

Fashioning British Columbia: Western Dress and the Construction of Social Identity in Victoria,  
New Westminster, and Hope, 1858-1870

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## Introduction

In 1862, the benefit of immigrating to the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia was that one would find that the “general tone of society and style of life is, with some not very important exceptions, thoroughly English.”<sup>1</sup> In this article, written by Alexander Rattray to encourage English immigration to the newly established colonies, he felt it was important to note that the comforts of the old country were accessible so that “no want or discomfort need be felt.”<sup>2</sup> What is demonstrated by Rattray, along with other contemporary observers of the colonies, is that in the 1860s the British Pacific Northwest was beginning to look the part.<sup>3</sup> The houses, the furniture, the streets, and the dress in cities like Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope started to resemble the imperial ideal that was imagined by settlers, as they appropriated this space. As settlers established urban spaces, clothing came to represent who belonged and who did not.

The structures of race and class in colonial British Columbia were intentionally defined and constructed. Settler society, in its earliest stages in the colony of Vancouver Island, was organized in such a way as it was meant to reproduce the class structure of British society. The Wakefield system, introduced to replicate British social order in Victoria, made land difficult to access, especially in comparison with the Oregon territory to the south, because of two particularly “onerous restrictions... stipulating that landowners bring with them three married couples or five single labouring men for every 100 acres of land (the labour clause), and that

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Rattray, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia; Where They Are, What They Are, and What They May Become* (Smith, Elder & Co. 1862), 171. Internet Archive.

<sup>2</sup> Rattray, “Vancouver Island,” 169.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Guillod, “Henry Guillod’s Journal of a Trip to Cariboo, 1862,” ed. Dorothy Blakley Smith, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 19 (July-October 1955): 195-97; Robert Burnaby, *Land of Promise: Robert Burnaby’s Letters from Colonial British Columbia, 1858-1863*, ed. Anne Burnaby McLeod and Pixie McGeachie (City of Burnaby, 2002), 62-3.

rural land should be priced at £1 an acre.”<sup>4</sup> The Wakefield system was successful in its establishment of a colonial society where political power was based on land ownership.<sup>5</sup> Before the 1858 gold rush, it was primarily the successful employees of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) who could afford to purchase land and thus became the political elite of the colony of Vancouver Island.

The Fraser River gold rush of 1858 was unexpected and quickly changed the settler demographics. Miners arrived in great numbers to the colony of Vancouver Island and prompted the creation of the new colony of British Columbia. They also challenged the intended construction of class and race in the colonies. As miners immigrated in greater numbers, they “simultaneously raised the possibility that British Columbia might be home to a white society and suggested that it might be neither British nor law-abiding.”<sup>6</sup>

Settler women were intentionally brought to the colonies to re-align the demographics with the desired nature of the colonial project. The morals of miners were constantly in question, as well as their viability as settlers.<sup>7</sup> White women were expected to encourage miners to permanently settle in the colonies and improve the moral character of these settlements.<sup>8</sup> Immigration of British women was facilitated in the 1860s by social organizations in Victoria.<sup>9</sup> These women came to be a symbol of the progress of colonization, the ideal settler, and the moral saviors of the colony.

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<sup>4</sup> Richard Mackie, “The Colonization of Vancouver Island, 1849-1858,” *BC Studies* 96 (1992): 13, <https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i96>.

<sup>5</sup> Mackie, “Colonization of Vancouver Island,” 32.

<sup>6</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (University of Toronto Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>7</sup> Perry, *Edge of Empire*, 46.

<sup>8</sup> Perry, *Edge of Empire*, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Penelope Edmonds, “Unpacking Settler Colonialism’s Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Victoria, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City,” *Urban History Review* 38, no. 2 (2010): 5, <https://doi.org/10.7202/039671ar>.

Urban development in settler-colonial cities occurred through two key processes, dispossession of land from Indigenous peoples and their replacement through immigration of white settlers.<sup>10</sup> In “Unpacking Settler Colonialism’s Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Victoria, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City,” Penelope Edmonds explores how Indigenous people “came to be produced and marked in specific ways” that were used by settlers to facilitate the segregation of settler urban spaces. Thus, the construction of racial differences between settlers and Indigenous people shaped how settler urban spaces developed.

In this period, cities like Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope determined privilege and position through the formation of distinct social groupings based on race, class, and nationality. The fur-trade elite were established leaders of the colonies because of their connections with the HBC. Many of them held important political and administrative positions as a result of their ownership of land and connections to each other.<sup>11</sup> They often married within this social group, keeping access to this status exclusive. Their authority and exclusivity were challenged and eventually replaced by elite settlers who arrived after 1858. Those with Canadian and American heritage formed one of these new social elites, with notable ties to industry, mining, and mercantilism. Members of the middle and upper class in Britain also arrived and established themselves in the colonies, in particular as the leaders of the colony of British Columbia.<sup>12</sup> Miners were another social category that held much of the purchasing power in the colonies. The colonies were also home to many Chinese miners and Black immigrants, who had their own social categories as a result of racialization, which constructed them as different from white settlers. There were also many distinct Indigenous nations, all with their own social formations

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<sup>10</sup> Edmonds, “Settler Colonialism’s Urban Strategies,” 6.

<sup>11</sup> Perry, *Edge of Empire*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Perry, *Edge of Empire*, 16.

and relationships with settler society, but they were typically constructed by settlers as one category of generalized Others. The socially constructed groupings shaped the treatment, political power, access to wealth, and social position, among other things, that individuals experienced within settler cities.

Appearance was one way that people were categorized and understood by their contemporaries. Dress is a powerful social technology through which meanings are communicated. Using those meanings, people locate others “symbolically in some structured universe of status claims and life style attachments.”<sup>13</sup> Fred Davis calls the meanings and ideas that are communicated through dress the “clothing-fashion code.”<sup>14</sup> Clothing visually assists in the creation of social identity and the establishment of differences between social groups. The clothing-fashion code projects how individuals want to be viewed and reflects how people understand others based on what they wear.

Dress often appears in studies looking at race and class in early colonial British Columbia but is never the focus. When clothing is discussed by scholars, it lacks crucial context, complexity, and theoretical understanding. In *Framing the West: Race, Gender and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest*, Carol Williams explores the visual construction of colonial British Columbia in photography. The photograph is her primary object of study, but she explored the clothing of the photographic subjects, in particular, as representative of the conversion of Indigenous people to a European way of living.<sup>15</sup> Williams generalizes dress into two categories, pre-colonial and post-colonial dress, without looking at the motivations and complexities behind wearing practices. Jean Barman explores the dress of Indigenous women in

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<sup>13</sup> Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Carol Williams, *Framing the West : Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 92-93.

dance halls. She argues that dance halls offered Indigenous women an opportunity to “learn to dress and behave as their newcomer counterparts did, and thereby, they hoped, to secure a measure of acceptance and even respectability.”<sup>16</sup> This is an interesting assertion, which suggests the need for further evidence and understanding of the complex nature of fashion in the colonies. Similarly, Sylvia Van Kirk uses clothing as evidence that the mixed-race daughters of the fur-trade elite were very successful in assimilating to British, upper-class expectations.<sup>17</sup> What these studies lack is a dedicated scholarly examination of dress in colonial British Columbia to reference.

Only two studies on the colonial period of British Columbia have focused on the history of dress, and both have significant limitations. Virginia Careless studied the archival collection of fashion from Victoria’s O’Reilly family, in particular their daughter Kathleen O’Reilly.<sup>18</sup> As a micro-historical study with a very limited set of archival sources, Careless was able to make a limited number of observations on this society as a whole. In her study “Influence of the Hudson's Bay Company on Carrier and Coast Salish Dress, 1830-1850,” Nicholette Prince analyzes the ledgers of HBC stores in New Caledonia and Fort Langley to see what clothing merchandise was most popular among local Indigenous communities.<sup>19</sup> This study is mostly quantitative and has limited implications for our understanding of the social meaning behind this clothing. The system of dress and its broader social meanings require further analysis.

In other places, the study of dress codes has provided new insights into the construction of social categories such as race, class, status, and gender. In “She Was a Ragged Little Thing”:

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Barman. “Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (UBC Press, 2005), 219.

<sup>17</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria,” *BC Studies* 115–116 (1997): 161.

<sup>18</sup> Virginia A.S. Careless, *Responding to Fashion: The Clothing of the O’Reilly Family* (Royal British Columbia Museum, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Nicholette Prince, “Influence of the Hudson's Bay Company on Carrier and Coast Salish Dress, 1830-1850,” *Material History Review* 38 (1993), 15.

