native Sons to have been an extremist organization founded primarily on race, while others think of the organization as having engaged in what might be referred to as "early nativism." In any case, it is clear that the Native Sons saw themselves as defenders of "pioneer values" and the British Empire, although quite a few members were descended from non-British immigrants (Pass 2006). The organization promoted BC history from the perspective of BC-born white residents. They showed an interest in First Nations history, although frequently depicting it problematically (Reimer 1995; Pass 2006). The Native Sons successfully lobbied for the first legal protections for First Nation totem poles and other works of indigenous art (Crockford 2009). Pass (2006) points out that during its latter years, some prominent First Nation leaders joined the Native Sons, possibly to forward their own interests.

Figure 1
The Bastion in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, at present (left) and during the time it was in operation by the Native Sons of British Columbia.

In Nanaimo, where Post No. 3 of the Native Sons was located, one of its main roles was safeguarding the Bastion, the first fort built there in 1853 by the Hudson's Bay Company (Beck 1966) (Figure 1). They were successful in saving it from demolition in 1904 (Crockford 2009). Later, the Native Sons made the Bastion their headquarters and a museum, until it was eventually handed over to the City of Nanaimo in 1974 (Native Sons of B.C. 1974). Today, it remains the most enduring and iconic landmark in Nanaimo. The most important symbol of white British colonialism of its era, it defended the business interests of the first white settlers, who migrated to Nanaimo after 1852. That year, an indigenous man from the "Nanymo" area named "Che-wet-chi-kan," later known as "Coal Tyhee," first brought samples of coal to whites working for the Hudson's Bay Company in Victoria (Borserio 1953). The Nanaimo area coal boom followed. As a result, Robert Dunsmuir became the richest man on Vancouver Island (Bowen 1982).

Although the Bastion remains the symbol of early white settlement to Nanaimo, few remember one notable story that provides a sense of what First Nations must have thought of the Bastion at the time it was established. According to Beck (1966), a gruesome event occurred, one that is no longer publicized today, for reasons that should become obvious.

Shortly after the Bastion was located near the coastline in what is now downtown Nanaimo, a group of Haida people who had apparently travelled to the area, were camped just north of the Bastion. A local settler, George Baker, had a "saucy little dog" named Lucy who apparently did not like the Haida and bit one on the leg. According to Beck (1966), undoubtedly written by a white person, the Haida responded by picking up a large stone and killing the dog. When Baker realized what had happened, he went to the camp to investigate, but the Haida were allegedly not friendly to him. He was enraged, and reported the incident to Captain Stuart, who sent out a force to apprehend the Haida who had killed Lucy (we are told the name of the dog but not the names of any of the Haida). When the police went to arrest the indigenous man, his Haida friends refused to give him up. The police fired a couple of rounds of "grapeshot" from the Bastion to impress the Haida, who became fearful and gave up their man. The magistrate sentenced the Haida to be flogged with a cat o' nine tails. Captain Stuart was brutal in his administration of punishment. He had

the prisoner tied to the barrel of one of the big guns in the Bastion, before a brutal lashing was administered "until blood spurted out and the flogger was exhausted." It was so gruesome that some white onlookers were "sickened," and wanted to take their leave. However, Stuart forced them to watch until the bitter end, as if there was some kind of moral lesson to be learned. From the time of this incident, the Haida and other indigenous groups must have seen the Bastion in a very different light than did the settlers.

The Native Sons and Native Daughters did not initially discriminate regarding membership. Indeed, there were some African Canadian members of the Victoria chapter, at least in its early years (Pass 2006). The Native Daughters at first claimed to be "non-sectarian, non-political, and there is no colour or racial prejudice" (Native Daughters of B.C. 1920a). In 1925, however, the Native Sons changed their constitution so as to disallow BC-born people of Asian descent from joining (Pass 2006). This is when the story of Asian racism becomes evident. Lobbying against Chinese and Japanese immigrant communities by the Native Sons became strong, beginning in the 1920s and continuing until after World War II. These efforts gradually subsided, and the organization finally died away, with the Victoria chapter being disbanded around 1990 (Crockford 2009).

