

The Unique Experiences of Sto:lo Farmers:
An Investigation into Native Agriculture in British Columbia, 1875-1916

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The nineteenth century was a period of immense change for the peoples of the area that is now known as British Columbia, Canada. Except for those along the coast, many First Nations communities came face to face with people of many ethnicities for the first time: Europeans, Canadians and Americans, Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, and other First Nations. This contact affected First Nations communities in many ways: depopulation through disease, new knowledge and understandings, new ways of interacting and relating to other people. In reaction to these new experiences, First Nations cultures shaped and reshaped themselves to fit these experiences into a worldview they could understand and work within. It is this re-working of a worldview that I explore here, in a case-study of the Sto:lo people and their involvement in agriculture. It is proven here, that commonly held stereotypes of First Nations groups were (and remain), essentially hunter-gathers and passive users of nature, is unfounded among the Sto:lo people, yesterday and today. The Sto:lo have a long history of involvement in agriculture in its many forms, from pre-contact to the present. This history is very different from the one told by Sarah Carter, whose Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Canadian Policy remains the most detailed examination of Native agriculture in Canada. The Sto:lo history told here could be considered to be Part One of at least a two part story. Only the period up to the 1920s is covered here. The story, however, does not end here, rather it continues up to today, and conceivably may continue into the future. That part of the story, however, requires much research to be told adequately. Suggestions for further research can be found at the end of this paper. While a “purely” Sto:lo form of agriculture existed in pre-contact times, it is the colonial and early provincial experiences that truly shaped the extent to which Sto:lo were involved in agricultural occupations. It

is this period, from the mid-late nineteenth to the early twentieth century that is explored here and compared with Carter's examination. Circumstances were very different between the two regions, the Fraser Valley of Sto:lo territory, and the Prairies of the Northwest Territory. These differing circumstances led to completely different attitudes for government and yet similar outcomes for First Nations.

Sarah Carter's work on native agriculture on the Canadian Prairies was the first, and remains the only, large scale examination of First Nations agricultural efforts in Canada.¹ Other smaller scale investigations have largely proven that Carter's thesis holds true in other parts of Canada.² My examination of the topic, using the Sto:lo as a case study demonstrates that the circumstances that led to Carter's conclusions did not occur in the Lower Mainland of B.C. While the circumstances that affected the development of Sto:lo agriculture were in fact quite different, the outcomes was surprisingly similar. Carter's work will be explained here to provide contrast for what will follow.

Carter's work focuses on the years between 1889 and 1897, when the Department of Indian Affairs instituted a new policy regarding agriculture by First Nations. This system, developed under the supervision of Indian Commissioner Hayter Reed, sought to encourage First Nations to progress through the stages of civilization, a process that would end in assimilation into the dominant English Victorian culture (see below for a

¹ Sarah Carter first explored the issue in "Two Acres and a Cow: 'Peasant' Farming for the Indians of the Northwest, 1889-1897," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 70 (2), 27-52, reprinted in J.R. Miller, ed., *Sweet Promises: a Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada* (Toronto, 1991), 353- 377. then expanded on her ideas in *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*. Montreal: McGill- Queen's University Press, 1990.

² See Leo G. Waisberg and Tim E. Holzkamm, "'A Tendency to Discourage Them From Cultivating': Ojibwa Agriculture and Indian Affairs Administration in Northwestern Ontario."

greater discussion of this topic). It was believed that cultural progress occurred along linear set of stages. Reed was concerned that Prairie farmers appeared to be skipping important stages by adopting Western European style agricultural techniques, crops, etc. What Indians needed to do, was ease into agriculture, becoming independent peasant farmers who supplied all their needs themselves, including farming implements.³ To implement this policy, reserves were subdivided into individual family plots, labour-saving machinery was to be forbidden, goods were to be manufactured at home if at all possible, pass laws limited movement, and an amendment to the Indian Act regulated First Nations produce sales.⁴ After 1881, produce was only to be sold with written permission from the local Indian agent, sales without permission were punishable by a hundred dollar fine or three months imprisonment for the purchaser.⁵ This amendment made it difficult to sell surpluses as most Agencies were large and Agents could not visit all farms.⁶ Carter argues that this policy and related legislation that restricted First Nations agriculture served to sacrifice Native interests to those of the new settlers.⁷ As a result, Native agriculture stagnated and eventually disappeared. Emphasis is also placed on the Plains Natives determination and resolution to make agriculture a successful venture. Carter demonstrates that arguments regarding the widespread failure of farming by First Nations based on the notion that Indians were incapable of settling down and

Ethnohistory 40: 2 (1993), 175-211; and Frank Tough. 'As Their Natural Resources Fail': Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930, (Vancouver, 1996).

³ It was felt that rather than expanding land under cultivation, it was better for Native farmers to work smaller pieces of land more effectively which would limit the need for machinery and increase their abilities to supply themselves with tools. Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow," in Miller, ed., Sweet Promises, 353.

⁴ Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow," in Miller, ed., Sweet Promises, 353-354. See also, Waisberg and Holzkamm, "'A Tendency to Discourage,'" *Ethnohistory* 40: 2 (1993), 176.

⁵ Waisberg and Holzkamm, "'A Tendency to Discourage,'" *Ethnohistory* 40: 2 (1993), 188.

⁶ Also, travel was often difficult and expensive. Waisberg and Holzkamm, "'A Tendency to Discourage,'" *Ethnohistory* 40: 2 (1993), 189.

disturbing Mother Earth not only are false but ignore the larger oppressive forces of the Canadian Federal Government as represented by the Department of Indian Affairs.⁸ Carter's work is complemented by research into Native agriculture in two other areas of Canada: Northwestern Ontario and Manitoba.

Leo G. Waisberg and Tim E. Holzkamm investigated agricultural pursuits by the Ojibwa of Northwestern Ontario and found that the circumstances were very similar to Carter's. Like the Natives of the Northwest, the Ojibwa agitated for a treaty that provided training and supplies in order to intensify their agriculture.⁹ While they faced many obstacles (pests, weather, lack of training, inadequate equipment), by far the one that had the greatest impact was the 1880 amendment to the Indian Act that restricted the sales of their produce. Chiefs referred to this as the primary cause of the failure of reserve farming, recognizing that farming without a commercial aspect was unattractive for band members.¹⁰ Attempts to sell produce 'on the black market' were apparently relatively unsuccessful. As a result, the Ojibwa turned to hunting and trapping, industries that remained unregulated. Waisberg and Holzkamm mention the peasant farming policy but do not go into detail regarding its impact on the Ojibwa.¹¹ Ojibwa agriculture appears to have been atrophied by the same restrictive government policies and regulations as was Plains agriculture.

Reserve agriculture in Northern Manitoba was also stunted by government policies, as demonstrated by Frank Tough. First Nations in Manitoba showed a desire to

⁷ Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow," in Miller, ed., *Sweet Promises*, 370.

⁸ Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 13.

⁹ Waisberg and Holzkamm, "A Tendency to Discourage," *Ethnohistory* 40: 2 (1993), 176.

¹⁰ Waisberg and Holzkamm, "A Tendency to Discourage," *Ethnohistory* 40: 2 (1993), 186.

develop agriculture by the early 1870s as the hunting economy went through a period of insecurity.¹² When wildlife resources increased in the late 1880s and early 1890s, agricultural production decreased. Other occupations such as working for white farmers, helped to turn First Nations attention from their own gardens and crops. However, the “real limitation” to Native agriculture was the government regulations that served to restrict sales.¹³ These limited market such that even when a surplus was produced, there were no buyers. Once again, restrictive legislation served to effectively stultify Native agriculture.

This brief survey of what happened to First Nations farmers in other parts of Canada is by no means exhaustive of the factors involved, but all point to the negative affects of Federal policies and legislation. For Native farmers in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario, their agricultural interests were smothered by racist and restrictive federal government officials, despite their efforts to ensure that their interests were met by the government. For the Sto:lo, the circumstances were quite different, as we shall see.