Missionaries, Embodiment, and Refashioning Aboriginal Womanhood in Northern Canada,” Myra Rutherdale looks at the accounts of Anglican missionaries in Northern Canada and argues that the way they discussed clothing allows us to better understand how they perceived Indigenous peoples.<sup>20</sup> This research suggested that Western clothing, in this setting, was seen as a symbol of “civilization” and the success of conversion.<sup>21</sup> She also examined how fashion was used to differentiate social groups, determine status, and construct ideas of racial difference.<sup>22</sup> This research demonstrates how the study of fashion can help us better understand the complexity of identity formation, especially in colonial spaces.

This thesis will explore the ideas embedded in the clothing of different social groups across a period of twelve years. To do so, it will use an interdisciplinary approach of material and social study of dress, examined by Lou Taylor in “Fashion and Dress History: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches.” Using a material approach, scholars examine specific clothing and wearing practices through detailed study of garments or depictions of dress.<sup>23</sup> This thesis will rely on photographs and advertisements for its material study. The social approach uses textual sources to understand the “lived experience of dress.”<sup>24</sup> For the purposes of this study, I focus on journals, letters, travel accounts, and reminiscences.

To complete a thorough analysis of these sources across BC in this period would be beyond the possible scope of this study. As a result, I have focused on sources from a select group of cities, which made up some of the centers of settlement and British society: Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope. Victoria was established as the urban center of the British Pacific

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<sup>20</sup> Myra Rutherdale, “‘She Was a Ragged Little Thing’: Missionaries, Embodiment, and Refashioning Aboriginal Womanhood in Northern Canada,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickes and Maya Rutherdale (UBC Press, 2005), 229.

<sup>21</sup> Rutherdale, “Ragged Little Thing,” 230.

<sup>22</sup> Rutherdale, “Ragged Little Thing,” 235.

<sup>23</sup> Lou Taylor, “Fashion and Dress History: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches,” in *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, ed. Sandy Black et al. (Bloomsbury, 2013), 29.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, “Fashion and Dress History,” 31.

Northwest in 1843. Originally, it was a HBC fort and became the capital of the colony of Vancouver Island. New Westminster was established in 1859 as the capital of the new colony of British Columbia. Hope was first established as a HBC fort in 1848, then laid out as a townsite by the royal engineers in 1858, in response to the gold rush. Victoria was the governing center of the colonies, especially because James Douglas, who lived with his family in the city, was the governor of both colonies until his retirement in 1864. After the two colonies merged in 1866, Victoria became the official capital of British Columbia. It was the center of society in the colonies, challenged only by New Westminster, which was developing into an urban center of its own right. The rivalry between the two cities was also a rivalry between two social groups, the fur-trade elite and the newly established British upper class. According to Richard Burnaby, writing in 1858, those associated with the fur-trade elite did everything in their power “to build up [Victoria], which is the stronghold of Hudson’s Bay interests, and where all the old set, from the governor downwards, have a great landed stake,” at the expense of New Westminster.<sup>25</sup> These two urban centers are key places of development for settler society in British Columbia. British settler society also developed in rural areas like Hope. At the time of the 1858 gold rush, Hope had an important position on the Fraser River and was strategically chosen as a spot for settlement. It was also visited and inhabited by many individuals from an upper-class British background.<sup>26</sup> Western dress was established in both rural and urban spaces and shaped the social construction of the colonies as a whole.

Crucial to my analysis of dress is the theoretical approach of sociologists, including Fred Davis, who understands dress as a semiotic signifier, and Joanne Entwistle, who emphasizes that dress works alongside the body. Davis’s clothing-fashion code is expanded on by Entwistle to

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<sup>25</sup> Burnaby, *Land of Promise*, 64.

<sup>26</sup> Susan Allison, *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia: The Recollections of Susan Allison*, ed. Margaret A. Ormsby (The University of British Columbia Press, 1976), xiv.

observe the role of the body as the wearer of fashion, arguing that “the body and dress operate dialectically: dress works on the body, imbuing it with social meaning, while the body is a dynamic field that gives life and fullness to dress.”<sup>27</sup> The role of dress in colonization is also crucial to the study of dress in this period in British Columbia. In “Clothing the Borders: Dress as a Signifier in Colonial and Post-Colonial Space,” Gareth Griffiths encourages further scholarly analysis of clothing in the colonial system to observe the many complexities of how it can act as a “marker of colonization” and establish difference between the colonizer and colonized individuals.<sup>28</sup>

There are some inherent limitations of the sources this study utilizes. In particular, photographs from this period provide limited information on how everyday dress might have looked. The portraits that are analyzed in this study were likely taken with the intent to demonstrate an individual's material success.<sup>29</sup> As a result, they represent some of the best and most fashionable clothing the subject owned. Written accounts of dress help balance my understanding of what typical consumers owned and wore. Another common issue with photographic sources from this period is the depiction of Indigenous individuals. These representations, taken by settler photographers, often intentionally create a particular narrative of Indigenous life, settlement, and ethnographic recording and cannot necessarily be taken as faithful depictions of Indigenous people and communities.<sup>30</sup> Written accounts have their own challenges. In particular, there are some limitations in the sources found within Section 2, on Indigenous communities of the Pacific Northwest. Due to a lack of first-hand accounts from

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<sup>27</sup> Joanne Entwistle, “Fashion and the Fleshy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice,” *Fashion Theory* 4, no. 3 (2000): 327. doi:10.2752/136270400778995471.

<sup>28</sup> Gareth Griffiths, “Clothing the Borders: Dress as a Signifier in Colonial and Post-Colonial Space,” in *Postcolonial Gateways and Walls Under Construction* eds. Daria Tunca and Janet Wilson (Brill, 2017), 7.

<sup>29</sup> Williams, *Framing the West*, 110.

<sup>30</sup> For more exploration of the use of photographic representations of Indigenous subjects see Williams, *Framing the West*, 7-8.

Indigenous peoples, I rely on the writing of settler observers, especially the journals written by Bishop Hills. While these sources contain many descriptions of the topic of interest, they must be engaged with critically. Hills' journals in particular are impacted by his perspective as a missionary. Where possible, I have also tried to introduce secondary literature that takes more comprehensive ethnographical approaches to understanding Indigenous values and perspectives by centering Indigenous knowledge systems.

I would also like to acknowledge my own limitations and the way my identity and background have, undoubtedly, impacted my research. Debra Hardy suggests within the work of historians who study archival material, "the position of the historian as influencing the research is rarely touched on at all."<sup>31</sup> She encourages researchers to consider not only the way that their theoretical position impacts their research but the way that "researcher positionality" impacts our interpretation of the text, especially for historians interested in race.<sup>32</sup> Studying British Columbia in this period almost inevitably resulted in me studying individuals whose life experiences and positionality are different from my own. I am a white settler woman with Finnish heritage who has been trained in Western historical practice. This has certainly impacted the way I approached this topic, in particular my focus on archival documents, which have many inherent limitations of their own. I hope this research may inspire future studies to explore fashion and dress in a greater variety of sources that expand well beyond the scope of this study. I only hope to shed light on a small piece of this story and do the best I can with the sources I have available.

This thesis will focus on the experiences of dress and the clothing-fashion code by three of the many constructed social groups. Section one looks at the British elite, who arrived in the colonies and settled in cities like Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope during this twelve-year

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<sup>31</sup> Debra A. Hardy, "Using Positionality and Theory in Historical Research: A Personal Journey," *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* 38 (2021): 85.

<sup>32</sup> Hardy, "Using Positionality and Theory," 85.

period. It shows that they brought with them a distinct set of meanings applied to clothing, which often came into conflict with the practical nature of life in the colonies, resulting in a fashion system that held these two realities in tension. By carefully utilizing respectable fashion, British settlers distinguished themselves from others, especially the Americans. Section two looks at the use of Western dress by Indigenous people, in particular those who lived close to and interacted often with the developing settler communities in Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope. In this period, many Indigenous people used Western clothing styles yet maintained meaningful traditional clothing and styling. They were culturally innovative and adopted some Western clothing as an addition, rather than a challenge to their existing systems of dress. However, settlers often used clothing to further their construction of racial differences between themselves and Indigenous peoples. Finally, section three looks at the experiences of the fur-trade elite as they used fashion to navigate their role in the newly developed upper class of urban settler society. Dress provided a space to negotiate their métis identity and claim legitimacy as the leaders of the colony, both politically and socially.

Fashion in the colonies was a social organizer. As individuals placed meanings on dress, they constructed differences between themselves and others. It allowed individuals to navigate a complex and still developing system of social rules, identities, and groups. Race, ethnicity, and status were two particularly contentious categories that were negotiated by individuals with the help of clothing. By determining what people wore and what meanings were assigned to that dress, this study provides new insights into the ways that different social groups constructed the identity of themselves and others as the settler urban spaces developed.