Asians, racism, and Nanaimo

This is certainly not the first piece of scholarly work to examine racism directed against Asians in BC. Indeed, Peter Ward's (2002) *White Canada forever* provides a much more comprehensive overview of racism against Asians in British Columbia than is possible for me to provide here. Price's (2012) *Orienting Canada* is also an important piece of scholarship on the topic. In addition, Katie Pickles has written about gender and racism in British Columbia, including about the "Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire" or IODE, in Canada (Pickles 2002). There has also been the work of the anti-racist Japanese-Canadian geographer, Audrey Kobayashi (1992; forthcoming), as well as work by others, such as Adachi ([1979] 1991) and Hickman and Fukawa (2012). Here, however, I focus on issues or events that were particularly important for Nanaimo, a place that has so far not received particular attention by anti-racist geographers.

In the 1860s, the first Chinese immigrants arrived in Nanaimo after having worked in California gold mines (Nanaimo Community Archives, n.d.a.). Some two decades later the *Chinese Immigration Act* was introduced in Canada. Its intent was to limit Chinese immigration by imposing a $50 head tax per Chinese person. This tax gradually increased to $500 per person in 1903. The tax was deeply unpopular, although only repealed in 1947. It caused the Chinese community to refer to July 1, Dominion Day, as "Humiliation Day," since the Chinese were the only ethnic group in Canada subjected to a head tax (Scheinberg 1994).

Chinese immigrants to Nanaimo faced deep racism and abuse from the beginning. An undated Nanaimo newspaper article makes this abundantly clear by describing the racism faced by one of the first Chinese immigrants to the area, Charlie Pong. Mr. Pong opened a laundry shop in Nanaimo. As stated in the article, Charlie "probably led a lonesome and frightened existence," although he was apparently "law-abiding,"

> [t]he small space in front of the counter [of Charlie Pong's laundry shop] was likely to be occupied by a roaring, jeering teasing, brutal gang of young villagers, all male, who found that baiting a Chinese, the only one the village had, was a sport more delectable than cockfighting, likely to be more successful and not likely to be interfered with by the police. (Nanaimo Community Archives n.d.b.)

Racism against Chinese immigrants was particularly manifested in regard to rules and regulations prohibiting them from mining underground. While safety was always the main argument made for restricting the Chinese from underground mining, white miners wanted to exclude them in part because they were competitors who worked long hours, often for only a third to a half of the wage paid to white workers. Discrimination on the part of white miners, not mine management, increased—especially after 1883, when the number of Chinese miners rose considerably due to new immigration (Nanaimo Community Archives, n.d.a.). Crucially, mine owners and managers appeared to be largely sympathetic to Chinese workers, as they worked hard and for low wages. The Chinese were, however,

seen as a threat to white working-class miners. Indeed, race and class were intertwined.

In 1887, there was a massive mining accident at Mine #1, and 52 of the 149 workers killed were Chinese (Carroll 1935). The Chinese were, either fairly or unfairly, blamed for the accident (Christine Meutzner, Archivist, Nanaimo Community Archives, pers. comm.). The following year, a petition was sent to the Legislative Assembly in Victoria, signed by 1,421 white miners from Nanaimo. It sought to prohibit people of Asian descent from being allowed to mine underground. Although the petition failed, due to the influence of mine owners who wished to continue to employ Chinese (Nanaimo Community Archives, n.d.a.), a second petition of 850 miners was submitted in 1890. It was ultimately successful in causing the passing of legislation that the white miners desired (Nanaimo Community Archives, n.d.c.).

The Native Sons and Native Daughters of British Columbia and Asian racism

There was much animosity originating from white miners against the ethnic Chinese and, more generally, Asian Canadians long before the Native Sons and Native Daughters were established. Therefore, it is not surprising that these two organizations were to become important vehicles for anti-Asian racism.