Context: Settlement, the Land Question

Nineteenth century thinking encouraged First Nations to become involved in agriculture. Ideas like the hierarchy of cultures, and notions of how cultural progress is obtained, influenced Canadian federal policy towards its Native subjects. These are best expressed in the two major acts that make up the Indian Act, the “Civilization Act” and

¹¹ The peasant farming policy is described but its impact on the Ojibwa seems to have impacted them only in that it strengthened restrictions on the sale of produce. Waisberg and Holzkamm, “A Tendency to Discourage,” *Ethnohistory* 40: 2 (1993), 191.

¹² Tough. ‘As Their Natural Resources Fail’, 165.

¹³ Tough. ‘As Their Natural Resources Fail’, 169.

the “Gradual Enfranchisement Act”. The Indian Act shaped the way Sto:lo agriculture was viewed by the Department of Indian Affairs.

The concept of the hierarchy of cultures is clearly seen in the “Civilization Act” and the “Gradual Enfranchisement Act”. This hierarchy places cultures along a savage/civilized axis beginning with African cultures and ascending (conveniently ordered along skin colour as well) from there to North then South American cultures, Asian (Chinese being placed higher than Japanese), Eastern and finally Western European cultures culminating in British/ British North American culture/ civilization.¹⁴ Racism clearly is a major feature of this concept, which justified the colonial oppression of peoples all over the world by Western Europeans, and the British Empire in particular. This was not a fixed hierarchy; by developing the characteristics of the most civilized culture, the bottom cultures could move up through the stages. To help First Nations achieve such a level of civilization, the “Civilization Act” was adopted in 1857. This set out the requirements needed to achieve a civilized state and therefore qualify for Canadian citizenship.¹⁵ These requirements were morality on par with the dominant British upper class morality, literacy, and freedom from debt. Cultural progress also meant moving up from being a hunter-gather to a peasant and then commercial farmer. Complementary to the “Civilization Act” was the “Gradual Enfranchisement Act” of 1869 which replaced hereditary chiefs with elected officials following the British model of democracy.¹⁶ The

¹⁴ See chart in Keith Thor Carlson, “A Legacy of Broken Promises: The *Xwelitem* Exploration and Settlement of *Solh Temexw* (Our Land)” in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *You Are Asked to Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada’s Pacific Coast History*, (Chilliwack: 1997), 65.

¹⁵ A lengthy description of the requirements of the “Civilization Act” are found in Keith Thor Carlson, “Early Nineteenth Century Sto:lo Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy,” in Carlson ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 97- 98.

¹⁶ Carlson, “Early Nineteenth Century Sto:lo Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy,” in Carlson ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 98.

need for First Nations to progress culturally, characterized by the adoption of Western European cultural characteristics, and, in particular, agriculture, created the two pieces of legislature that became the Indian Act and profoundly changed the way in which First Nations in Canada live their lives.

As stated above, the adoption of Western style agriculture was a key factor for progress up the hierarchy of cultures and the achievement of agriculture. The Department of Indian Affairs Deputy Superintendent General, James A. Smart put the Department's position on Native agriculture into words in 1898:

Increasing acquaintance with Indian affairs can hardly fail to strengthen the conviction that the initial step towards the civilization of our Indians should be their adoption of agricultural pursuits, and that if the red man is to take his place and keep pace with the white in other directions, he will be best fitted to do so, after a more or less prolonged experience of such deliberate method of providing for his wants. For the transformation of the nomadic denizens of the forest or prairie, or of such of them as under changed conditions have become vagrant hangers on about the outskirts of settlement, the first essential is fixity of residence, and the formation of the idea of a home. Without that neither churches nor schools nor any other educational influence can be established and applied. Cultivation of the soil necessitates remaining in one spot, and then exerts an educational influence of a general character. It keeps prominently before the mind the relation of cause and effect, together with the dependence upon a higher power. It teaches moreover the necessity for systematic work at the proper season, for giving attention to detail, and patience in waiting for results. It inculcates furthermore the idea of individual proprietorship, habits of thrift, a due sense of the value of money, and the importance of its investment in useful directions.¹⁷

¹⁷ James A. Smart, Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1898, xxi.

Overtly racist, Smart demonstrates that without agriculture, neither religion, education, “the home”, a sense of individuality, nor capitalism, in short, all the concepts that made up a Victorian Western European/ North American man, could develop in “the red man”.

It puzzled me, being a product of the late twentieth century, this link between agriculture and progress seen throughout the Department of Indian Affairs annual reports. To me, progress is linked to technology, my worldview being a product of modernist thinking after all, and agriculture is not high up on the list of technological innovation (at least, to me the lay person). I wanted to explore this link between agriculture, or cultivation, and civilization, or culture, or perhaps, acculturation. All these words have *cult* as a base. Looking into the subject, what does *cult* mean? The term *cult* comes from the Latin *cultus*, meaning care or adoration. In fact, cultivate and culture have a shared meaning- to grow in a prepared medium.¹⁸ Other similar meanings include: *cultivate*- to foster the growth of, and to improve by labour, care, or study; and *culture*- the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties especially by education. The link between the adoption of agriculture by the Natives, and the “progress” (to use the DIA term) of Native society goes beyond the imaginings of the typical nineteenth century DIA official to the very core of Western language, the basis from which we understand our world.

Cultural progress, facilitated through manipulation of the soil (agriculture) resulting in acculturation and the development along the linear path of civilization was a goal of Canadian government officials. To achieve a level of Western European cultural development was seen in the nineteenth century as the only way in which “Indians” could

¹⁸ Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1985.

survive into the twentieth century. As a result, government policy and legislation was adopted to encourage First Nations to take up agriculture.

An investigation into Sto:lo agriculture must logically begin at the beginning, with pre-contact horticulture. At contact, Sto:lo women were observed cultivating patches potatoes, possibly the local wild potato, *Sagittaria latifolia*, or wapito in *Halq'emeylem*, with digging sticks. Wayne Suttles states that the two factors were necessary for this step up to agriculture from hunting and gathering, both of which the Sto:lo demonstrated.¹⁹ A tradition of gathering roots and a sedentary lifestyle which would allow for tending of resources and the development of a sense of ownership. These factors indicate that the Sto:lo were 'pre-adapted' for the adoption of Western European style agriculture, the ideas were already acceptable within their worldview.

Sto:lo people were very interested in many forms of agriculture and put in a genuine effort to make agriculture a viable source of income. The establishment of the gardens and farms of Fort Langley served to introduce European crops, equipment, and methods of cultivation to the local First Nations groups. By the 1870s, European style agriculture had spread to many of the groups along the Fraser River. Crops, livestock, etc. were not homogenous across Sto:lo territory; people were quick to diversify. What follows is a an attempt to cover the *who, what, where, when, and why* of Sto:lo participation in agriculture- a vast subject with many smaller topics.

Before launching into the history of Sto:lo agriculture, a few definitions are needed. The term agriculture is used here as an all-encompassing term describing horticulture, orcharding, stock-raising, as well as crop raising. When a specific type of

¹⁹ Wayne Suttles, Coast Salish Essays, (Vancouver, 1987), 146.

agriculture is intended it will be referred to by name. Along similar lines, farming and farmers are also used generally to denote all types of agriculture unless otherwise specified. Non-Sto:lo is the term used for all farmers not of First Nations ancestry. I have chosen not to use the *Halq'emeylem* term of *Xwelitem* because many farmers that settled in Sto:lo territory were not of European descent, including Japanese, Chinese, and Indian ancestry. The term Sto:lo, of course, is applied to all bands currently allied in one way or another to the political organization of the Sto:lo Nation. These terms will be used throughout this discussion of Sto:lo agriculture.

By the time of the first Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report on the Sto:lo people in 1875, some Sto:lo people appeared to have become involved in reserve agriculture. Following Fort Langley's establishment in 1827, local Sto:lo people worked on the farms, providing produce for the Hudson's Bay Company.²⁰ St. Mary's residential school, which opened its doors in 1863 also provided instruction in farming to its Sto:lo students.²¹ Sto:lo people were also likely helping settlers by working as farm hands. Through these experiences, Sto:lo people had an apprenticeship of sorts that allowed them to start their own farms.