### New Arrivals, New Fashions

When Mary Moody moved from England to New Westminster in 1858, she wrote to her mother that she had forgotten to bring “a good many little things [which] we can’t procure here,” but was resolved that they would “make the best of what we have for the present.”<sup>33</sup> At the time, the newly established colony of British Columbia was remote. It could only be accessed by sea, and many material goods had to be imported. She arrived with more than just clothing for herself and her family. Moody brought modern cosmopolitan ideas that shaped the formative years of New Westminster. And yet, her letters to family members recount her struggle to adapt to the material culture of the colonies. Settlers from the British elite encouraged the adoption of Western fashion in the colonies, thus altering the fashion system to their sensibilities. But what developed as a result held in tension the urbanizing aspirations of settlers who were eager to recreate British society in the colonies and the practical requirements of their everyday life in this new space. Embedded in this fashion system were both old and new meanings, through which British settlers negotiated their status as they developed and shaped these societies. In particular, they used fashion to distinguish themselves from the American members of the upper class.

Throughout the period from 1858 to 1870, Western clothing could be accessed in four main ways. It could be purchased ready-to-wear from distributors. It could be custom-made by a dressmaker, tailor, or other professional. Some residents even custom-imported clothing and dress goods. Likely the most common option, however, was that it was made in the home by wives, daughters, and servants. The fashion that was available in settler cities changed significantly as a result of the gold rush and the societal shifts it created. As a result of increased

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, February 23, 1858, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), MS-1101.

trade, importation, and population, Western clothing became more accessible for consumers by 1870.

In the late 1850s and early 1860s, when the population was primarily composed of men and miners, ready-to-wear clothing was mostly limited to men's basic apparel, like shirts and underclothes.<sup>34</sup> Goods for women and children were limited to hosiery, shoes, and accessories, which were difficult to make themselves and therefore had to be purchased. Dress goods could also be found in the Hudson's Bay Company's store. When Sophia Cracroft visited in 1861, she noted that "they import direct from England everything you can think of in the way of dress."<sup>35</sup> However, for those living in the colonies, they noticed that not everything they wished for was readily available. For example, certain types of fabric had to be directly imported, as they were unavailable to purchase in the colonies.<sup>36</sup>

In the latter half of the decade, some ready-to-wear clothing became available for women, alongside a greater variety in men's styles. An advertisement in the *Mainland Guardian* in 1869 lists for sale "Girl's whitney jackets, ladies print dresses, ladies' seal dresses, ladies drap de France, Men's fancy coating, suits, Bedford cords, drill, black cloth & colored trousers, various patterns, reefers jackets, cloth coats & c."<sup>37</sup> Similarly expanded lists of dry goods available through importers appeared in the Victoria newspaper, the *British Colonist*, towards the end of the decade, with newly available women's clothing, a greater variety of fabric, and more options for accessories.<sup>38</sup> The expansion of access to dress coincided with immigration schemes

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<sup>34</sup> "Victoria Wholesale Price Current," *The British Colonist*, December 18, 1858, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18581218uvic/page/n1/mode/2up>.

<sup>35</sup> Sophia Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest: Being Extracts from the Letters of Miss Sophia Cracroft, Sir John Franklin's Niece, February to April 1861 and April to July 1870*, ed. Dorothy Blakey Smith (Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1974), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, August 4, 1859, "Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence" (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

<sup>37</sup> "Wolbrook, Fisher & Co.," *The Mainland Guardian*, Oct. 9, 1869.

<sup>38</sup> "The Hudson's Bay Comp'y," *The British Colonist*, March 2, 1868, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18680302uvic/mode/2up>.

that increased the population of women. Between 1861 and 1865, women only made up 5-15% of the mainland's population, but by 1870, women were around 42% of Victoria's population and 31% in New Westminster.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps women's dress became more accessible partly due to the fact that there were more women and more demand for such consumer goods.

Custom clothing was also available to purchase. An advertisement in 1859 for A.J. Brunn, a draper and tailor, claims to have a "superior quality of Tailors Trimmings which enables him to make Gent's Garments in the latest fashions," or to adjust older garments to fit the "latest style."<sup>40</sup> These garments were likely made at a higher price point but were considered better quality than ready-to-wear clothing. In Victoria's city directory of 1860, there were eleven tailors listed, and only two dressmakers, suggesting that once again clothing made outside the home was more readily available for men than women.<sup>41</sup> However, by 1869 there were eleven dressmakers and nineteen tailors.<sup>42</sup> This suggests an increase in demand, especially for women's custom-made clothing, which coincides with the increasing gender balance in the population of Victoria.

While dress goods were accessible in the cities, many settlers still valued direct importation and purchase from other places. Despite being able to access many goods in New Westminster in 1860, Mary Moody stated that she "still [preferred] things from England."<sup>43</sup> She used her connection with family members in England to have them send boxes of hosiery, fabric, and clothing made by family members.<sup>44</sup> James Douglas sent his measurements out to have his

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<sup>39</sup> Perry, *Edge of Empire*, 17.

<sup>40</sup> "A.J. Brunn," *The British Colonist*, July 13, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18590713uvic/mode/2up>.

<sup>41</sup> Edward Mallandaine, 1860, "First Victoria Directory Part 1," British Columbia City Directories, Vancouver Public Library, 970017.

<sup>42</sup> Edward Mallandaine, 1869, "First Victoria Directory 3rd Issue," British Columbia City Directories, Vancouver Public Library, 970018.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, March 12, 1860, "Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence" (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

<sup>44</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, February 23, 1859, March 12, 1860, August 15, 1860, "Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence" (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

suits custom-made and then imported.<sup>45</sup> Settlers relied on family members and friends from home to organize and send them the material goods they wanted.

Most commonly, clothing was created in the home. Women were expected to be capable of sewing and maintaining the clothing for a household. Settler women struggled with the lack of support in the colonies for the creation and maintenance of clothing. Domestic servants were hard to find and expensive. Mary Moody was shocked by the cost of domestic labour and lamented that despite finding a servant talented at sewing, she could not spare her to relieve any of that labour because she needed her in other areas of the household.<sup>46</sup> In rural areas like Hope, servants were scarce, and settler women had a hard time adjusting to the type of labour they had to take on. When Susan Allison moved to Hope, she and her family did not even know how to wash their clothing and had a “rather bad time on washing day” because their fashionable white embroidered petticoats were always difficult to wash.<sup>47</sup> Good servants made the creation and care of clothing much easier for those who could afford it. Sarah Crease had a Chinese domestic servant and said that she had never had “things so comfortable as since he came” and particularly noted that he “washes the clothes quite as well as [her daughter] at her best.”<sup>48</sup> In England, labour might have been shared between relatives, but the isolation faced by the women who moved to the colonies made this more difficult. Moody continued to rely on relatives in England to make and acquire clothing for her and her children.<sup>49</sup> The colonies required adaptation to a system of labour that was required to make and maintain fashion.

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<sup>45</sup> James Douglas to Messers Ollivier & Brown, June 2, 1869, “Private Letterbook” (transcript), BCA, Book B/40/2A.

<sup>46</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, August 15, 1860, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

<sup>47</sup> Allison, *Recollections of Susan Allison*, 9.

<sup>48</sup> Sarah (Lindley) Crease to Henry Pering Pellew Crease, May 14, 1866, “Henry Pering Pellew Crease Correspondence Inward series,” Crease Family Fonds, BCA, MS-2879 Box 12, File 3.

<sup>49</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, May 6, 1859, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101; Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, August 29, 1860, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

Settlers certainly followed the trends of the decade, at least in their public and fancy attire. Studio portraits demonstrated the status and success of individuals for observers and were also a popular consumer good for families in the colonies.<sup>50</sup> The majority of portraits feature daytime dress, rather than evening dress. From 1858 to 1865, the most fashionable styles were rather subdued, which was reflected in many of the portraits of settlers. For women, dresses were usually rather plain. They used simple fabrics with limited embellishments. In Figure 1, Jane Dewdney wears a very typical dress, featuring a pleated skirt with volume provided by hoops or petticoats, a fitted bodice with buttons to the neck, a simple belt, and dropped-shoulder sleeves, with limited decorative trim. This



Figure 1: "Mrs. Edgar Dewdney, nee Jane Shaw Main, the first Mrs. Dewdney," *BC Archives*, A-01178.



Figure 2: "Mrs. Kenneth McKenzie, nee Agnes Russell, and her daughters, Agnes, Dorothea, Jessie and Wilhelmina," *BC Archives*, A-01447.

style is one of the most consistent throughout the portrait photographs of women, although all have varying usage of ruffles and trims. From 1865 to 1868, dresses had more decorative features. In Figure 2, Mrs. McKenzie and her daughters' dresses all feature a false yoke on the bodice and more ruffles on the skirts, although they remain fairly simple. Figure 3 demonstrates a more heavily decorated version of this style, with a complex false yoke made with a variety of

<sup>50</sup> Williams, *Framing the West*, 110.