Beginning at the 1921 Grand Post meeting of the Native Sons, the organization decided to write to the Prime Minister in London to protest further Japanese immigration to Canada (Pass 2006). After that, the Native Sons adopted a series of resolutions during their annual conventions calling for all "Orientals" to be prohibited from gaining citizenship in Canada. Some went further, advocating for all the Asians to be deported (Crockford 2009). Although the Native Sons were not established particularly for racist reasons (Pass 2006), they certainly put considerable effort into championing anti-Asian racism.

One document that is particularly worth reviewing was produced as a pamphlet by the Native Sons, titled "Argument advanced by Native Sons of British Columbia in opposition to granting of Oriental franchise." While it is undated at the Nanaimo Community Archives, where I first found it, the BC Archives records it as having been published in 1932, although it was more probably produced in 1937 (Pass 2006). Indeed, on October 27 of that year, the Native Daughters' Post No. 1 in Vancouver wrote a letter to Post No. 3 in Nanaimo, encouraging the printing of "some pamphlets on the question of franchise for Orientals." The letter stated that at their last meeting a motion had been passed for the secretary to write to all the Native Sons and Native Daughters posts to ask them to establish committees to raise funds for printing the pamphlets (Native Daughters of B.C. 1937). The pamphlet itself makes a comprehensive and quite frightening argument against allowing people of Japanese descent, and by extension others of Asian descent, to become Canadian citizens (Native Sons of B.C., n.d.).

The pamphlet reveals the particular vein of racism against Asians that existed at the time. It begins by making the case that, considering the external threats to individual freedoms and democratic institutions leading up to World War II, it was crucial for Canada to be vigilant. The pamphlet stated, "Is the time right for us to experiment; to lower the guard that we kept up in more tranquil times? We think that you will agree that it is not." The pamphlet continues,

> Yet, today, we have some of our own people, advocating what must be considered only as a most dangerous expedient—the enfranchisement of Orientals: Urging, counselling and assisting the endeavors of peoples whose fundamental ideals, whose outlook on life, whose traditions and whose economic concepts are antagonistic to our own appreciation of a democratic state. (Native Sons of B.C., n.d.)

The pamphlet continues, "Native Sons of British Columbia are unequivocally opposed to extending the franchise to the Asiatic races," framing the argument in such a way that it was their obligation as "pioneers of this Western country" to arouse the people to "share in our heritage."

Interestingly, the overall argument against giving voting rights to Asians, and particularly the Japanese, is not based on the fact that Asians were believed to be racially inferior to whites, but rather the opposite. As the pamphlet argues,

> Many of us can remember the days when the Orientals —then comparatively few in number—were our servants; we saw them leave those humble domestic and manual pursuits in which they were engaged and become the competitors to our farmers; then, they

> gradually entered into trade and the business occupations of our urban life, and invaded the professions. Once our servants, now our competitors in industrial occupations and commercial and economic spheres—today they are demanding full citizenship—give it to them and tomorrow they will be our masters. (Native Sons of B.C., n.d.)

Oddly, the Native Sons claimed that they were not racist, writing, "This is no idle, biased prediction born of prejudice—it is the story so often repeated in the history of a dozen lands." To try to convince people of their non-racist tendencies, they go on to praise Asians, writing, "Asiatic peoples have many admirable qualities. We admire them for those qualities." But then they go on to state, "We give and are willing to give to them the full measure of the protection of our laws—but we most strenuously oppose giving them the right to participate in the making of those laws" (Native Sons of B.C., n.d.).