All farmers, Sto:lo and non-Sto:lo alike, who started 'from scratch' in the Lower Fraser Valley faced similar obstacles. The three main obstacles were clearing the land, reclaiming the lowlands along the river, and building roads to markets. How Sto:lo and non-Sto:lo were able to cope with these last two problems were much different. The

²⁰ Keith Thor Carlson and John Lutz, "Sto:lo People and the Development of the B.C. Wage Labour Economy," in Carlson ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 116.

²¹ Keith Thor Carlson, "Early Nineteenth Century Sto:lo Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy," in Carlson ed., *You Are Asked to Witness*, 101-102.

Sto:lo farmers were forced to deal with many of these problems on their own, while non-Sto:lo people had organizations to assist them in dealing with these problems.

Sto:lo people had much trouble clearing their lands in order to have space for agriculture. Let's imagine for a moment: it is 1870, you are standing in a vast forest of centuries old Western Red Cedar- how are you going to cope with preparing this piece of land in order that it be plowed and ready to be sown with wheat? This must have been a massive job; burning away brush and logging the trees was surely the easy part, even if done by hand (and Sto:lo people were experts at chopping down big beautiful cedars). Once this is done, what remains is a field of tall stumps that must be removed. No mention is made of how stumps were removed but clearly digging them out or burning the roots must have been a big time commitment. Archie Charles, a Sto:lo farmer who began farming in the 1950s states that it took him ten years to clear forty acres- with heavy machinery!²² Clearing the land was such a job that it was acknowledged that the Sto:lo would require assistance in clearing.²³ No mention of assistance is made in the annual reports. The lack of progress in clearing was instead blamed on the Sto:lo character: "The greater part of their land throughout the Lower Fraser country is heavily timbered, and requires great work to clear it. They do not like such heavy work."²⁴ It is interesting to note, if Sto:lo did not like heavy work, why did so many of them work on the railway and other labour intensive jobs? Even after the land was cleared, the nature of the natural forest meant that cleared land could not be left untouched for too long, as

²² Interview with Archie Charles, June 1, 2000, recorded at Seabird Island, copy of tape will be given to Sto:lo Nation Archives.

²³ James Lenihan, Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1875, 56.

²⁴ Lenihan is clearly drawing on the stereotype of Indians as lazy. Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1879, 135.

the forest would creep in, as was the case in the Cheam and Popkum orchards.²⁵ It is suggested by the Inspector of Agencies for Southwestern B.C. that some Sto:lo paid to have land cleared, but even in 1912 the cost was great.²⁶ Since clearing was such a time consuming and labour intensive job, it is little wonder that Sto:lo preferred to participate in the emerging wage labour economy instead, making land clearing and agriculture lower priorities.

A major hurdle to successful farming in the Fraser Valley is the location of the best land- in the Fraser River floodplain. Nearly every annual report put out by the Department of Indian Affairs in this period mentions the loss of crops and often livestock due to the spring freshet. These floods may have affected Sto:lo farmers more than non-Sto:lo farmers for two main reasons: location of reserves and lack of dykes. The majority of Sto:lo reserves were located along the major rivers, the Fraser, the Harrison, the Chilliwack, the Pitt.²⁷ When locations were laid out as reserve sites, a preference was given for village and fishing spots.²⁸ James Lenihan, Superintendent for the Lower Mainland and the Southern Interior early on recognized this as a problem early on:

... they gathered confidence and settled down to work [the land] with a will. It is much to be regretted that their labour proved so fruitless, in consequence of the unusually high flood. The majority of the Reserves on the Lower Fraser are more or less under water every year, but at

²⁵ R.C. McDonald, Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1910, 256.

²⁶ Ditchburn writes "During the past year very little land had been cleared, as the cost is very heavy." Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1912, 275.

²⁷ Reserves in the Fraser River Floodplain alone total 24 (Whonock, Langley, Matsqui, Papekwatchin, Skweahm, Lakahamen, Lackaway, Zaitscullachan, Skumalasp, Squakum, Scowlitz, Scowkale, Yakweakkwoose, Skwahla, Schelowat, Cheam, Popkum, Seabird Island, Peters, Tseatah, Chehalis, and Grass). Ministry of Environment, British Columbia, "Fraser Freshet Sector N.E." and "Fraser Freshet Sector S.E." Maps, April 12, 1999.

²⁸ James Lenihan, Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1875, 56.

periods of three or four years the water covers nearly all their reserves.²⁹

As a result, villages, fields, and farms were often deluged following the spring freshet in May and June. Not only did floods destroy crops, but morale as well. Many of the Fraser Agent reports make the link between floods and increased participation in the wage labour economy- P. McTiernan writes in 1883 that

This present season the area of land under cultivation is not as large as it otherwise would be had not the freshet of last year occurred. Many of the Indians who had lost all their crops and fences last season were discouraged, and consequently went to work on the railroad, where they receive \$2 a day.³⁰

The largest flood of this period, in 1894, caused the most damage but more frequent smaller floods were also destructive for Sto:lo farms.³¹ These smaller floods may not have affected non-Sto:lo farms as severely. The passing of the Sumas Dyking Act allowed for the dyking and draining of many parts of the Fraser floodplain- but not the reserves in the Chilliwack, Sumas, and Matsqui areas, “Aboriginal people would not have to pay for the drainage or dyking”.³² Sto:lo people did, however, pay for dyking. In 1884, Sto:lo from the Chilliwack reserves dyked a jointly held grass reserve of 160 acres to be used as hay land.³³ At Sqwah, residents cultivated “considerable land” that

²⁹ Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1876, 37.

³⁰ Canada. Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports. 1883, 45.

³¹ Measuring the height of the Fraser River at Hope, the three major floods were the 1894, 1948, and 1921. The 1894 flood was so great, that it is estimated that a flood of its size would return in approximately 450 years. In the meanwhile, a flood the size of the 1921 flood has an estimated return of 10 years. Due to the frequency of the “major flood” of 1921, dyking would have been very necessary to protect farmlands. Klohn Leonoff, Historical Review of Selected Indian Reserve Lands in British Columbia, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Report #4099, 1990, no page.

³² Not extending the dykes to encompass the reserves was justified as actually being beneficial to their residents- due to the terms of the agreement with Ellis Luther Derby, lands around the reserves would be granted to him in exchange for the dyking. This of course would limit any further expansion of reserve boundaries. Brian Thom and Laura Cameron, “Changing Land Use in *S’olh Temexw* (Our Land): Population, Transportation, Ecology, and Heritage,” in Carlson ed., You Are Asked to Witness, 175-176.

³³ Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs, 1884, 103.

was in danger of being washed away. Agent McTiernan felt that if the amount of money was not too great, the band would pay for repairs.³⁴ Dyking by Sto:lo people was continued in 1889.³⁵ A recent study (1990) of the reserves in the Chilliwack area found that the existing dyke system provides protection to approximately half of reserve lands and that what dykes do exist along reserve lands may cause water to pond up behind them, possibly causing worse damage than if no dyke existed.³⁶ However, the existing dyke system in the Chilliwack surrounding non-Sto:lo areas are generally standard (will withstand the capacity of the 1894 flood).³⁷ While both Sto:lo and non-Sto:lo farmers dealt with the rivers rising around them, the non-Sto:lo farmers were much better protected, and as taxpayers, in a better position to demand assistance from floodwaters.

Sto:lo, as non-taxpayers, faced a further difficulty in getting their produce to market with which non-Sto:lo did not have to deal. Neither the British Columbia nor the Canadian governments took responsibility for developing roads on reserves, nor did they seem anxious to build adequate transportation to and from reserve land. Instead, Sto:lo people were responsible under the Indian Act to work on roads to their reserves. The 1886 Indian Act, Section 33, Roads and Bridges states:

Indians residing upon any reserve, and engaged in the pursuit of agriculture as their then principal means of support, shall be liable, if so directed by the Superintendent General, or any officer or person by him thereunto authorized, to perform labor on the public

³⁴ Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs, 1888, 107.