Figure 3: "Mrs. Wood," *BC Archives*, E-00447.

trims, and a stylish overskirt completed with a decorative rose. Evening wear was truly the chance for women to show off their wealth and sense of fashion. Very few portraits from this period feature this type of dress. One rare portrait of Mrs. Rhodes (Figure 4) showcases the off-shoulder bodice and heavily embellished trim of typical Victorian evening attire. Menswear consisted of a variety of cuts and styles of suits. Figure 5 shows a few variations on fashionable men's clothing. On the left, Peter O'Reilly wears a black cutaway jacket and straight-legged trousers. In the middle, Captain H.M. Ball wears a typical suit, with a vest underneath. On the right, Thomas Elwyn wears a cutaway jacket, vest, and trousers, with a fashionable matching print. This sort of business attire was commonly worn by men throughout the period and appears in many formal portraits. Uniforms, like that of Edmund Verney in Figure 6, were also worn in formal portraits and at social events. The overall impact is of a society that followed and maintained transnational fashions of dress. However, the majority of the portraits are understated, and displays of wealth using fashion are rare.

trims, and a stylish overskirt completed with a decorative rose. Evening wear was truly the chance for women to show off their wealth and sense of fashion. Very few portraits from this period feature this type of dress. One rare portrait of Mrs. Rhodes (Figure 4) showcases the off-shoulder bodice and heavily embellished trim of typical Victorian evening attire. Menswear consisted of a variety of cuts and styles of suits. Figure 5 shows a few variations on fashionable men's clothing. On the left, Peter O'Reilly wears a black cutaway jacket and straight-legged trousers. In the middle, Captain H.M. Ball wears a typical suit, with

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Figure 4: "Mrs. Henry Rhodes," *BC Archives*, A-01830.



Figure 5: "Judge Peter O'Reilly, Gold Commissioner Captain H.M. Ball and Thomas Elwyn," *BC Archives*, A-01103.

whole was a practice reserved for the elite, but who exactly made up the colonial elite was in question in these newly established cities. Wealth alone often allowed people to rise above their stations. The British elite saw themselves as more respectable and moral, especially compared to the American elite. Being appropriately dressed was a tool to signify "rationality, respectability, humility, and 'good breeding.'"<sup>52</sup> Settlers used Western dress to legitimize their status in society, but what constituted proper

British immigrants brought with them Victorian sensibilities and values associated with fashion, through which they distinguished themselves from other settlers. Participation in fashion required one to walk a fine line between "ostentatious displays of affluence and cheap displays of vulgarity."<sup>51</sup> Fashion as a



Figure 6: "Captain Edmund Hope Verney, R.N." *BC Archives*, 1-51693.

<sup>51</sup> Kay Boardman, "A Material Girl in a Material World": The Fashionable Female Body in Victorian Women's Magazines," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 3, no. 1 (1998): 99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13555509809505913>.

<sup>52</sup> Karen Sayer, "A Sufficiency of Clothing": Dress and Domesticity in Victorian Britain," *Textile History* 33 no. 1 (2022): 112.

dress in the colonies required one to carefully navigate between modernity and sensibility.

Settlers valued their ability to maintain the standards of proper upper-class fashion. For example, after attending a ball where she was able to dress up in a “black new” dress, Mary Moody told her sister that she felt “quite respectable, once more!”<sup>53</sup> Susan Allison and her neighbor made white petticoats for the summer because they “would not be behind the fashion.”<sup>54</sup> Participation in the newly developing urban societies required knowledge of Victorian fashion standards. At the theatre in Victoria, women dressed in “demi-toilette.”<sup>55</sup> Men also insisted on maintaining proper dress. On one occasion, Arthur Bushby was forced to borrow a suit that was too small for him to ensure he would be properly dressed for dinner.<sup>56</sup> Another time, he could not access his proper clothing or borrow it from elsewhere, so he opted not to attend the gathering rather than appear underdressed.<sup>57</sup> In his memoirs, Captain Hankin described how once he had steady employment in Victoria, he could afford to “buy some decent clothes,” which he felt demonstrated that he was “making headway” in his life in the colonies.<sup>58</sup> Fashion was a marker of their success and respectability.

Practicality was considered important in everyday life, even when it challenged what British settlers viewed as respectable for their position. Moody described feeling “ashamed” of one of her dresses because it had been poorly altered, but she wore it anyway, having very few options.<sup>59</sup> But despite feeling as if she were behind on fashion, in the colonies, what she wore

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<sup>53</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, October 15, 1860, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

<sup>54</sup> Allison, *Recollections of Susan Allison*, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, May 6, 1859, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur Thomas Bushby “The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby, 1858-1859,” ed. Dorothy Blakey Smith *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 21 (1957): 137.

<sup>57</sup> Bushby, “The Journal of Arthur Thomas Bushby,” 14.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Hankin, “Memoirs of Captain P. Hankin, R.N.,” BCA, E/B/H19A, 57.

<sup>59</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, August 29, 1860, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

was acceptable. From her husband's perspective, it was “the great advantage of the place [that] one can wear out one’s old clothes.”<sup>60</sup> Even habits associated with respectable dress were challenged in the colonies. Susan Allison maintained her habit of “dressing for dinner” when she moved from England to Hope but described feeling judged by her neighbor for continuing the practice in a rural area where others wore “shirt sleeves.”<sup>61</sup> This practical approach to dress was situational. In the private household and rural areas, fashion was prioritized less than in the developing urban spaces. The result meant that settlers required the knowledge and resources to maintain respectable dress in different social spaces. Sometimes, this meant dressing fashionably, and sometimes this meant embracing practicality.

Dress was not just embedded with meaning when worn. Its procurement and care were symbols of a “well-ordered house” and “well-ordered body.”<sup>62</sup> The care and creation of dress became a symbol of the practical, respectable household. Annie Deans, a resident of Victoria, discussed the domestic habits of her neighbors and directly linked their morality to the care of their clothing. She wrote that “it would [suit] Mrs Russel better if she would [make] and dress her own [clothing]... she has never washed any [clothing] to herself since the Gold Rush... but what can you expect of people that has got more pride than prudence.”<sup>63</sup> In comparison, Mrs. Yates, “thought it no [dishonour] to tell she had to wash, [sew], and even sell her [clothing],” which Deans took to mean that the Yates had no “nasty pride with them.”<sup>64</sup> Deans considered neglecting to care for one's clothing as an action that suggested some members of society saw themselves as “above” others, linking domestic work ethic to respectability.

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<sup>60</sup> Mary Susanna Moody to Mary Elizabeth Hawks, August 29, 1860, “Mary Susanna Moody Family Correspondence” (transcript), BCA, MS-1101.

<sup>61</sup> Allison, *Recollections of Susan Allison*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> Sayer, “A Sufficiency of Clothing,” 114.

<sup>63</sup> Annie Deans to unknown recipient, December 18, 1860, “Deans family fonds” (transcript), BCA, E/B/D343.

<sup>64</sup> Annie Deans to unknown recipient, December 18, 1860, “Deans family fonds” (transcript), BCA, E/B/D343.

Public discourse on women's fashion in particular associated dress with status and morality. The newspapers in Victoria and New Westminster show how social criticism was shaped by the values associated with dress. In some articles, they ridiculed women's popular trends, suggesting clothing that was too fashionable signified immodesty. In 1867, the poem "Tilting Hoops" was published by *The Islander*.

I saw her but a moment,/ Twas in a "tilting skirt,"/ how prettily she sailed along,/ The charming little flirt!  
 I saw her but a moment,/ Ah! 'twas a pretty sight,/ to see her tread the crowded street,/ With footsteps free and light.  
 I saw her but a moment,/ Yet I swore by the "Old Harry,"/ Thought a pretty thing to look at,/ She would never do to marry!  
 Though I saw her but a moment,/ Yet I knew she was a flirt,/ By the jaunty airs she put on,/ As she swung her tilting skirt.<sup>65</sup>

This poem jokes about the popular shape of hoopskirts in the later part of the 1860s. The front was significantly shorter than the back, with a "tilted" effect.<sup>66</sup> It was achieved using a cage crinoline, which was lighter for women but commonly criticized for its impracticality and even immorality.<sup>67</sup> The fashionable silhouette was often a point of contention between women and cultural observers. In this poem, the writer suggests that women who adhered to this fashionable silhouette were "flirts" and unfit for marriage. Meanwhile, modest fashion was publicly encouraged as an attribute of respectable women. A woman's fashion column in the *Mainland Guardian* explained in 1869 that "toilettes for quite young ladies should be exceedingly simple - the sure mark of refinement and good taste."<sup>68</sup> Other articles admired specific local women who they saw as representative of good fashion. For example, the *British Colonist* wrote that "Miss Caroline Chapman... dresses with a becoming modesty that speaks volumes for her parents and

<sup>65</sup> "Tilting Hoops," *The Islander*, January 27, 1867.

