

Fish versus Power

An Environmental History of the
Fraser River

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Introduction

In the twentieth century, humans transformed the planet's rivers. On every continent, save Antarctica, they dammed, diverted, and depleted rivers. On local, regional, and continental levels, the pathways and uses of water changed, if not always in kind, then in intensity, location, and scale. Two ecologists, Mats Dynesius and Christer Nilsson, reported in the closing decade of the twentieth century that over three-quarters of the total water discharge of the 139 largest rivers in the Northern Hemisphere are “strongly or moderately affected by fragmentation of the river channels by dams and by water regulation resulting from reservoir operation, inter-basin diversion, and irrigation. . . . These conditions indicate that many types of river ecosystems have been lost and that the populations of many riverine species have become highly fragmented.”¹

The aim was not to fragment but to create a new order. In emerging nation-states, in empires and colonies, in capitalist and communist societies, political elites applied new technologies of power to rivers and lakes. Dreams of a hydraulic order sought to correct past ills, to raise wealth, to impose control over nature and others. Floods would be stopped, rushing, wasting water would be harnessed with hydroelectric dams, and arid lands and reservoirs would be linked with irrigation systems. A new order of previously unimaginable scope was placed on rivers almost everywhere. Over the course of the twentieth century, humans increased their annual

1. Dynesius and Nilsson, “Fragmentation and Flow,” p. 753. For Dynesius and Nilsson, “northern third of the world” refers to North America north of Mexico, Europe, and the republics of the former Soviet Union.

withdrawals from rivers and lakes ninefold.² And still the search for order, on the Yangtze, on the Mekong, and on the Great Plains, continues.

Because so many dams have been built and so many rivers transformed, the historiography of water development has understandably focused on the factors driving development rather than on those constraining it. From the role of state systems and geopolitics to the importance of monumentalism and modernism in dam design, environmental historians have sought to understand the forces that have made dam development politically possible, economically feasible, and ideologically acceptable.³ Complementing a number of important studies focusing on fisheries, they have also catalogued a host of environmental consequences of river development, not only on fish, but also on changed flow regimes and on human settlements.⁴ Relatively few national and international studies have sought to resurrect and understand protest movements against dam development.⁵ In general, environmental historians of river development have emphasized the causes of development without questioning what the alternatives might have been or whether, in similar places at similar times, the outcomes were the same.

This book focuses on a river for which some of the choices made about how to impose order, to raise wealth, and to establish political power took different forms than those used elsewhere. The Fraser River, located in British Columbia, Canada, is the most productive salmon river in the world. In terms of annual discharge, it is the third largest river on the Pacific coast of North America, following the Columbia and the Yukon, and the third largest in Canada, after the Mackenzie and the St. Lawrence. Like many large North American rivers, the Fraser has inspired dreams of waterpower wealth and fisheries growth. Despite many attempts in

2. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*, pp. 120–1. Estimates of long-term changes in human uses of freshwater may be found in L'vovich and White, "Use and Transformation," pp. 235–252.
3. Blatter and Ingram, *Reflections on Water*; Goldsmith and Hildyard, *Social and Environmental Effects*; Headrick, *The Tentacles of Progress*; Hundley, *The Great Thirst*; Jackson, *Building the Ultimate Dam*; Nelles, *The Politics of Development*; Pisani, *To Reclaim a Divided West*; Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*; Worster, *Rivers of Empire*.
4. McEvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem*; Taylor, *Making Salmon*; White, *The Organic Machine*.
5. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness*; McCully, *Silenced Rivers*.

the twentieth century, however, the main stem of the Fraser has never been dammed. The river has been fragmented, but far less than most. For students of the modern world and of the environment, the Fraser River provides an important counterpoint to other rivers in North America and beyond. Its many developmental similarities highlight its important differences. On the Fraser, fish have triumphed, not dams, and this study seeks to explain why.

The answer turns on the political economic and transnational forces that shaped the Fraser River in the twentieth century. Before 1945, developers dammed tributaries to assist resource extraction activities and to power urban growth. However, the limits of local markets and state intervention as well as the practical difficulties of dam development kept large dams off the Fraser. After 1945, power demand soared and flood control became a major goal of public policy. Diverse interests promoted the benefits of damming the river. In this high stage of postwar development pressure, a fisheries conservation coalition, born of a fishing industry alliance, Canada–U.S. cooperation in the international regulation of the salmon fishery, and the intervention of fisheries scientists critical of the effects of power development, held dams off the Fraser. Once Canada concluded an international treaty (1964) with the United States to dam the upper Columbia in coordination with American projects downstream, the British Columbia government proceeded with another major power project on the northern Peace River, which would meet domestic and export power demands for decades. As a result, the Fraser became insulated from development pressures. Former dam proposals could no longer be justified economically or politically. Development was delayed, then displaced to other rivers.