³⁵ Unfortunately, Agent McTiernan's report does not mention where, how much, or by whom the dyking was done. Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs, 1889, 147.

³⁶ Leonoff, Historical Review of Indian Reserve Lands, no page.

³⁷ There are three types of dykes in the Chilliwack area: standard (withstand a flood like the 1894 flood), substandard (withstand a flood similar to the 1948 flood) and dykes that could easily fail. It is this third type that reserves who have dykes have. Ministry of Environment, British Columbia, "Fraser Freshet Sector SE", 1999.

roads laid out or used in or through, or abutting upon such reserve...³⁸

Such roads were necessary for farmers taking produce to market and therefore vital for farmers to move beyond merely subsistence, to commercial farming. Many reserves had difficulty taking surplus produce off reserve. Sto:lo of the Douglas District (on the Harrison River) had to go a long distance involving a difficult trail and “bad” canoe travel just to get their potatoes and other vegetables from their gardens to their villages.³⁹

In the Chilliwack district, Soowahlie farmers had major transportation problems:

The Indians of Too-ylee have a good reserve and but for a great drawback they have to contend with they would be very prosperous. The Chilliwack River separates their reserve from market, the current is very strong and the water is too shallow in places to admit of the use of any kind of large boat or canoe to freight produce.⁴⁰

Not only produce was difficult to transport to and from Soowahlie; horses and cattle had to be swum across the Chilliwack River.⁴¹ Non-Sto:lo agriculturists likely did not face such transportation difficulties. Being taxpayers, they were an effective lobbying group and also able to harness public funds for such a vital item as infrastructure. As in the case with the dykes, transportation was more of a problem for Sto:lo farmers than non-Sto:lo.

An added encumbrance to reserve agriculture was disease among the Sto:lo population. While this was a factor that non-Sto:lo had to deal with as well, it was probably not on the same scale. Diseases that made people sick, such as tuberculosis,

³⁸ Sharon Helen Venne, Canada, Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1975, An Indexed Collection, (Saskatoon, 1981), 123.

³⁹ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1885, 85.

⁴⁰ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1888, 107.

influenza, mumps, and measles (among others that made their way through Sto:lo communities in the nineteenth century), would have interfered with the Sto:lo's ability to perform the labour necessary for some types of farm work.⁴² Despite being inoculated, Department of Indian Affairs reports that the 1862 small pox epidemic killed many First Nations in the Lower Mainland.⁴³ It is possible that many of these First Nations were from other coastal groups and not Sto:lo. However, if the Sto:lo were badly hit by the epidemic and there were many deaths or cases of blindness, this may affect the number of able-bodied adults who could perform the labour-intensive tasks involved in agriculture.⁴⁴ It would have been difficult to have been a successful farmer if one were dealing with sickness.

Agriculture is, and has been, a very capital-intensive industry, therefore a difficult one for many to become involved in, particularly for First Nations. Money is needed for seeds, equipment, outbuildings, livestock, among other items. Profits from such investments are not seen until harvest, and often not until several harvests have been brought in. Under a capitalist system economy, the two main ways of obtaining start up capital are working for wages, or obtaining loans to be paid in cash (with interest) or by

⁴¹ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1882, 59.

⁴² A list of diseases and dates of epidemics may be found in Carlson, "First Contact: Smallpox" in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., You Are Asked to Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada's Pacific Coast History, (Chilliwack: 1997), 37.

⁴³ Lenihan describes the epidemic as having "decimated" "thousands" of First Nations in the Lower Mainland. Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1875, 55. This contradicts Carlson who states that the majority of Sto:lo escaped the 1862 epidemic thanks to the inoculation efforts of the Catholic missionaries in the area. Carlson, "First Contact: Smallpox" in Keith Thor Carlson, ed., You Are Asked to Witness, (Chilliwack: 1997), 30.

⁴⁴ Blindness did not stop all Sto:lo from farming. Jack and Angus Pettis of Seabird Island were both blind and they had cows, horses, goats, and sheep as well as an orchard, vegetable garden, and a field which they ploughed with a horse who knew to stop before hitting the fence. They even cut wood with a big push saw! They were successful enough to drive their horsecart to the Agassiz hop yards where they would sell their surplus garden produce and fruit. Reuben Ware and Albert Phillips, Stalo History Fieldnotes, Sto:lo Nation Archives, Uncatalogued, 68.

giving up collateral. First Nations in Canada often have little to offer as collateral; reserve land is considered Crown land and therefore cannot be taken away if a loan is defaulted. The only option left for First Nations in Canada is wage labour and saving money. This further pushes First Nations into the wage labour economy and away from agriculture as a means of support. This could be avoided if monies coming from the Department of Indian Affairs could be used for supporting Native farmers. Throughout its history, the DIA has been seriously underfunded and this type of support was unavailable.⁴⁵ DIA expenditures for Native agriculture in the Fraser Agency, in its various forms, throughout this period was insignificant until 1916, the last year for which there is an Annual Report in Sto:lo Nation Archives (see Table 1). The total expenditure of \$8,218.10 for all of British Columbia was still not much but indicates a more serious attempt to assist Native agriculture when compared to the \$1,870.61 spent for all of B.C.'s Native farmers in 1910, the last previous year for which there is a figure.

Table 1: DIA Expenditures in the Fraser Agency, 1876- 1899

Year	\$ for Agricultural Supplies	Year	\$ for Agricultural Supplies
1875	No record	1887	166.95
1876	1,753.13	1888	N/A but \$ was paid
1877	No record	1889	N/A but \$ was paid
1878	No record	1890	N/A but \$ was paid
1879	No record	1891	N/A but \$ was paid
1880	N/A but \$ was paid	1892	No record
1881	N/A but \$ was paid	1893	No record
1882	44.95	1894	No record
1883	73.60	1896	No record
1884	31.30	1897	No record
1885	164.00	1898	No record
1886	141.00	1899	393.70

⁴⁵ Rolf Knight, Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia, 1848- 1930, (Vancouver, 1996), 117.

Most money for agricultural supplies in British Columbia did not come from the Department of Indian Affairs, nor from loans, but from the First Nations themselves.

Sto:lo farmers had only themselves to rely on for agricultural supplies. Most federal money was spent on seeds and implements, but some was also spent spraying orchards, and clearing land.⁴⁶ Sto:lo chiefs requested funds for such items as ploughs, wagons, seeds, and agricultural implements, of which only a few requests seem to have been granted. In one case, money made from the clearing of reserve land was taken by the DIA and spent on agricultural implements and oxen on behalf of the Hope band.⁴⁷ Most agricultural supplies, however, seem to have been given out only to “destitute” Sto:lo. In several reports it is mentioned that Sto:lo purchased supplies for themselves, likely out of money earned from the mostly seasonal jobs Sto:lo took.⁴⁸ It appears that most bands owned implements at least partially communally; beginning in 1898 it is specifically mentioned that most families had their own farming implements in bands in the Chilliwack district.⁴⁹ Other bands appear to have a sufficient or adequate amount of agricultural implements, likely purchased from savings earned from several seasons of work. Sto:lo farmers had to work hard, at other jobs, in order to obtain the capital necessary to allow them to work their own farms.

⁴⁶ In 1891, money was spent “Clearing land and measuring fences and dykes on Indian Reserve, occupied by Mrs. Herring”. It is unclear whether or not this was a Sto:lo woman. Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1891.

⁴⁷ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1885, 85.

⁴⁸ See for example, bands in the Chilliwack district who, in 1910 are described as having a good supply of farm implements “in most cases purchased by themselves”. Chilliwack bands acquired new implements almost yearly according to the 1903 report. R.C. McDonald, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1910, 208, and 1903, 261.

⁴⁹ This suggests that other bands communally owned some implements. Frank Devlin, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1898, 216.