<sup>66</sup> Linda Setnik, *Victorian Costume for Ladies 1860-1900*, 2nd ed. (Schiffer Publishing, 2000), 50.

<sup>67</sup> Rebecca N. Mitchell, "Victorian Fashion," in *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion: West Europe*, ed. Lise Skov (Berg, 2010), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/9781847888570.EDch81312-ED>.

<sup>68</sup> "The Ladies Column," *The Mainland Guardian*, December 1, 1869.

herself.”<sup>69</sup> Public discourse impacted the way that individual values were perceived through meanings associated with fashion.

Those who skillfully navigated and adapted to the colonial fashion system, while maintaining markers of the upper class, secured their status as the elite. According to one visitor, the Moody family and other British settlers had “introduced an upper class, as well defined as in England,” to New Westminster.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, those who overindulged in fashion received social criticism. Miners who had struck rich in the gold fields bought extravagant clothing for their brides and wives. High society in Victoria was shocked when one miner spent £2000 on his bride's wedding attire.<sup>71</sup> This type of high spending was not associated with upper-class respectability and set them apart rather than gaining them a spot with the elite of the colonies. Modest fashion also differentiated the British from the Americans. In an account by Richard Burnaby when visiting San Francisco, he called the extravagance of the Americans “something insane,” suggesting they wore “silks and satins blown up barred out hugely” and “all look more or less like Dames Galantes.”<sup>72</sup> He further explained that the Americans had influence on Victoria, but the “dull” and presumably more respectable nature of British settlers “[keeps] it in check.”<sup>73</sup> In doing so, he associated American dress with vulgarity and immorality and the British as their more modest, respectable, balancing force.

In this period, the establishment of settler colonies resulted in the development of a distinct fashion system. Through the decade, settler styles and fashionable dress became more common. But life in a remote colony also impacted the way that this system grew, and fashion

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<sup>69</sup> “Miss Caroline Chapman,” *The British Colonist*, January 10, 1860.

<sup>70</sup> Verney, Edmund H. *The Vancouver Island Letters of Edmund Hope Verney: 1862-65*, ed. Allan Pritchard (University of British Columbia Press, 1996), 79, ProQuest.

<sup>71</sup> George Hills, January 15, 1863, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>72</sup> Burnaby, *Land of Promise*, 116.

<sup>73</sup> Burnaby, *Land of Promise*, 116.

was limited by availability and practicality. Impractical fashion was also considered immoral fashion, so settlers experienced the tension between their ideas and their social reality. Overall, fashion in the colonies was modern but subdued. The approach to fashion was especially shaped by ideas about the relationship of fashion to modesty and respectability. Women in particular were encouraged not to stand out from the crowd, and ensured that they, and their families, dressed well enough to display their success and position but not so well as to garner negative attention. Modesty and respectability demonstrated through moderate fashion distinguished the British elite from Americans and “new money” individuals, who were considered more ostentatious.

### Indigenous Innovators

The settlements of Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope grew in close contact with Indigenous people. In this economic “contact zone” interactions between settlers and Indigenous people undeniably impacted each other's culture and dress. Between 1858 and 1860, many Indigenous people wore Western clothing, especially within the villages close to settler cities. Many of the Indigenous communities of the Pacific Northwest were innovative; the way they adopted Western dress was consistent with the meanings and uses it held within their cultures. Settler reactions were complicated. They encouraged the use of Western dress in Indigenous communities because of the values they thought it represented. But the racialization of Indigenous people was present regardless of what they wore, as settlers constructed them as Others, who did not have the same right to a place in settler urban developments.

Upon his arrival in Victoria in 1860, Bishop Hills was surprised to see the extent to which Indigenous people were already wearing settler dress. As the head bishop of the Anglican

Church in the colonies, Hills observed and recorded much of the use of Western dress by Indigenous people, as he believed it reflected the success of his missionary activity. Hill's journals are one of the most specific accounts of Indigenous uses of Western dress in the communities he visited, especially surrounding Victoria, New Westminster, and Hope. They are limited to the distinct communities and people he describes and cannot be taken as a complete account of Indigenous dress. His observations do not apply to all members of these communities and are not necessarily representative of dress in all social contexts. They do, however, provide some knowledge of what clothing was worn by some Indigenous individuals and communities and where.

Around the city of Victoria, many Indigenous communities set up seasonal settlements to facilitate trade and work in settler communities. Hills did much of his missionary work in the Songhees reserve and other village sites and, therefore, described many members of the nations he interacted with. Many of them wore Western dress. Members of the Ts'msyen First Nation, Hills noted, "dressed, I may almost say, in the latest fashion!"<sup>74</sup> Hills described some of the family members of the Haida chief as "dressed well" and stated that "you would take them for respectable Europeans."<sup>75</sup> Hills also travelled within the colonies and brought his missionary activity to New Westminster and Hope, where he interacted with other Indigenous communities. In Hope, he encountered members of the Chawathil Nation. The women, he said, were "dressed in coloured time gowns as country people in England."<sup>76</sup> The chief, in particular, "dressed well," in gloves and a coat, according to Hills, perhaps suggesting a difference in dress among the

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<sup>74</sup> George Hills, April 28, 1860, "Bishop George Hills Diary" (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>75</sup> George Hills, January 1, 1862, "Bishop George Hills Diary" (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>76</sup> George Hills, August 4, 1860, "Bishop George Hills Diary" (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

different classes in this society.<sup>77</sup> When visiting New Westminster, Hills visited a Stó:lō community. He was accompanied by “two bright-eyed & smartly dressed young ladies.”<sup>78</sup> What is clear is that many Indigenous people were wearing Western clothing.

There are a few reasons that help to contextualize Indigenous use of Western dress in the 1850s and 1860s. Innovation was a cultural trait of many communities and resulted in the use of Western clothing in the fur trade period. Thus, a cultural precedent existed. When settler societies rapidly developed after 1858, Indigenous communities had access to new sources of wealth from work in settler communities, which made Western clothing more accessible and useful.

Innovation was an important cultural practice of many Indigenous cultures in the Pacific Northwest.<sup>79</sup> These communities had formal means with which to introduce and make use of outside innovations.<sup>80</sup> Material goods, artwork, dances, songs, and other types of outside culture held prestige value. For the Ts’msyen people, “there was a strong association between cultural innovation from outsider sources and the achievement of power and wealth.”<sup>81</sup> Clothing was one such good, and it was used in Indigenous communities in the fur-trade period. From 1830 to 1850, Nicholette Prince found that the Coast Salish used European-created dress goods, “for clothing production much like their pre-contact dress style, for example the use of European-produced wool blankets.”<sup>82</sup> For the Ts’msyen in the 1850s, the use of Western clothing symbolized whether or not they were willing to engage with white visitors.<sup>83</sup> As Maragaret

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<sup>77</sup> George Hills, August 5, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>78</sup> George Hills, May 31, 1861, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>79</sup> Margaret B. Blackman, “Creativity in Acculturation: Art, Architecture and Ceremony from the Northwest Coast,” *Ethnohistory* 23, no. 4 (1976): 391. <https://doi.org/10.2307/481653>.

<sup>80</sup> Blackman, “Creativity in Acculturation,” 397.

<sup>81</sup> Marki Sellers, “Wearing the Mantle on Both Shoulders”: An Examination of the Development of Cultural Change, Mutual Accommodation, and Hybrid Forms at Fort Simpson/Laxłgu’alaams, 1834-1862” (MA. thesis, University of Victoria, 2010), 68.

<sup>82</sup> Prince, “Carrier and Coast Salish Dress,” 24.

<sup>83</sup> Sellers, “Wearing the Mantle,” 108.

Blackman argues, acculturation was not a purely disruptive process to Indigenous communities, it could also be creative, and adaptive.<sup>84</sup> Material goods were used in a way that built on existing Indigenous cultures.