A second argument of this book is that the fish vs. power debate not only delayed and displaced development, but also produced various side effects on salmon, science, and society. Over the course of the twentieth century, debates about how to manage the river and the salmon bore consequences for salmon migration when landslides blocked the main stem, for salmon spawning grounds when developers dammed tributaries, and for salmon populations when restoration activities reclaimed areas for salmon rearing. Throughout the fish vs. power debate, scientists played an

important role in analyzing potential development cases, providing expert advice, and studying the relevant problems. Scientific institutions were formed and strengthened in part to provide answers to the fish–power problem. The applied questions that scientists sought to answer directed their research along some avenues and not others. In the background to the development conflict lay basic questions about British Columbia’s future. The fish vs. power debate broke and forged coalitions among different social groups, regional interests, industries, and state bureaucracies. Because the Fraser salmon fishery was international and because the development of the Fraser would affect other transboundary developments on the Columbia, the fish vs. power debate expanded into national and international politics, challenging and provoking older definitions of regionalism and regional self-interest. The debate over the river and its fish, in short, climbed the banks of the Fraser and affected and interacted with a range of problems and processes beyond.

“You cannot step twice in the same river,” observed the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, “for other waters are continually flowing on.”⁶ Writing a river’s history, then, seems a peculiarly elusive project, chasing a flow that cannot be constrained. Yet rivers have served as both metaphors and subjects of history for thousands of years. In Canada, rivers became routes for an unfolding nation in an earlier historiography; today they appear more frequently in our writing as sites of pollution.⁷ Romantic highways have become sewers. In British Columbia, rivers flow through the contemporary environmental imagination. They carry salmon that are said to typify a region and its history. They connect people to a place and its past. Frequently British Columbians have tried to step into the same river twice, forgetting how the river has changed and, more frequently still, how they have changed with it.

Before 1900, when this book begins, modernizing forces of the world economy and the politics of colonization had already

6. Quoted in Wheelwright, *Heraclitus*, p. 29.

7. The classic statement of the Laurentian interpretation of Canadian history is found in Creighton, *The Commercial Empire*; New, “The Great River Theory.”

changed the river and its peoples. To gain a long-term perspective that helps to place the development conflicts of the twentieth century in context, it is well to describe some of the natural processes that have made this river and to reflect upon the forces that turned the Fraser into a resettlement corridor.

The Fraser River drains a large basin, 250,000 km² (1 km² = 0.3861 miles²), about a quarter of British Columbia, or slightly larger than the land area of the United Kingdom (see Map 1). Since 1952, when the Nechako River was partially diverted to the coast, the drainage area has practically decreased to about 233,000 km².⁸ The Fraser originates in the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains near Mount Robson and curves in a long s-shaped southwestern arc toward the delta, 1375 km away. Over the seasonal cycle, the river's mean flow, measured near the river mouth, changes dramatically from 750 m³/s in the winter to 11,500 m³/s in the summer (1 m³ = 1.308 yd³).⁹ From mountainous slopes in the western Rockies, the river cuts deeply into interior plateaus and enters a wide valley near the delta. In its course, the river passes through several different ecological regions shaped by varying conditions of moisture and temperature: evergreen forests of pine, spruce, and fir on the western slopes of the Rockies, dry plateau and sagebrush country in some sections of the interior, and dense rain forests on the coast. Each of these areas provide rich and varied habitat for salmon. Five species of Pacific salmon (*Oncorhynchus*) spawn in the Fraser basin: chinook (*O. tshawytscha*), chum (*O. keta*), coho (*O. kisutch*), pink (*O. gorbuscha*), and sockeye (*O. nerka*).¹⁰ Pacific salmon are anadromous. They spend their early life in freshwater environments, usually food-rich lakes or small streams, migrate to the ocean for the bulk of their life history, and, in their final phase, return to their natal streams to spawn and die.¹¹

8. Church, "The Future of the Fraser River."

9. Dorsey, "Water"; Moore, "Hydrology and Water Supply," Vol. 2, pp. 3-18, 21-40; Northcote and Larkin, "The Fraser River."