When Sto:lo had the capital to start developing their own farms, they chose many types of items to produce. In 1876, the first year for the Agricultural and Industrial Statistics to include the Fraser area, corn, wheat, oats, peas, potatoes, and hay were all cultivated, with the greatest proportion of cultivated land being put into potatoes. A few horses, cows, sheep, pigs, and oxen were also to be found on farms in the Fraser Superintendency.⁵⁰ Cows for dairy produce did not likely produce much more than family need. Ten years later, farmers in the Fraser Agency added barley to the list of grain crops.⁵¹ By 1906, barley was no longer being grown by the farmers in the Fraser River Agency, and garden vegetables such as beans, carrots, and turnips were also grown in large enough amounts to be enumerated.⁵² Geese, ducks, and chickens also appeared in the 1906 report. In 1916, the last year for which there is an annual report, crops grown and stock raised in the New Westminster Agency was the same as ten years previous.⁵³ Not mentioned in the Agricultural and Industrial Statistics are the varieties of fruit grown by Sto:lo people: apples, peaches, plums, pears, prunes, cherries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries.⁵⁴ It was the fruit crops in particular that Sto:lo were successful. Dairying as a commercial enterprise first occurs in 1896 and expanded rapidly after that.⁵⁵ Sto:lo people appeared to be interested in all types of agriculture but seemed to focus on orcharding, dairying, and potatoes.

Exactly who in Sto:lo communities was farming remains unclear. Special attention is paid in the Department Of Indian Affairs Annual Reports to Sto:lo chiefs. It

⁵⁰ Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1876, 7.

⁵¹ Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1886, cxiii.

⁵² Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1906, 133- 137.

⁵³ Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1916, 54-81.

⁵⁴ Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1875- 1916.

was believed that the best way to acculturate the First Nations in Canada was to either assimilate or replace their respected leaders.⁵⁶ Agents for the Sto:lo territory were keen to point out those Sto:lo leaders who were the most “progressive”, i.e. those who acted in a manner acceptable to the agent’s standards of civilization. Chief Alexis of Cheam in 1875, the chief of Kwakwaka’pilt in 1888, Chief Billy of Skowkale, and Chief Joe of Kwakwaka’pilt in 1896, and several others are all mentioned as being particularly “progressive” because of their great example as farmers.⁵⁷ The most glowing report is given to Chief Pierre of Hope in 1896:

The Hope Indians are also doing a great deal in the way of cultivation, and are making good progress. Great credit is due to Chief Pierre for the good example which he sets before the others. He has about thirty-five acres cleared and in a high state of cultivation. When he was paid off at the cannery in September, 1895, he deposited the sum of two hundred dollars in the savings bank here. This year he deposited the sum of one hundred dollars, so that he has now the sum of three hundred dollars to his credit in the bank.⁵⁸

Chief Pierre demonstrates the qualities that Smart felt would come from the process of tilling the soil, a sense of individualism and “a due sense of the value of money”. Other chiefs, however, are decidedly unprogressive. Despite all kinds of promises, the Coquitlam band seemed to show little progress, due to their “old chief”.⁵⁹ Although not directly stated, it would appear that the DIA encouraged the adoption of agriculture by chiefs, hoping to acculturate the group they represented as well.

⁵⁵ Frank Devlin, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1896, 88

⁵⁶ Two methods of assimilation were the subversion of the chiefs and the immersion of children in “civilized” culture through the residential school system. Carlson, *Early Nineteenth Century Sto:lo Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy*,” in Carlson ed., You Are Asked to Witness, 95.

⁵⁷ See Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1875, 1888, 1896.

⁵⁸ Frank Devlin, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1896, 87-89, pg. 88.

Little is known about where agricultural surpluses grown by chiefs and other band member, when they existed, ended up. The first mention of produce being sent to market from Sto:lo farmers is in 1888 when Assylitts, a small band of 26, is described as sending out “considerable” produce.⁶⁰ Fruit markets in particular were limited. Fruit was often not accepted on the regular market and had to be sold to fruit canneries because its variety which was either too poor, or no longer popular on the market. Another major problem with fruit was the lack of proper packing knowledge. In order to remedy this, special packing schools were held in Sardis and Chilliwack where the Sto:lo participants, mainly children, “beat their white competitors, as they are excellent imitators and have sharper eyes for judging size.”⁶¹ Fruit was also sold by Sto:lo orchardists at the hop-yards, which seemed to buy much Native-grown produce.⁶² No other mention of buyers for Sto:lo produces is made in the Annual Reports. In a conversation with Archie Charles, he mentioned that garden produce grown on Seabird Island was sent to the canneries.⁶³ It is likely that this occurred during the period under study here but no mention was found in the DIA Annual Reports. Other industries that may have purchased produce from the Sto:lo include the logging camps, and the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Some types of produce, like butter and fruit were sold locally. Other surpluses may have been sent to more urban markets like New Westminster and

⁵⁹ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1883, 44-46, pg. 45.

⁶⁰ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1888, 105-107, pg. 105.

⁶¹ Tom Wilson, Inspector of Indian Orchards, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1914, 107-110, pg. 107.

⁶² Pears, early apples, late cherries, and plums were particularly popular at hop-yards as “all or nearly all the Indians are fruit-eaters when they can get it.” Note that the quality of the fruit was such that it would not be sold on the regular market. Tom Wilson, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1915, 115-117, pg. 116.

Vancouver but again, this is speculation.⁶⁴ While the specific destination of agricultural surpluses is not known, it is clear that such surpluses, when available, were disposed.

The DIA Annual Reports indicate that when there was a surplus, it was sold at fair or remunerative prices. Despite the problems listed above, fruit appears to have been the most profitable Native-grown crop. Fruit such as pears, plums, peaches, prunes, cherries, and apples were all grown with success on many Sto:lo reserves. Sto:lo found fruit-growing so profitable, that in 1890 “a great many” young trees were planted after making “considerable” profit from plums, peaches, cherries, pears, and apples.⁶⁵ This was long before profits on other types of produce was realized. Dairying, an industry that is first mentioned in 1896, allowed two members of Scowlitz and Chehalis to sell butter to local dairy shops at a good price.⁶⁶ Field crops are rarely mentioned in terms of profit; it is unclear why. Possibly this is because field crops didn’t often produce a surplus, prices were low, weather conditions ruined crops, or not much effort was put into bringing such crops to market. Both the bands in the Chilliwack District and Langley, however, were described as being prosperous from surplus crops which may include field crops.⁶⁷ Hay too, was sometimes successful enough to sell a surplus. Table

⁶³ Interview with Archie Charles, June 1, 2000, recorded at Seabird Island, copy of tape will be given to Sto:lo Nation Archives.

⁶⁴ It is known, however, that Coquitlam band members supplied game and fish to the New Westminster market for a living, a much lamented fact for local agents. From 1898 when the annual reports began outlining the “progress” of individual bands down to 1916 when the reports end, Coquitlam is reported as making a living primarily through hunting and fishing. Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports , 1898- 1916.

⁶⁵ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1890, 128-129, pg. 128.

⁶⁶ Frank Devlin, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1896, 87-89, pg 88.

⁶⁷ The term crop is used indiscriminately in the DIA reports and it is often unclear what type of crop is meant. As fruit and potatoes are mentioned specifically, it is possible that *crop* refers to field crops. Tom Wilson, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1914, 107-110, pg. 108.

2 shows the income for First Nations in the Fraser/ New Westminster Agency from 1900 to 1916.

Table 2: Breakdown of Indian Income for the Fraser/ New Westminster Agency, 1900- 1916⁶⁸

Year	% Derived from Agriculture	% Derived from Fishing	% Derived from Hunting & Trapping	% Derived from Other Industries	% Derived from Wage Labour	Total Indian Income
1900	13.5	27.5	18.5	13.5	27	343,004.75
1901	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1902*	5	18	27	15	26.5	348,990.10
1903	14	27	18	14	27	343,745.40
1904	14	22	18.5	17.5	28	342,708.90
1905	14	21	19	19	27	337,590.90
1906	15	27	17	16	25	347,615.90
1907*	19	34	15.5	18	24	272,890.90
1908	18	19	14	23	26	299,343.50
1909	19	20	14	22	25	293,112.50
1910	19	22	12	22	25	300,058.00
1911	18	20	13	24	25	247,130.00
1912	22.5	22	13	19.5	23	149,025.00
1913	16	23	12	22	26	254,465.00
1914*	31	23	12	22	26	250,317.79
1915*	16.5	23	12	22	25	255,121.68
1916	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Incorrect math in the original data from the DIA Annual Reports is the cause of the incorrect percentages that add up to more than 100%.