This type of cultural innovation is evident within the relationship of Indigenous people with Western clothing, and clothing goods from 1858-1870. Western clothing was incorporated into Indigenous culture. Its inclusion, in this period, did not necessarily displace or challenge existing

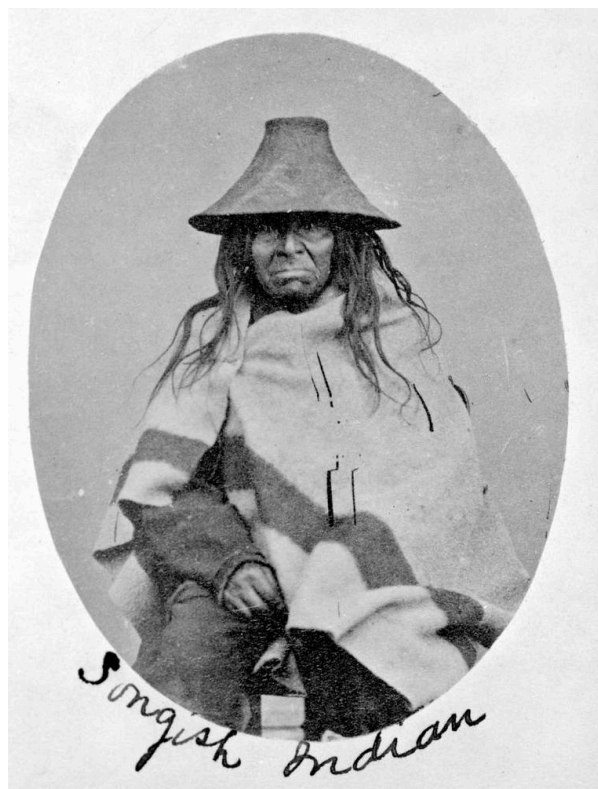


Figure 7: "Songish [Songhees] Indian," *BC Archives*, F-08327.



Figure 8: "Songish [Songhees] Indians," *BC Archives*, F-08294.

meaningful cultural traditions. Western and Indigenous clothing styles were often mixed, and portraits demonstrate a great variety of use. In particular, cedar hats and blankets were often worn with or on top of Western clothing, like in figures 7 and 8. While it is possible some of these portraits were staged by photographers, they are generally consistent with other accounts that mention Indigenous dress.

<sup>84</sup> Blackman, "Creativity in Acculturation," 409.

Traditional and ceremonial dress maintained its social and spiritual importance. Regalia associated with celebrations and ceremonies is known to northern Indigenous communities, the Haida, Tlingit, and Ts'msyen, as “*at.óow*.” In *Celebration: Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian Dancing on the Land*, Rosita Worl explains that “the translation, ‘an owned or purchased object,’ masks their social and spiritual significance. In the Tlingit worldview, *at.óow* is multidimensional—it represents both natural and supernatural phenomena, and it has both tangible and intangible properties.”<sup>85</sup> Regalia is a crucial part of celebration, storytelling, culture, and social organization, and its value within the community goes far beyond that of everyday clothing. Regalia continued to be used in the celebrations by members of the Haida Nation observed by Hills in the 1860s.<sup>86</sup> Some traditional body-styling practices were also practiced in the 1860s. For example, some Coast Salish nations bound the heads of infants to alter the shape.<sup>87</sup> Anthropological studies suggest that the practice was widespread postcontact, until the later part of the 19th century. It was described as an aesthetic preference but also demonstrated status and belonging in Coast Salish communities.<sup>88</sup> During a visit to Esquimalt, Hills and Sophia Cracroft noticed an infant who was undergoing the practice and had an interesting exchange with the mother. When they explained their discomfort with the practice, calling the flattening of foreheads “not good,” the mother retorted that she thought that *their* foreheads looked “not good.”<sup>89</sup> While an amusing story, it also underlies the strength and continuity of traditional fashioning in this period, alongside the expansion of Western dress in Indigenous communities.

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<sup>85</sup> Rosita Worl, *Celebration: Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian Dancing on the Land* (Sealaska Heritage Institute, 2008), 38.

<sup>86</sup> George Hills, February 9, 1862, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>87</sup> Homer G. Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*, (University of Oregon Press, 1955), 75.

<sup>88</sup> Bill Angelbeck and Colin Grier, “Anarchism and the Archaeology of Anarchic Societies: Resistance to Centralization in the Coast Salish Region of the Pacific Northwest Coast,” *Current Anthropology* 53, no. 5 (2012): 559.

<sup>89</sup> George Hills, February 27, 1861, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

Western dress was only incorporated where it was meaningful and was adopted, at least in part, on Indigenous terms, centering Indigenous values. This was likely the last decade where the practice of cranial deformation was common, as settler observers began to document the decline in the 1880s, likely as a result of missionary pressure.<sup>90</sup> The potlatch ban introduced by the government of Canada in 1885 impacted ceremonial dress by introducing harsh penalties, including the seizure of regalia, forcing potlatches to go ‘underground’ to avoid discovery.<sup>91</sup>

Western dress goods were historically linked to these high-status cultural innovations. For the Ts'msyen, cultural innovation was crucial to gain and maintain social status.<sup>92</sup> Clothing could also symbolize whether an individual was in a state of “peace” or “conflict” with newcomers.<sup>93</sup> As such, for the Ts'msyen and perhaps other individuals who wanted to gain wealth and status through engagement with settler society, clothing was a powerful tool. For example, many of the individuals Hills describes in Western clothing are chiefs or otherwise high-ranking individuals, suggesting an association of Western dress with high status. Perhaps one reason that Hills interacted with so many individuals wearing Western dress was because those individuals were using Western dress to symbolize their openness to interact with the missionary.

As the decade progressed, more Indigenous individuals gained access to wealth and Western material culture through paid labour in the settler economy for purposes “integral to their own priorities.”<sup>94</sup> In particular, the wealth gained during seasonal work in Victoria funded the distribution of gifts and wealth in the potlatch. Indigenous people likely recognized that Western dress was a useful, and perhaps necessary, tool to engage with settler society. Lutz explains that Lek'wungen women in the second half of the 19th century participated in settler

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<sup>90</sup> Williams, *Framing the West*, 132-33.

<sup>91</sup> Megan A. Smetzer, *Painful Beauty: Tlingit Women, Beadwork, and the Art of Resilience* (University of Washington Press, 2021), 66, JSTOR.

<sup>92</sup> Sellers, “Wearing the Mantle,” 69.

<sup>93</sup> Sellers, “Wearing the Mantle,” 108.

<sup>94</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (UBC Press, 2008), 234, EBSCOhost.



Figure 9: “Indians picking hops Vancouver Island. Near to Victoria,” *BC Archives*, D-00469.

labour systems to gain wealth “independently of men in order to potlatch and enhance their personal status in their society.”<sup>95</sup> One of the ways they did this was through dance halls, and Western fashion marked their participation. Hills recorded Indigenous women sewing elaborate Western-style dresses, complete with hoops, for their nights at the dance halls.<sup>96</sup> Other depictions of Indigenous workers support this idea. In figure 9, Indigenous agricultural workers are all

<sup>95</sup> John Lutz, “Gender and Work in Lekwammen Families, 1843-1970,” in *Gendered Pasts*, eds. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy Forestell (University of Toronto Press, 2017), 90. <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442627970-008>.

<sup>96</sup> George Hills, February 1, 1862, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

shown in typical Western clothing while picking hops. In doing so, they achieved an appearance that allowed them to benefit from proximity to settler society in a way that suited their motivations for status within their own community.

The settler response was mixed. On one hand, many thought that by wearing Western dress, Indigenous people were demonstrating their assimilation to Western constructions of modesty and morality. Therefore, many saw clothing as a benefit to Indigenous people and supported its use. Nonetheless, observations of the use of Western dress follow a discourse of what Homi Bhabha calls “colonial mimicry.” Mimicry is like assimilation, in that the mimic acts, dresses, and otherwise appears like a colonial subject but maintains a level of difference from the dominant group.<sup>97</sup> In other words, they are “almost the same, but not quite.”<sup>98</sup> Settler observers racialized Indigenous people whether or not they wore Western dress. When Indigenous people wore more traditional styles, it was seen as a challenge to Western values and justification for further racialization and Othering.

To many settlers, the fact that many Indigenous people were willing to wear Western clothing was proof of the superiority of Western culture. Clothing was a visual marker of assimilation to Western values and the success of the colonial system.<sup>99</sup> Bishop Hills saw the use of Western dress by Indigenous people as an example of the “march of progress,” evoking the Enlightenment ideas that assimilation would benefit Indigenous people through modernization.<sup>100</sup> The reason Western dress was constructed as an important part of assimilation and a benefit to Indigenous people was because of the values of morality and modesty assigned to it by settlers.

One visitor to Victoria stated that there was a “*painful and provoking* scarcity of petticoats”

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<sup>97</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (1984): 126. <https://doi.org/10.2307/778467>.

<sup>98</sup> Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 126.

<sup>99</sup> Griffiths, “Clothing the Borders,” 7.