10. I deliberately leave steelhead/rainbow trout out of this listing, following Groot and Margolis: "The scientific names for steelhead/rainbow trout (*Salmo gairdneri*) and cutthroat trout (*Salmo clarki clarki*) have recently been changed. They are now included in the genus *Oncorhynchus* and have been renamed *O. mykiss* and *O. clarki*, respectively. . . . They are still known as trout rather than salmon." Groot and Margolis, *Pacific Salmon Life Histories*, p. x.

11. *Ibid.*

The Fraser River entered the modern world system relatively late. Native peoples had lived along the river for millennia and developed complex social worlds around the primary resource of salmon. In the lower sections of the river, salmon and a diverse marine environment provided the foundations for some of the largest native populations in Canada before contact. Coastal contacts between native peoples and European explorers and traders occurred only in the late eighteenth century – more than 200 years later than similar encounters in Eastern Canada. Smallpox, spreading north and west from the Plains in 1782, preceded direct contact in many areas of the coast and Fraser River and had devastating consequences for native groups.¹² Land-based contacts, driven by an expansive continental fur trade from the East, were not realized until the early nineteenth century when Simon Fraser descended the river that would later bear his name, mistaking it for the Columbia. Although the treacherous narrows of the Fraser Canyon ruled out the use of the river as a possible transportation corridor for the fur trade, fur-trade posts were established in the interior and near the delta. These early links connected peoples and environments of the Fraser Basin to a continental trade network and to the demands of international markets, but they did not displace native peoples, nor colonize them.

A gold rush up the Fraser River in 1858 changed all of this. In a matter of months, around 20,000 miners, mainly from California, but also from eastern North America and Asia, traveled up the river, staked claims, and developed placer mining sites. Numerous conflicts with native peoples along the river ensued. In the same year, the British created the colony of British Columbia to exert control. The Fraser Basin lay within the territory ceded by the United States to the British in the Treaty of Washington (1846). The British established a settlement system, built a wagon road along the river from Yale (the head of navigation) north to the Cariboo gold fields, surveyed town sites, and generally imposed a new system of law and order.¹³ Missionaries of several denominations seeking cultural and religious change followed. As part of this

12. Harris, "Voices of Smallpox Around the Strait of Georgia," in *The Resettlement*, pp. 3–30.

13. Loo, *Making Law*.

resettlement process, in the second half of the nineteenth century native peoples were confined to margins of their traditional territories on reserves; unlike in many other parts of Canada, here no treaties were signed.¹⁴ In a very short period of time, the river had been colonized, connected to a global empire, and exploited for a high-value, low-bulk commodity export.

The Fraser River, nevertheless, remained on the margins. Although small resource industries of lumbering, fishing, agriculture, and mining developed slowly, particularly in the lower sections of the river, the lack of substantial local markets and the prohibitive costs of transportation to larger centers limited opportunities. It was not until the late nineteenth century, after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, a transcontinental railroad, that the barriers of distance began to diminish. From the east, the railroad followed the Thompson River, a Fraser tributary. At the confluence of the Thompson and the Fraser at Lytton, the railroad cut south, following the Fraser to the coast, before terminating north of the delta, on Burrard Inlet. At its terminus, finally reached in 1887, the railroad provided the economic foundations for a new city, Vancouver. At the coast, the railroad connected with steamships. Along its tracks, telegraph lines carried information. Over the years, a series of spur lines ran up tributary valleys that bisected the main line. In the early twentieth century, a second transcontinental line followed the river. The railroad, however, did not move the Fraser River from the margins to the center. Beyond rail lines, travel and shipment in the Fraser Basin remained difficult. But the railroad did connect the region to a new East–West axis across northern North America that promised considerable political and economic change.

The construction of the railroad had been a fundamental condition of British Columbia's entrance into Canadian Confederation in 1871. Before that time, the mainland colony had been united with Vancouver Island in 1866. By entering Confederation, British Columbia became subject to the constitution of a complex federal state. By the terms of the British North America Act, 1867, provinces and the federal government gained different