Excluding the figures for 1902 and 1914 (outliers which are unexplained in the DIA reports) income from agricultural products was consistently between 15 and 20 % of total Indian income. This somehow seems inconsistent when little mention of the actual selling of produce is made in the reports. These optimistic figures may be the Agent's attempt to promote his agency, and therefore his work in the best possible light. Clearly Sto:lo agriculture on the whole was not really on a commercial level, nor enough to make a reasonable living.

Sto:lo agriculture throughout this period was mainly to meet subsistence needs rather than as a commercial enterprise. When reading the DIA Annual Reports one gets

⁶⁸ Data taken from Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1900- 1916.

the impression that aside from a little fishing in the summer and fall, all Sto:lo people did was farm. The chief occupations of Sto:lo people throughout this period were farming, fishing, and hunting. Farming is generally described as “a little mixed farming done by most families.”⁶⁹ Most of these families relied on agriculture to fulfill subsistence needs. While Sto:lo still participated in their seasonal round of activities, they were forced to rely more and more on their gardens, especially after 1900:

Generally speaking, the Indians of this agency continue to realize more fully the necessity of properly cultivating their farms, gardens, and orchards. The restrictions placed on their fishing and hunting operations compel them to do so.⁷⁰

These restrictions on traditional subsistence patterns coincided with a gradual squeezing out of Sto:lo from the wage labour economy.⁷¹ All these factors seem to indicate that farming by Sto:lo in this period was mainly done for subsistence, with a hope for a surplus and profits.

Farming was a low priority for Sto:lo who could earn more in jobs that better suited their seasonal subsistence and social rounds. Fishing is always mentioned second behind farming in occupations. This is not, I believe, because Sto:lo were more involved in farming but rather because farming was the more important of the two to the Department of Indian Affairs. To the Sto:lo it was vice versa. Even Sto:lo who were successful at farming, such as the bands in the Chilliwack district, would leave their

⁶⁹ This phrase is used over and over when describing Sto:lo agriculture. Example, Frank Devlin, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1900, 247.

⁷⁰ Agent Peter Byrne, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1913, 249.

⁷¹ See also Carlson and Lutz, “Sto:lo People and the Development of the B.C. Wage Labour Economy,” in Carlson ed., You Are Asked to Witness, 120-123.

farms in the summer to fish for the canneries and in the fall to fish for themselves.⁷² That farming was of less importance than income from the salmon fishery was very clear in 1887:

... The Fraser River Indians have lost large numbers of their stock. The chief cause of this was the failure last summer of the salmon fishing on the Fraser River. The Indians were obliged to resort to some means to obtain money to buy provisions to support themselves and families through the winter; consequently they went in large numbers to the hop-fields in Washington Territory. They remained there longer than they should have done, and did not reach their homes in time to cut and save sufficient hay to feed their stock during the long and severe winter.⁷³

The salmon fishery remained what Sto:lo relied on to make it through the winter, so much so that farms had to be neglected when it interfered with fishing, or in this case, finding an alternate source of revenue, hop-picking (notice they did not try to make it through the winter on their income from hay). Other sources of revenue, especially the salmon fishery, were far more vital to the Sto:lo than that from farming,

Hop-picking as an alternate source of revenue grew in importance throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Following restrictions on the aboriginal fishery and the edging out of Sto:lo from the cannery fishery by the Japanese, hop-yards became a major source of employment. Picking hops was also seasonal, occurring between the summer and fall salmon runs. Like fishing for the canneries, hop-picking allowed Sto:lo to continue with their traditional rounds and social calendar. Farming on the other hand, and in particular stock-raising, requires spring, summer, and fall labour with the most labour intensive time coming at harvest. Sto:lo did their best to

⁷² Frank Devlin, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1893, 120.

incorporate farming into their seasonal round but were not entirely successful. There are many incidents of fruit rotting on trees in “some of the best kept and thrifty orchards in the Lower Fraser Valley” because owners were off picking hops.⁷⁴ Along with hops, other lucrative industries such as logging, working on the railroad, sawmill operations, and as farm hands on non-Sto:lo farms all competed with the Sto:lo farms and orchards for their time. Competition with wage labour employment was a major factor for the unsuccessful nature of Sto:lo farms.

Sto:lo farming had many factors that led to its relatively unsuccessful commercial aspect. Lack of formal instruction, little assistance from the Department of Indian Affairs, and no shortage of wage labour opportunities all contributed. I will now compare the Sto:lo experience with Sarah Carter’s findings on the Prairies.

There are some initial differences between the two areas that need to be described. First, Plains peoples’ desire to become farmers was driven by the loss of buffalo, a major source of food. To compound this problem, the prairies were opened up to settlement, interfering with the Plains Peoples seasonal rounds by building fences and changing the natural landscape as they developed their farms. As a result of these changes, Prairie peoples began to starve and agriculture seemed to be the answer. As such, they demanded that agricultural supplies and instruction become a major part of treaty negotiations. Sto:lo people did not face similar circumstances, salmon were still running abundantly in the Fraser and settlement was such that it was still possible to maintain a seasonal round. They lacked the real need for agriculture that Plains people

⁷³ P. McTiernan, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1887, 111.

displayed. This is a major difference and does much to explain why Sto:lo were not as enthusiastic about farming as those on the Prairie.

Another difference was the respective developing economies. On the Prairies, most settlers came out West to farm and so the economy was largely based on agriculture. Opportunities for wage labour employment for the Plains peoples were likely fairly limited to jobs such as working on the railroad and other infrastructure related enterprises, and working for white farmers. Hunting and fishing were options as well, however the increasing area of cultivated land would drive wildlife further away in search of traditional ecosystems. The movement of Plains peoples was also limited by the pass system. Plains people would also have many immigrants with which to compete for employment. For the Sto:lo, the developing economy offered more, rather than less opportunities. Because immigration and settlement of the Lower Mainland was at a much slower rate, Sto:lo were needed to work in all industries, including fisheries, building of infrastructure such as the railway, logging, and as farmhands. The pass system was never enforced here due both to the difficulty of enforcing it and that labour by Sto:lo and other First Nations were vital to the developing British Columbian economy.⁷⁴ Not only were the Sto:lo welcomed into the wage labour economy, they were well paid as well. This was widely acknowledged in the DIA reports as being a

⁷⁴ Cheam and Popkum had such excellent orchards, among others, who were forced to leave the fruit when the harvest coincided with the hop harvest. Tom Wilson, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1911, 275.

⁷⁵ Superintendent General E. Dewdney writes "In short they [Indians of the Fraser River Agency] are an essentially industrial class of people, with whom the country could ill afford to dispense." Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1888, lxxxv.

major obstacle to agriculture.⁷⁶ Unlike the Plains people, Sto:lo were never restricted from participating in the developing economy.

Carter's thesis argues that government resistance to Native agriculture was the main stumbling block to commercial success for Native farmers, citing both the policy of peasant farming and the 1880 restriction of the selling of Native raised produce. Neither of these two factors applied to B.C., despite Carter's misleading statement that they did.⁷⁷

The DIA peasant farming policy did not apply to Native farmers in B.C. No attempt was made to subdivide reserves, and there were no restrictions on using machinery.⁷⁸

Furthermore, the 1880 amendment to the Indian Act that was to blame for the failure of reserve agriculture in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario was never intended to apply in British Columbia. The amendment reads:

The Governor in Council may make such provisions and regulation as may, from time to time, seem advisable for prohibiting or regulating the sale, barter, exchange or gift, by any band or irregular band of Indians, or by any Indian of any band or irregular band, *in the North-West Territories, the Province of Manitoba, or the District of Keewatin* of any grain or root crops...⁷⁹

Potential buyers of Sto:lo produce did not have to fear penalty for doing so, it was not illegal in British Columbia to buy produce from First Nations. Carter, Waisberg and Holzkamm, and Tough all found that these restrictive policies and legislation were what

⁷⁶ DIA officials seemed glad that as sawmills, logging camps, and other industries "shut off the demand for labour, has had the effect of sending the Indians 'back to the land.'" Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1915, 115.