<sup>100</sup> George Hills, April 28, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

among Indigenous women, emphasizing what he saw as the immoral quality of their dress by comprehending their fashion in direct opposition to Western ideas of propriety.<sup>101</sup> Traditional practices of styling the body continued in practice among Indigenous people but especially garnered the attention of settlers. Hills likened the use of labrets and cranial deformation to torture.<sup>102</sup> Traditional dress was even blamed for disease amongst Indigenous peoples. Hills, while visiting a village impacted by illness in 1860, listed a few reasons that Indigenous people were “victims to preventable diseases,” including that “their clothing is scanty.”<sup>103</sup> By adopting Western dress, settlers thought Indigenous people would “mimic” Western society and Western values.

This resulted in formal attempts by missionaries and politicians to encourage the use of Western dress, especially directed at children. In a journal written by Hills, he recounts a conversation with Governor James Douglas, where they concluded that the adult generation of Indigenous people could not be expected to alter their habits, but younger generations would be more susceptible to change.<sup>104</sup> Much of the dress that was adopted in this period was done so in mission schools. Young Indigenous girls were taught to sew and rewarded with clothing for good conduct.<sup>105</sup> Children were taught and expected to adhere to Western ideas about hygiene and body styling as well.<sup>106</sup> The colonial government even gifted clothing to members of the

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<sup>101</sup> James Bell, “Gold Rush Days in Victoria,” ed. Willard E. Ireland, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* 12 (1948): 237.

<sup>102</sup> George Hills, November 23, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>103</sup> George Hills, November 23, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>104</sup> George Hills, April 9, 1862, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>105</sup> Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest*, 20.

<sup>106</sup> George Hills, November 23, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

Songhees at Christmas in 1864, representing their interest in the assimilation of Indigenous peoples.<sup>107</sup>

Settlers believed that through Western dress, Indigenous wearers could almost achieve proximity to whiteness and civility. For example, when Sophia Cracroft visited the Songhees reserve, she observed a group of children who “reminded one” of English children because of their plaid shawls and light skin tone.<sup>108</sup> In a similar description, Hills said that the Songhees chief, Chee-al-thluk, could be “taken for a rather shabby Irishman.”<sup>109</sup> However, these descriptions have an added layer that undermines their message, as they both include a visual mistake. Indigenous wearers of Western dress may appear almost white, but these observers are quick to note that they are *not*. For others, mimicry would only ever attain a poor imitation of white society. Comparing the Indigenous people she saw in Princeton to those she had interacted with in Hope growing up, Allison stated that she thought traditional dress “gave them a certain dignity and grace that was absent when they tried to dress like white women.”<sup>110</sup> Entwistle emphasizes that dress always works alongside the body. While it can imbue the body with certain “social meanings,” the body also inevitably impacts the way that those meanings are understood.<sup>111</sup> In this case the racial meanings assigned to Indigenous people subverted the social meanings communicated through dress. To settler observers, Western dress was a symbol of colonization, but the racialized Indigenous body was always an Other.

Settlers also noticed that Indigenous use of Western dress did not always align with their values of morality, modesty, and modernity, likely because of the internal and cultural motivations to wear Western dress by Indigenous people that were discussed earlier in the

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<sup>107</sup> “Annual Passents to Indians,” *The Victoria Daily Chronicle*, December 22, 1864.

<sup>108</sup> Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest*, 21.

<sup>109</sup> George Hills, January 17, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>110</sup> Allison, *Recollections of Susan Allison*, 27.

<sup>111</sup> Entwistle, “Fashion and the Fleishy Body,” 327.

chapter. For example, when Western fashion was linked to use in the dance halls and prostitution, Hills began to doubt the influences of settler society and fashions. He lamented the potential for immorality, saying that before white society, Indigenous peoples' "domestic happiness at least was safe & [they] knew not vices which [they have] learnt from the White man."<sup>112</sup> He linked fashion to this moral vice, explaining how the women in Indigenous settlements would sew "gay" dresses to wear to the dance houses.<sup>113</sup> Western dress facilitated participation in settler spaces that were considered "immoral" and thus were inconsistent with the intent to assimilate Indigenous people to the Western value system through dress. The seeming disconnection between Indigenous uses of Western dress and the value system associated with it furthered the racial construction of Indigenous peoples as "mimics" and Others.

These ideas made their way into the discourse about belonging in settler cities. A common argument in favour of segregation of settler cities was that the traditional dress of Indigenous people was immoral and would corrupt the innocence of settler women and children.<sup>114</sup> In one such article, a settler calls Indigenous peoples' dress "an insult offered to female modesty."<sup>115</sup> The values associated with clothing were easily used to racialize Indigenous people as Others and justify their exclusion from the "moral" settler urban space.

Overall, the fashion code observed in the relationship of Indigenous people and Western dress shows a complex picture of how fashion was understood by Indigenous wearers and settler observers. Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest were innovative cultures and created

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<sup>112</sup> George Hills, January 1, 1862, "Bishop George Hills Diary" (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>113</sup> George Hills, March 13, 1862, "Bishop George Hills Diary" (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>114</sup> "House of the Assembly," *The British Colonist*, February 19, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18590219uvic/page/n3/mode/2up>; "Correspondence of the British Colonist," *The British Colonist*, February 26, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18590226uvic/page/n1/mode/2up>.

<sup>115</sup> "Public Improvements," *The British Colonist*, January 8, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18590108uvic/page/n3/mode/2up>.

their own meanings for Western dress that were significant within their communities. For settlers, the discourse around traditional and Western dress was two halves of the same coin. Western dress could be mimicked, but Indigenous wearers would never be entirely successful because of the way racializations were tied to the body. Meanwhile, traditional dress was considered antithetical to Western values and further proved to settlers the legitimacy of racializations, assimilation efforts, and even growing ideas of segregation.

### Fur-trade Fashion Leaders

In his memoir, Philip Hankin reminisces about a winter spent in Esquimalt, attending balls with the social elite of Victoria. He met the Ross daughters, who he learned were métis and thought “were supposed to be only on the outside edge of Society.”<sup>116</sup> Their father, Charles Ross, was a chief trader for the Hudson's Bay Company, and their mother, Isabelle Ross (née Mainville), had a French father and Ojibwe mother.<sup>117</sup> Despite Hankin’s observation, métis individuals did not always find themselves on the edges of the growing colonial social network. In fact, the new colonies had an upper class dominated by prior HBC officials, often with métis and Indigenous wives and children.

According to Sylvia Van Kirk, the elite métis daughters of British Columbia adopted Western dress under the influence of their fathers as Victoria transitioned from a fur-trade fort to a colonial urban space.<sup>118</sup> These families were primarily involved in the social and political space in Victoria. The men took on administrative roles, and their families became the social elite of the city. But their mixed-race heritage, considered acceptable in the fur trade, took on new meaning and was criticized by white settlers. Van Kirk argues they reacted by increased

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<sup>116</sup> Philip J. Hankin, “Memoirs of Captain P. Hankin, R.N.” (transcript), BCA, E/B/H19A, 34.

<sup>117</sup> Van Kirk, “Five Founding Families,” 155-156.

<sup>118</sup> Van Kirk, “Five Founding Families,” 151.

“attempts to hide Native backgrounds and to adopt all the trappings of British fashion and mores.”<sup>119</sup> Indeed, mixed-race families were fashionable, as their new role as the elite required. Clothing provided a visual technology to emphasize their legitimacy in a quickly changing urban space that threatened their status on account of their heritage and even negotiate how their race was viewed by contemporaries.

Marriages between HBC employees and Indigenous and métis women were common in fur-trade society. These “country marriages” provided officers and traders with domestic support, companionship, kinship connections with Indigenous groups, and crucial alliances.<sup>120</sup> It also resulted in generations of children who grew up in fur-trade society. While Indigenous mothers certainly maintained their domestic roles raising children, fathers often took responsibility for the acculturation of their wives and métis children. In forts, traders introduced their children to European fashions, including undergarments, clothing, and accessories, as well as European practices of hygiene.<sup>121</sup> The typical dress included Western and Indigenous clothing articles.<sup>122</sup> The wives and children of Victoria’s upper class had already experienced acculturation throughout their childhood and were likely already wearing many styles of European clothing prior to 1858.

As the prominent families of the colonies, métis people, especially wives and daughters, were expected to set the fashions. According to Fred Davis, “key persons” are responsible for accepting fashions before they become common in a particular community, a role he calls “fashion leadership.”<sup>123</sup> Historically, members of the aristocracy were the leaders of fashion and decided what was acceptable and tasteful in a certain society. In the 1860s in Victoria, the

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<sup>119</sup> Van Kirk, “Five Founding Families,” 161.

<sup>120</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer, 1998).

<sup>121</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 94-95.

<sup>122</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 95.

<sup>123</sup> Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, 146-147.