14. Harris, *Making Native Space*.

responsibilities and powers.¹⁵ Section 109 of the Act granted provinces jurisdiction over lands and resources, and Sections 92(5) and 92(13) granted the right to manage and sell public lands and to hold jurisdiction over property and civil rights. The federal government, however, retained jurisdiction over ocean-based and anadromous fisheries, navigable and international rivers, and significant powers related to natural resources under Section 91, particularly as these related to trade and commerce, taxation policy, and, most broadly, “Peace, Order and good Government.” Further, a railway belt, set aside to help finance the transcontinental railroad, remained under federal authority. The belt extended 20 miles on either side of the main line and therefore encompassed a wide section of the Fraser Basin. Administration of the railway belt remained contested for many years.¹⁶ These divisions of authority produced various conflicts within the state system over the administration and regulation of shared or contested resources – conflicts that private interests happily exploited.¹⁷

The railroad provided relatively cheap, reliable transport that underwrote a new era of resource development in the Fraser Basin. The primary exports from the basin were forest products and fish. Lumbering centered on the lower river and its environs, whereas fishing occurred near the delta and focused primarily on sockeye salmon. Agricultural commodities wrested from the rich soils of the Fraser Valley reached local markets in resource towns and the expanding commercial center of Vancouver. Before the turn of the century, cattle-ranching operations moved into sections of the middle basin, along the Thompson River. Rapidly, the railroad opened new resource development opportunities in the Fraser Basin and made it into an export-oriented, staple-producing region.

At the edge of the transcontinental railroad system, Vancouver emerged as the primary Pacific metropolis of Canada, organizing the provincial resource trades and providing transportation services for a vast hinterland. Within the city, lumber mills cut timber from logs floated by river and sea and prepared them for shipment by

15. The British North America Act, 1867, *Statutes of the United Kingdom*, 30–1, Victoria, Chapter 3.

16. Cail, *Land, Man, and the Law*, pp. 111–52.

17. Hessing and Howlett, *Canadian Natural Resource*, p. 56.

rail and barge. To the south, on the river, an increasing number of canneries produced an expanding pack of sockeye salmon. Cases of tinned fish were moved by rail to consumers in the east and abroad. Although manufacturing remained limited in the city before 1900, the city grew rapidly. Vancouver's population more than doubled from a modest 13,709 in 1891 to almost 30,000 by the turn of the century. In the next decade, the city's population quadrupled. By 1931, the city and surrounding municipalities reached nearly a quarter of a million; by 1951, over half a million – or nearly one-half of the entire provincial population.¹⁸ A city of this size and regional importance provided a considerable market for the resource economy of the province and also developed a substantial service industry and manufacturing base.

Fish versus Power is an environmental history of a contested river. To understand that contest, I build upon and seek connections among three bodies of scholarship.

First, any study of primary resource development in Canada must come to terms with the staples tradition of Canadian political economy. This tradition can be traced to the foundational economic histories of Harold Innis on Canada's early export trades of fur, cod, and minerals. Innis analyzed the "penetrative powers of the price system" across a vast northern realm and worked out the effects of staple commodity exploitation on economic and social relationships in hinterland regions.¹⁹ He approached these problems with the assumption that economic activity was linked to and embedded in environmental and spatial contexts. Although Innis's work has been widely praised and remains important, those who have sought to emulate his approach and concerns have done so in broadly different ways. In one direction, political economists have largely abandoned an historical approach, but have given greater theoretical precision to Innis's ideas and emphasized the inherent difficulties of industrialization in a staple-driven peripheral

18. McDonald, *Making Vancouver*; Wynn, "The Rise of Vancouver," p. 69.

19. For a general introduction to Innis's work and a collection of his essays, see Drache, ed., *Staples, Markets and Cultural Change* (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

economy.²⁰ In Canadian historical writing, the staples approach has received scattered treatment in the past half century; the most notable reinvigoration has appeared in the work of H. V. Nelles, who connected comparative studies of staple trades to analyses of the state and regulation.²¹ In historical geography, the staples tradition attracted considerable interest in the 1970s and 1980s and emphasized the settlement patterns associated with staple trades, as well as the environmental contexts and effects of commodity exploitation.²² My own approach analyzes the connections between what Nelles has called the “politics of development” in a federal state and the environmental histories of contested resources.