⁷⁷ Carter writes, "Similarly, in western Canada, measures like the permit system, severalty, and peasant farming combined to undermine and atrophy agricultural development on reserves." Carter, "Two Acres and a Cow," in Miller, ed., Sweet Promises, 372.

⁷⁸ In 1891, at the height of peasant farming policy on the Prairies, Agent McTiernan was pleased to report that the Soowahlie band had purchased a threshing machine. Hope band also had a threshing machine. Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1891, 202.

⁷⁹ Emphasis mine, Venne, Canada, Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1975, An Indexed Collection, (Saskatoon, 1981), 88.

really killed Native agriculture, yet these had no affect on Sto:lo. Despite this, the outcome of both First Nations ventures into agriculture was the same. What then, was the cause of the eventual stagnation and ultimate failure of Sto:lo agriculture?

Department of Indian Affairs officials did not have a coherent policy towards Native agriculture in B.C. An unstated policy seems to have been one of non-intervention. While they fully approved of the “red man” becoming involved in agriculture, they did not attempt to assist them in any way. I believe that this is because Native groups like the Sto:lo were the labour force upon which the provincial economy was built. In their heart of hearts, local DIA officials knew that it was not only in the best interests of the economy to allow First Nations to seek wage labour opportunities but also in the best interests for people like the Sto:lo. Not only was quality of life better for wage earners than farmers, there was no money to assist Native farmers with supplies or instruction. DIA officials dutifully reported to their superiors at the national level on the “progress” of Sto:lo agriculture, but the reality was such that intervention and assistance to help Sto:lo farms develop more fully was not provided.

While some Sto:lo did seem to have a genuine interest in agriculture, many factors combined to direct their energies to different occupations. As the non-aboriginal population remained smaller than the Aboriginal population for part of the period under study, Sto:lo were paid handsome wages at other seasonal occupations that better fit within their traditional seasonal and social rounds. A government policy of non-interference meant that Sto:lo faced many difficulties in obtaining funds to start and maintain farms. The location of many Sto:lo reserves and a lack of dykes meant that the almost yearly floods proved to be a discouragement. When all went well and a profit was

made, the revenue was not enough to support Sto:lo families by itself and further encouraged participation in the wage labour economy. All these factors reinforced each other to keep Sto:lo people participating in agriculture at a subsistence level. This is only a brief examination of factors that discouraged agriculture down to the 1920s, further research is badly needed as Sto:lo agriculture is a topic with a deep history.

Areas for Further Research

There are several areas that I would have liked to have investigated concerning Sto:lo agriculture in this time period. I have also included suggestions for further researchers seeking to understand the complex nature of Sto:lo agriculture into the twentieth century.

For this time period there are several areas which could be researched further. It is likely that many of the problems that faced Sto:lo farmers in the early period were the same facing non-Sto:lo farmers as well. To understand the uniqueness of the Sto:lo experience, it would have been useful to examine the experience of other small farmers of this period. They would have had the same difficulties in clearing the land, finding markets, and dealing with environmental factors, yet may have been able to cope in different ways from Sto:lo farmers.

Further the demographics of who in Sto:lo communities was actually farming requires research. The DIA reports do not give much evidence on this issue. There is great emphasis placed on those chiefs who farmed, but it does not indicate if only the high status families farmed, who started farming first etc. A related topic I would have liked to have learned more about the role of women involved in agriculture. In non-Sto:lo farms of this period, it would have been difficult to have had a successful farm

without a wife who was “a necessary condition to economic success”.⁸⁰ Were Sto:lo farms as dependent on the labour of women and children? Were these women and children of the slave population? Answers to these types of questions about who in particular was farming will provide a greater picture of how farming was seen by the Sto:lo people.

The perspective of the Sto:lo farmers themselves is sadly lacking in this paper. Due to the limited time in which to research and write this paper, and the depth of information found in the DIA annual reports, I did not get a chance to explore the Sto:lo viewpoint to great extent. The petitions cited above hint that there was great enthusiasm, at least at first, towards farming. Other petitions from Sto:lo people may shed further light on the changing Sto:lo perspective towards reserve agriculture. What factors caused this attitude to change? The McKenna- McBride Royal Commission Testimony (1912-1913 in Sto:lo territory) undoubtedly yields much information on the Sto:lo opinion as it is a forum for the voices of the farmers. The large sections on farming were delineated in the Sto:lo Nation Archives copy of the testimony for me by my colleague Gabe Haythornthwaite and likely are still marked. The Coqualeetza oral history collection was not explored in the course of research for this project. It is my understanding that some tapes date to the 1960s. It is possible that some discussion of Sto:lo participation in agriculture can be found that dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Examining these sources will begin to uncover the Sto:lo attitude towards agriculture.

⁸⁰ Cecilia Danysk, “‘A Bachelor’s Paradise’: Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880- 1930,” in Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat, eds., Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement (Toronto: 1996), 160.

Another source regarding Sto:lo agriculture that could develop a sense of change over time are the Agricultural and Industrial Statistics found in the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports. I examined these statistics for some basic information but did little in the way of quantitative analysis. The information is very detailed and one could get quite involved in them. This is a great source of information and one that needs to be examined more thoroughly than I had time for. I compiled a copy of all the Agricultural and Industrial Statistics for Sto:lo territory for the completion of this project and this binder will be given to the Sto:lo Nation Archives for ease of future researchers use. Included in the binder are some of the basic tables I created on income, acres under cultivation, and agricultural expenditures by the DIA.

Another question that remains largely unanswered is that of instruction- how did Sto:lo learn to farm various types of crops, raise- stock, and prepare produce for market? It would be interesting to examine Hudson's Bay Company and Fort Langley documents in general to gain an understanding of how workers in its farms were trained, by participant observation or were they given direct instruction? Also, how did this knowledge diffuse throughout the Sto:lo communities? Clearly migration between communities was one way. Did Sto:lo men pass on this information to other men? Only to their children? Was handing down the family farm through the generations a standard practice or not? This question may also be examined by having a thorough understanding of the changing attitude towards agriculture. Other forms of instruction were received from the non-Sto:lo settlers who developed farms in the area. The interaction between Sto:lo farmers and non-Sto:lo farmers struggling to start up farms would be an interesting area of exploration. Finally, training in agricultural knowledge

occurred in residential and industrial schools. I did not examine the information contained in the DIA annual reports regarding residential schools and farming, as I felt that this topic required more research than I had time to do. This is a part of another question left unanswered, that of religion's role in the development of Sto:lo farms.

As Rolf Knight points out, Catholic missions (who were very active in Sto:lo territory) were committed to creating autonomous Native communities.⁸¹ As partial fulfillment of this commitment, the Oblates attempted to develop mixed farming communities of First Nations peoples. According to Knight, the Oblates assisted the Natives with instruction and aid in obtaining stock and seeds, and likely implements as well.⁸² However, there does not seem to be any correlation between those band who are "progressive" and the Roman Catholic religion. A study of the local impact of St. Mary's, Coqualeetza, and the Mission at Mission City on Sto:lo farmers would further elucidate the *how* of the Sto:lo agricultural question. *Why*, I think could also be answered. Knight suggests that local Native leaders allied themselves with the missions to establish a place for themselves in directing Native dealings with the new cash economy.⁸³ One way Sto:lo may have needed church support would be in securing markets for their agricultural produce. Another possible aspect to be explored comes from the work of Calvin Martin. He argues that for the Cree, the adoption of technology came hand in hand with religion as "Western technology made more 'sense' if it was accompanied by Western religion."⁸⁴ This may or may not have been the case with the

⁸¹ Knight, *Indians at Work*, 93.

