Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of British Columbia, 2010)
BA (University of British Columbia, 2007)

“Problematic Settlers: Settler-Colonialism and the Political History of the
Doukhobors in Canada”

Department of Political Science

Thursday, December 15, 2016
12:00PM
David Turpin Building
Room A136

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Avigail Eisenberg, Department of Political Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Matthew James, Department of Political Science, UVic (Member)
Dr. Jordan Stanger-Ross, Department of History, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Sarah Carter, Department of History & Classics, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Nigel Horspool, Department of Computer Science, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Over the last ten years, there has been extensive scholarly debate about the nature of settler-colonialism and the category ‘settler’. The central problem animating this dissertation is the question of how we understand the position of a settler group like the Doukhobors in Canadian settler-colonialism. In 1899 approximately 7 500 members of the Doukhobor religious movement fled oppression in Russia and arrived in Canada with the hope of creating an earthly paradise based on communal economy, mutual aid, pacifism, and an anarchistic theology. Less than a decade after fleeing tsarist oppression in Russia and settling in the Canadian prairies, the Doukhobors once again came into conflict with a government; this time the conflict revolved around land and compliance with homestead regulations. This moment marked the beginning of more than half a century of provincial and federal government attempts to assimilate recalcitrant factions of the Doukhobor community. A number of tactics including opportunistic land policy, imprisonment, removal and forced education of children, legislation targeting communal property and inducements to integrate into mainstream Canadian society were employed by provincial and federal governments to make the Doukhobors into proper settler subjects. By examining these government attempts to re-make Doukhobor subjectivity in the image of an idealized Anglo-settler identity, this project sheds light on the broad process through which ‘settlers’ are ‘made’ by government action. Drawing on archival sources, this dissertation exposes the intersection of Canadian government policy, and colonial ideas, directed towards Indigenous peoples and the Doukhobors from 1899 until 1960. I examine this intersection through the themes of land, education, and colonial knowledge creation (government reports). The dissertation finds that the twin elements of settler-colonialism—settlement and dispossession—must be considered as a unified political project. During the period under study there is significant transfer of ideologies and policies between those officials working on the assimilation of settlers and those working toward the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The dissertation concludes that an important element of the category ‘settler’ is its political nature, and therefore its contingent and contestable nature.