Second, a body of work in transnational environmental history has raised important questions. Although the term transnational has come to mean different things across the social sciences and humanities, in environmental history it refers to the connections made between humans and environments across national boundaries. Ian Tyrrell’s recent study of environmental exchanges between Australia and California, for example, explores the complex interplay of cultural meanings and ecological processes at various spatial scales.²³ The problems and practices of a transnational approach have attracted the greatest attention in American historiography and challenged persistent notions of American exceptionalism.²⁴ Beyond the United States, explicit reference to transnational concerns has been less evident, although there is no doubt that world history scholarship and numerous national (including Canadian) historiographies have treated transnational problems implicitly, or as a matter of course. Although this book focuses on one river basin, prescribed political or bioregional units of analysis do not confine it. I address the local, national, and international forces that have shaped the river and have been shaped by it. By making the transnational aspects explicit, I suggest the importance of understanding seemingly local or seemingly international

20. Drache, “Celebrating Innis: The Man, The Legacy and Our Future,” in *ibid.*, pp. xiii–lix.

21. Nelles, *The Politics of Development*.

22. Harris, “Industry and the Good Life Around Idaho Peak,” *Canadian Historical Review* 66(3) (1985): 315–43; Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*; Wynn, *Timber Colony*.

23. Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*.

24. Tyrrell, “Making Nations/Making States”; *idem*, “American Exceptionalism”; White, “The Nationalization of Nature.”

environmental questions at different and frequently intersecting spatial scales.

Third, recent work in environmental history has drawn connections among environmental change and the ideas and practices of science.²⁵ Broadly, environmental historians have borrowed selectively from recent constructivist approaches to the history and sociology of science that emphasize the contextual aspects of knowledge and practice. They have extended the range of problems under analysis, however, by linking scientific ideas and practices to changing environmental contexts.²⁶ Joseph Taylor's environmental history of the Columbia River fisheries, for example, identifies the agency of scientific knowledge in refashioning salmon populations under various fish cultural techniques.²⁷ Nancy Langston's environmental history of forestry in the U.S. West, on the other hand, demonstrates the mutually constitutive roles of changing scientific ideas and management practices acting on and changing within a shifting forest regime.²⁸ This book builds on this previous work by linking environmental history and the history of science, while also attending to the institutional and political contexts of scientific knowledge.

This book also depends critically on a rich body of local scholarship. Perhaps the first historian of fish and power was Henry Doyle, a British Columbia canner and self-taught scholar who produced a history of the Pacific Coast fisheries in the mid-1950s in the hopes of educating the public and warding off the power threat. Although he tried to publish this history, no press would take it, chiefly because of its heterodox theories of salmon biology, but also perhaps because of its fierce denunciations of the power interest.²⁹ Since Doyle's polemic, the subject has passed. Because there are no dams on the Fraser, presumably, their absence requires little explanation. Historians of hydroelectricity have focused on the rivers on which development did take place.³⁰ Historians of British

25. White, "Environmental History." 26. Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*.

27. Taylor, *Making Salmon*. 28. Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*.

29. UBC Special Collections and Archives (hereafter UBC), Doyle, Henry Papers, *The Rise and Decline of the Pacific Salmon Fisheries*, 2 vols. (nd, 1957?), unpublished MS.

30. For the early period, see Armstrong and Nelles, *Monopoly's Moment*; Roy, "The British Columbia Electric Railway Company"; idem, "The Fine Arts of Lobbying"; idem, "The Illumination of Victoria"; idem, "The British Columbia Electric Railway and Its Street Railway Employees"; idem, "Direct Management from Abroad." For the

Columbia's fisheries have provided a number of excellent studies on the role of business in the commercial fishery and on aspects of ethnic and native history.³¹ Few have investigated how nearly the industry came to an end in the face of dam development.³² In terms of the environmental conditions of the fishery, my attention is focused on the river. Although important studies over the past decade have provided new ideas and evidence about the effects of changing ocean conditions on salmon life history and productivity, much uncertainty remains around specific instances of environmental change, such as the effects of the Hells Gate slides.³³

The Fraser's present and future have also shaped my questions and concerns. The Fraser River's salmon fisheries, like so many fisheries worldwide, have experienced sharp declines in recent years. In 1999, the sockeye fishery was canceled for the first time. Concurrently, British Columbians and North Americans increased their appetite for energy. As California struggles to secure energy supplies, British Columbia and other Canadian jurisdictions export surplus power and imagine ways to develop and sell more.³⁴ With a faltering fishery on the Fraser and increasing energy demands, can calls for power dams on the Fraser be far behind? Today, the Fraser provides a counterexample to many rivers elsewhere, but it still has the potential to follow more familiar patterns.

Fish versus Power opens with a tragedy: a series of devastating landslides in 1912–14 that dammed the river in a narrow gorge named Hells Gate. The slides cut off the migration path of the

postwar period, see Bocking, *Mighty River*; Mitchell, *WAC Bennett*; Mouat, *The Business of Power*; Swainson, *Conflict Over the Columbia*; Wedley, "The Wenner-Gren and Peace River Power Development Programs"; idem, "Infrastructure and Resources"; Williston and Keller, *Forests, Power and Policy*, especially Chapter 2, "The Two Rivers Policy."

31. Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism*; Johnstone, *The Aquatic Explorers*; Meggs, *Salmon*; Muszynski, *Cheap Wage Labour*; Newell, *Tangled Webs*; idem, *The Development of the Pacific Salmon-Canning Industry*; idem, "The Politics of Food in World War II"; idem, "Dispersal and Concentration"; idem, "The Rationality of Mechanization"; Ralston, "Patterns of Trade"; Reid, "Company Mergers."

32. Writers reaching a broader popular audience have raised some of these questions, however: see Bocking, *Mighty River*; Roos, *Restoring Fraser River Salmon*.

33. For an important statement on this area of research, see Beamish and Bouillon, "Pacific salmon production trends."

34. Froschauer, *White Gold*.

largest salmon run ever recorded. The Fraser Canyon filled with the writhing red bodies of spawning salmon, visible for 10 miles beneath the obstruction. In combination with other factors, the slides precipitated the collapse of the Fraser fisheries. For thirty years salmon runs fell below a quarter of their historic levels. Native peoples, commercial fishers, fisheries scientists, and regulators adjusted to the new conditions and sought solutions. Chapter 1 examines the causes and consequences of the slides and lays the foundations for understanding subsequent attempts to restore the river.

Visions of a transformed river abounded after 1900. Power interests surveyed the river's flow, sited dams, and promoted development schemes. Small dams rose on tributaries to facilitate mining, forestry, and hydroelectric concerns. Before 1940 these projects proceeded with little regulatory oversight or constraint and had adverse effects on important spawning grounds. Main-stem projects, however, remained unrealized. Weak market demand and the focused development projects of a monopoly utility in the metropolitan regions of the province did not provide the economic conditions to support major dam projects. No government intervention in power development propelled a building program. Chapter 2 investigates the course of dam development on Fraser tributaries in the early twentieth century and explains why the main stem remained undammed.

After the decline of the Fraser sockeye runs following the Hells Gate slides, Canada and the United States negotiated the Pacific Salmon Convention (1937) to establish a catch agreement and to launch a scientific restoration program under the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission. Following scientific investigations that identified blockage problems at Hells Gate, the International Pacific Salmon Fisheries Commission built fishways to overcome the difficulties. Here was the first of several instances in which the transnational nature of the resource affected local environmental management. Just as pressure built in British Columbia to proceed with major dam development on the Fraser in the late 1940s, salmon runs rebounded and Hells Gate emerged as a model of the costs of development. In Chapter 3, I examine the development

of a transnational research program, the restoration of Hells Gate, and the local and international controversies in which this program became embroiled. I argue that the construction of the fishways created a significant claim to the Fraser Canyon just as political pressures mounted to dam the Fraser.

The growth of British Columbia's economy during World War II inspired new demand for electrical energy, public power development, and expansion into hinterland regions. Canadians looked enviously upon regional growth in the U.S. Pacific Northwest spurred by dam projects and associated industrial development. Calls were made to nationalize the power sector, to dam the Fraser, and to drive the region into a new industrial phase. Urban centers expanded, provincial population grew, and the resource economy prepared for a postwar development phase. In response, BC Electric launched a major building campaign and new developers entered the scene in the hopes of harnessing British Columbia's waterpower wealth. Chapter 4 suggests how the context of a world war and the mounting demands of the postwar period transformed the possibilities for development on the Fraser.

Overlapping resource demands made the Fraser River a contested site of development politics. By the late 1940s, the fish vs. power debate had begun. In the first major dispute of the postwar era, the Aluminum Company of Canada successfully obtained rights to develop the Nechako River, an upper-basin tributary. With strong provincial support, the Aluminum Company's development scheme promised to create the third largest city in the province, propel industrial development in the provincial North, and affect salmon runs minimally. The fisheries defense proved scattered and contradictory. As the Aluminum Company's project rose in the North, flooding out traplines and burial grounds of Cheslatta T'en natives and diverting the Nechako with consequences for salmon runs downstream, the development agenda appeared unstoppable. In Chapter 5, I examine the politics of conflicting resource demands and demonstrate how the aluminum industry and provincial government co-opted fisheries protest and federal opposition. Despite the loss of fisheries interests in this case, the Aluminum Company dispute provided the opportunity for the organization of a