⁸² Knight, *Indians at Work*, 93.

⁸³ Knight, *Indians at Work*, 92.

⁸⁴ Calvin Martin, "The European Impact on the Culture of a Northeastern Algonquian Tribe: An Ecological Interpretation," in Ken S. Coates and Robin Fisher, eds., Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History (Toronto, 1998) 43.

Sto:lo adoption of agriculture and “Western” technology. However, as previously noted, Sto:lo people already had cultivated wapito so agriculture was not necessarily an imported concept. Also, an early nineteenth century Sto:lo prophet told of the coming Christians and explained that Sto:lo religion would now be practiced in the manner of the newcomers, so it could be argued that they did not have to adopt a Western religion either.⁸⁵ An examination of agriculture and religion would benefit the larger study of Sto:lo participation in agriculture.

Sto:lo farming truly began to decline around the end of World War One. Some of the evidence I came across suggests some possible reasons that need to be examined more fully. Reuban Ware and Albert Phillips spent some time learning about the mainly dairy farms on the Kilgard reserve in 1978 and dairy farming on Seabird Island in 1977.⁸⁶ One dairy farmer’s land was part of the land surrender for the railroad and he supposedly received only fifty dollars for the surrender of his farm. Clearly valuable farm land was lost during the shrinking of the reserves throughout the twentieth century. Ware and Phillips conversation with then Chief Archie Charles of Seabird Island gave another reason for the disappearance of the Seabird dairy farms, government regulation of the industry in the 1940s.⁸⁷ Very few Sto:lo dairy farmers survived the changes in regulation. While the same changes would have affected small dairy farmers in general, they were likely better able to cope than Sto:lo farmers as they had access to capital through loans which the Sto:lo did not. Other Sto:lo farmers were eventually phased out as well- why? From my own conversation with Archie Charles, it would seem that the

⁸⁵ Personal Communication with Keith Carlson, May 2000.

⁸⁶ Reuben Ware and Albert Phillips, Stalo History Fieldnotes, Sto:lo Nation Archives, Uncatalogued.

⁸⁷ Ware and Phillips, Stalo History Fieldnotes, 66.

loss of markets was a large factor in the decline of the market garden farmers on Seabird Island.⁸⁸ According to Mr. Charles, government regulations were such that after the loss of the cannery markets in the late 1970s, it was impossible for Seabird farmers to find other places to sell their produce. Loss of markets, and loss of reserve land are two possible reasons for the decline of Sto:lo farming in the mid- to late twentieth century but there are likely more reasons that should be researched.

Problems like the lack of markets may have been easier to deal with in organized groups. In an interview with Frank Malloway and in a magazine article about his father, Richard Malloway, it is revealed that there was a Sardis Native Farmers Association, organized by Richard Malloway and George Matheson.⁸⁹ Its mandate apparently was to “teach Indian Farmers modern dairy techniques.”⁹⁰ Neither the Sto:lo Nation Archives nor the Chilliwack District Archives have anything on the Sardis Native Farmers Association. Research on this subject is a must in my opinion. Was it effective as a lobbying group? Who were its members? Were there similar organizations in other areas of Sto:lo territory? Richard Malloway was also a member of the Fraser Valley Milk Producer’s Association.⁹¹ Clearly Malloway found that he needed to be a part of an organization. How did the FVMPPA meet his, and other Sto:lo farmers’, needs? Were there other types of non-Sto:lo agricultural organizations of which Sto:lo people became members? It is known that Tom Wilson, Inspector of Indian Orchards advised Sto:lo

⁸⁸ Interview with Archie Charles, June 1, 2000, recorded at Seabird Island, copy of tape will be given to Sto:lo Nation Archives.

⁸⁹ Frank Malloway, “Through the Eyes of *Siyemches te Yeqwyeqwi:ws*,” in Keith Carlson, ed., You Are Asked to Witness: The Sto:lo in Canada’s Pacific Coast History, (Chilliwack: 1997), 23.

⁹⁰ This quote is taken from “Profile Richard Malloway” Western Wonderland, no date, 8. This article was photocopied from a scrapbook kept by Edna Malloway.

⁹¹ “Profile Richard Malloway” Western Wonderland

farmers to join farming institutes and that some did join.⁹² How effective were these types of organizations to Sto:lo people? What types of roles did Sto:lo farmers play in these types of organizations? Did agricultural organizations treat Sto:lo farmers the same as non-Sto:lo members? Did Sto:lo farmers join such organizations because they represented the same concerns as non-Sto:lo? What compelled Sto:lo farmers to sign up? The history of Sto:lo involvement in agricultural organizations like the Fraser Valley Milk Producers Association and the Sardis Native Farmers Association will further elucidate the concerns and needs of Sto:lo farmers as well as their relations with non-Sto:lo farmers.

Sto:lo farmers also interacted with the larger farming community through participation in agricultural fairs such as the Provincial Exhibition held at New Westminster. The various agents for the Fraser region all mention the relative success of Native farmers' exhibits. Yet clearly there was some discrimination on behalf of their competitors: in 1913 and 1914 it would appear that Native exhibits were given less space than non-Native exhibits. This indicates possible hostility on the part of non-Sto:lo farmers in regards to Sto:lo competition. Did non-Sto:lo farmers work to undermine Sto:lo farmers' access to markets? Also, did Sto:lo reserves hold their own agricultural fairs as Sarah Robinson seems to suggest for the Vancouver Island Salish?⁹³ The relationship between Sto:lo and non-Sto:lo agriculturalists may also be examined through research into Sto:lo participation in agricultural fairs.

⁹² Tom Wilson, Canada, Sessional Papers. Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1914, 107-110, 107.

⁹³ It is not entirely clear from Robinson's comment where the agricultural fairs the Vancouver Island Salish participated in were held. Sarah Anne Robinson, Spirit Dancing Among the Salish Indians Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1963, 46.

An interesting segment of the Sto:lo farming community was the dairy farmers. Sto:lo appeared to have much success in dairying, in particular Richard Malloway who was the last Indian dairy farmer by the 1970s. Archie Charles gave a possible reason: cows were pastured in the forest on Seabird Island thus eliminating the difficult job of clearing the land.⁹⁴ Malloway was the longest lasting Sto:lo dairy farmer- what was his secret? Was it his willingness to try new technologies such as artificial insemination?⁹⁵ Studying Sto:lo ventures into various types of agriculture such as dairying will shed much light on agricultural history.

Finally, much work could be done to assess current Sto:lo attitudes towards agriculture. My interview with Archie Charles was very informative and I wish I had the chance to do interviews with others. Not only was Mr. Charles able to talk about his experiences in the farming industry but he also had vast knowledge of other agricultural operations that had occurred on Seabird Island. This knowledge enabled him to offer opinions on the failure, and future, of agriculture on the reserve. His current view of reserve agriculture sheds much light on both his personal and band agricultural history. Studying the opinions of contemporary Sto:lo people, both young and old, will help the Sto:lo Nation in making demands regarding agricultural lands and resources in current treaty negotiations.

The history of Sto:lo agriculture is one of great depths and many topics. It is also unique to the experiences of Native farmers throughout Canada. Unlike other areas

⁹⁴ Interview with Archie Charles, June 1, 2000, recorded at Seabird Island, copy of tape will be given to Sto:lo Nation Archives.

⁹⁵ Malloway was one of the first dairymen in the Chilliwack area to breed cattle through artificial insemination: "I was more curious than knowledgeable. I went to the first meeting on artificial insemination that was held up here and realized that the government men were talking sense." Malcolm Turnbull, "Chief Named Citizen of Year", in Unknown Newspaper, Feb. 16, 1971.

where direct government regulation was to blame for the lack of success by Native farmers, it was a combination of factors that were mutually reinforcing that kept Sto:lo reserve agriculture at a subsistence level in the period of 1875- 1916 despite some moments of success/ prosperity. Good wages, difficulties with the land, lack of capital and government support, and difficulties fitting large scale agriculture into traditional rounds all contributed. This research has been immensely rewarding and should be continued further.

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