Specifically opposing the proposal that people of Asian descent who were born in Canada should have the right to vote once they reached the age of 21, they wrote, "They have been educated in our schools, have the veneer and polish of our Western culture, and in the presentation of their argument to a Committee of Parliament last year made, as was to be expected, a pleasing impression." The pamphlet then states that the argument of the Native Sons must be directed against the Japanese, since the delegation had consisted entirely of people of Japanese descent: "we must respectfully deny to them ... the right to sit in our councils, and fashion our destiny." The pamphlet then claims that the above-mentioned delegation gave but half the story, and that a more nefarious plan was being devised. Indeed, they quote one of the delegates, Mr. S. I. Hikwara, to support their conspiracy theory: "The total number of Canadian-born Japanese is only a matter of 1,200, but we are sufficiently aware of our political obligations and the rights of citizenship to demand the rights to which our birth entitles us. Our parents are also discriminated against, and we fight for their rights as well as our own." Canadians are, therefore, warned to be careful, since Canadian-born Japanese want not only their rights recognized, but oppose discrimination against their parents as well. The Native Sons hope this knowledge will convince other white Canadians to oppose giving political and voting rights to any people of Japanese descent! They go on to claim that this issue is especially important for B.C., since Canada's 1931 census revealed that of the 23,342 Japanese nationals found to be living in Canada, 22,205 were permanent residents of BC. Revealing their xenophobic tendencies, they write, "This is a number larger than the entire population of this province at Confederation." It is noteworthy that they conveniently chose to not consider Indigenous peoples in their calculation. The pamphlet reminds its readers that the Japanese Canadians do not make up the whole picture. If they were to be granted rights, within a few years the same rights would have to be granted to the "Chinese and other races." They point out that of the 84,548 "Asiatics" recorded in the 1931 census, 50,951 were living in BC. To drive home the point, this consideration is added: "Provincial statistics reveal that the birth rate among Orientals is much higher than among our white residents" (Native Sons of B.C., n.d.).

The Native Sons go on to make the argument that people of Japanese descent cannot be trusted due to their religion. They write, "Shintoism is the official religion—or philosophy—of Japan." They quote Mr. D. Goh, whom they claim to have been an "eminent Japanese authority," as follows: "Whilst all other religious beliefs are theoretically distinct from political usage and institutions, Shinto embraces the Imperial dynasty of Japan as part of its Godhead." Based on this, they conclude that, "If on no other ground, Canadians must reject the demand for full rights of participating in the government of this country to a people whose religious philosophy so definitely associates them with the Emperor of a foreign power" (Native Sons of B.C., n.d.).

As is well documented, just a few years later, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and continuing up to 1949, four years after the end of World War II, this same sort of argumentation justified the uprooting and internment of Japanese Canadians. Property, homes, vehicles, market gardens, and fishing boats were confiscated and auctioned off at low prices, thus benefiting many white Canadians. I will not go into these details, as others, including the Japanese-Canadian geographer Audrey Kobayashi, have already done so (see Adachi [1979] 1991; Kobayashi 1984, 1985, 1992; Hickman and Fukawa 2012).

After World War II, the Native Sons continued their efforts to exclude Asians. On January 20, 1947,

an article titled "Japanese seek right to return to the coast" was published in the *Vancouver Province*. At the time, the Japanese were barred from entering a "coastal defense zone" that was designed to geographically exclude the Japanese (*Vancouver Province* 1947). In response to this article, the Nanaimo Post of the Native Sons proposed the following resolution to the Grand Post on February 28, 1947: "Resolve, we the members of the Native Sons of British Columbia, Nanaimo Post #3, are strongly opposed to the Japanese seeking Rights to Return to the Coast of British Columbia, and further, that we object to the Asiatics owning property or interests in any industries in the Province of British Columbia" (Reifel 1947). They encouraged the Grand Post to pass this resolution at their annual convention (Reifel 1947), which apparently occurred (Pass 2006).

In addition, during the 1947 annual convention of the Grand Post of the Native Sons of British Columbia, held in Nanaimo, the following resolution was adopted, in response to newspaper reports that the *Chinese Immigration Act* was to be repealed by Ottawa: "The Grand Post of the Native Sons of B.C. in session at Nanaimo, B.C., strongly protests against any changes being made in our Immigration Laws, that will permit Chinese to immigrate into our country; we believe that the Chinese problem in our Province is very serious and should not be further aggravated" (Native Sons of B.C. 1947).

Conclusions

My goal in writing this paper has been to reflexively but critically examine racist institutions, particularly the Native Sons and Native Daughters of British Columbia, through making use of anti-racism methodologies. Our histories and continued connections within racist institutions and structures need to be acknowledged, whether we have been personally involved in those particular events or processes or not. While my grandmother was not the head or deputy of the Native Daughters, she was a long-time member and had a position in the organization. Moreover, she was part of a broader working-class society and an institutional environment that allowed racism against Asians to flourish. So was my step great-grandmother, Ada Baird.

It is important even for those who are only generally a part of such historical circumstances, such as me, to nevertheless investigate such involvement. This does not mean I no longer love my grandmother, but I want and need to acknowledge, in a non-defensive way, the anti-Asian racist history of my paternal ancestors and my own present-day embeddedness within the white-dominated system that still exists. Indeed, I think it is crucial to be able to maintain the love we have for cherished family members, while at the same time condemning those aspects of our family histories that were deeply racist, or continue to be so. This, I think, is at the core of the anti-racism decolonizing work which has been my focus here.

This paper is timely, I believe, as there has recently been an increase in anti-Asian racism in BC, including an apparent rise in white supremacy more generally, through groups such as the White Aryan Resistance, or the Warskins, in East Vancouver, or less street violence–oriented racist groups such as the National Alliance and the Church of the Creator (Ball 2016a). Most recently, a chapter of the Soldiers of Odin Canada was established in Vancouver after being originally founded by white supremacists in Finland (Ball 2016b). There have also been more brazen recruitment efforts in the Fraser Valley, including the distribution of recruiting pamphlets by the Loyal White Knights of Klu Klux Klan. Some pamphlets were distributed in bags of white rice, which was seen as an explicitly anti-Asian message (Ball 2016a; Browne 2016). Some are fighting back by joining groups such as Extreme Dialogue, which is engaged in an international campaign to "counter-recruit" extremists away from white supremacy and religious extremism alike (Ball 2016a). My contribution to promoting anti-racism may appear much more modest, but I believe that it is an important one nonetheless, as the politics of knowledge production is always at the forefront of struggles such as this, and any kind of decolonizing effort, including ones related to anti-racism, requires the production of knowledge to counter other views.

This paper does not mark the end of my promotion of anti-racism and decolonization more generally, whether with respect to Asians and Asian Canadians, or with regard to Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, or Southeast Asia. I do, however, believe that it is important to study the past, face those realities, and report on them. Jordon Stranger-Ross, a faculty member in the History Department at the University of

Victoria and the director of the project titled "Landscapes of Injustice"—which examines the history of Japanese internment during World War II—was asked by Gregor Craigie of CBC Radio how understandings of past injustices can contribute to addressing contemporary issues. He perceptively responded that this could be done by learning through analogy. Indeed, the present nativism and white supremacism we are facing, and are indeed part of, in BC and beyond, including other parts of Canada and the United States, demands that we engage in research efforts such as this, so as to confront the injustices of the past, which will make us more attentive to similar injustices when they arise in contemporary times, and equip us better to resist such racism.

I am not claiming to be free of a continuing system of colonization and various forms of racist oppression, or to have effectively decentred whiteness in society. My positionality and role in these racist processes is undoubtedly different than my grandmother's experience, as I do not feel threatened by Asian labour like her generation did—but to deny that I am still embedded in continuing racist political, economic, and social structures would defeat the purpose of this exercise. A process such as this, if not conceptualized appropriately, could be used to justify continuing forms of oppression by seemingly, though artificially, giving myself and others the mistaken impression that I have successfully severed myself from societal racism. This is the work of a lifetime, and the worst mistake would be to let down my guard by misleading myself and others into thinking that I have achieved more than is possible, considering the overarching structures of oppression, whether they relate to class, gender, geography, or white privilege that continue, in part, to define me, regardless of whether I like them or not.

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