Douglas family and other members of the fur trade elite held the highest social positions. As such, the métis daughters of these families were expected to dictate taste and fashion. According to Edmund Verney, James Douglas' niece, Mrs. Young, was brought to the colony to “instruct him and his wife and daughters in the ways of the fashionable world,” and she was “considered by many [to be] the leading lady in the island.”<sup>124</sup> Over time, “their mother learnt to be ‘fashionable,’” and Mrs. Young “by degrees subsided.”<sup>125</sup> The Douglas family was looked to as trendsetters and social elites, even if they regularly received criticism as a result of their heritage. These families responded to their new roles by educating and acculturating children to the colonial fashion system.

The urbanization of colonial settlements provided new opportunities and requirements for dress. To further acculturate their children, many fathers sent their métis children to colonial schools. Many smaller forts had lacked adequate education systems, so children had to be sent away for school or taught by their parents.<sup>126</sup> However, during the rapid development of Victoria in the late 1850s and early 1860s, more colonial schools became available. The sisters of Saint Ann opened their school for girls in 1859.<sup>127</sup> An Anglican school was opened in 1860.<sup>128</sup> Women's education was particularly important for the adoption of Western dress. Schools for girls taught plain and fancy needlework, enabling girls to gain the skills needed to participate in British fashions and “refining” their talents to those acceptable for the colonial upper class.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Verney, *Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 74-75.

<sup>125</sup> Verney, *Letters of Edmund Hope Verney*, 74.

<sup>126</sup> Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 158.

<sup>127</sup> “Sisters of Charity School,” *The British Colonist*, January 1, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18590101uvic/page/n1/mode/2up>.

<sup>128</sup> George Hills, September 3, 1860, “Bishop George Hills Diary” (transcript) Anglican Church of Canada, Ecclesiastical Archives of British Columbia.

<sup>129</sup> “Opening of the School for Young Ladies by the Sisters of Saint Ann,” *The British Colonist*, December 17, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18591217uvic/page/n1/mode/2up>; “Young Ladies School,” *The British Colonist*, December 31, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18591231uvic/page/n1/mode/2up>; “Select School,” *The British Colonist*, December 31, 1859, <https://archive.org/details/dailycolonist18591231uvic/page/n1/mode/2up>.



Figure 10: "Harriet McNeill," *BC Archives*, G-07869.

Even upper-class women often sewed the clothing for their families. In his private correspondence, James Douglas proudly notes that his daughter Alice is very "industrious" and "makes all [her children's] clothes and does all her own sewing."<sup>130</sup> Some children were also sent abroad for education and therefore had greater access to quality clothing to bring with them to the colonies. When James Douglas Jr. returned home from school, his father requested that he bring home "a good stock of... coats, vests and [trousers]," as clothing of the same quality could not be found for a good price in Victoria.<sup>131</sup> Through school, métis children became embedded within British material culture and the values associated with Western dress.

Portraits of children demonstrate how fashion helped to acculturate them to Western identity. The wearing of Victorian fashion physically demanded adherence to ideas about childhood, gender, and

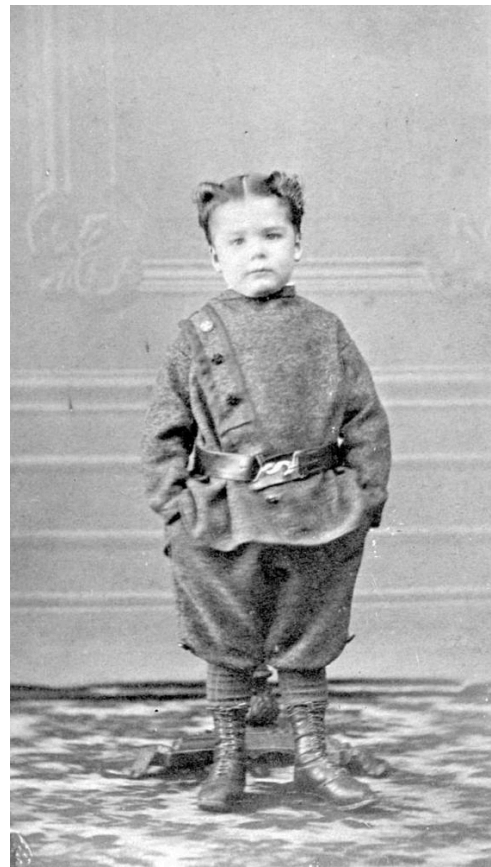


Figure 11: "George Gordon Bushby, grandson of Sir James Douglas," *BC Archives*, A-01149.

<sup>130</sup> James Douglas to Jane Dallas, January 22, 1870, "Private Letterbook" (transcript), BCA, Book B/40/2A.

<sup>131</sup> James Douglas to Jane Dallas, August 23, 1869, "Private Letterbook" (transcript), BCA, Book B/40/2A.



Figure 12: "John Finlayson," *BC Archives*, A-01273.

restriction. Corsets were worn in the Victorian era to maintain posture and support the heavy hoops, skirts, and petticoats of the fashion. Young girls wore corsets to encourage them to develop good posture, and restraint.

In figure 10, Harriet McNeil wears a common style for young girls, which features petticoats and, most likely, a corset.<sup>132</sup> Boys also wore clothing that reflected the ideas of Victorian masculinity. In Figure 11, George Bushby is styled in a diagonally buttoned tunic and knickers, which was a typical fashion for boys from the 1860s-1880s.<sup>133</sup>

Figure 12 is a photo of John Finlayson, son of Roderick Finlayson and Sarah Work. He wears a typical suit, complete with a cutaway coat, vest, and full-length

trousers. The transition from boyhood to manhood was reflected in the fashions of children during the Victorian era. The loose-fitting knickers in Figure 11 are a style only worn by boys, which maintains the freedom of movement associated with childhood innocence.<sup>134</sup> Figure 12 depicts the typical dress of boys after breeching, when they transitioned to styles that emulated their fathers.<sup>135</sup> Styles of older boys were more restrictive but also allowed for "vigorous movement" limited to men because of "bifurcated apparel," like riding, running, and bicycling.<sup>136</sup> Girls' skirts and corsets restricted movement, requiring them to adhere to ideas of proper femininity.

<sup>132</sup> Linda Setnik, *Victorian Fashions for Women and Children: Society's Impact on Dress* (Schiffer Publishing, 2012), 11.

<sup>133</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Fashions*, 138.

<sup>134</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Fashions*, 140-141.

<sup>135</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Fashions*, 140.

<sup>136</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Fashions*, 132.

With this education, métis individuals were well equipped to maintain the attention to fashion expected of their position in society. Portraits indeed show that they were successful in following Western fashion trends of the decade, and often garments indicate their wealth and high status. In Figure 13, Amelia Douglas wears a plain but fashionable dress, featuring a bodice with buttons to the neck, decorative trim, and sleeves that demonstrate the popular “dropped shoulder” and bishop shape. The



Figure 13: “Lady Douglas,” *BC Archives*, B-05456.



Figure 14: “Two of Sir James and Lady Douglas’s daughters; Jane, later Mrs. A.G. Dallas, and Mattie, or Martha, later Mrs. Dennis Harris,” *BC Archives*, A-02202.

bodice is completed with a popular lace

collar. The skirt has a lot of volume, which gathers at the waist to create the fashionable silhouette.<sup>137</sup>

Fashion became more intricate towards the end of the decade, as demonstrated by the intricate details on the dresses of two of the Douglas daughters in Figure 14.

These dresses feature the popular overskirt, as well as significant use of decorative ruffles.<sup>138</sup> Both girls wear

the popular chignon hairstyle.<sup>139</sup> They quickly

adopted new styles, demonstrating adherence to

<sup>137</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Costume for Ladies*, 43-45.

<sup>138</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Costume for Ladies*, 74.

<sup>139</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Costume for Ladies*, 75.



Figure 15: "William Ross," *BC Archives*, A-01719.

trends, adaptability, and their role as fashionable leaders in the colony.

The successful use of Western dress evoked the high status of the fur-trade elite and provided them with a sense of protection from scrutiny. Appearances had the power to obscure their racial identity. When Hankin visited Victoria, he went into detail about the mixed-race heritage of the Ross daughters but said they looked "quite smart" in their dresses at the local dances.<sup>140</sup> He does not mention anything about the

clothing or heritage of the McNeill, Work, or Douglas daughters, all métis women whom he encountered at the same events.<sup>141</sup> Fashion could also be used to emphasize certain parts of their heritage. In Figure 15, William Ross, son of Charles Ross and Isabelle Ross, is outfitted in traditional Scottish dress. This aspect of their heritage could be outwardly celebrated in colonial society, but the absence of similar portraits demonstrating Indigenous heritage suggests that it was not similarly portrayed.

Once observers knew about the Indigenous heritage of these families, their appearance became heavily scrutinized. During her visit to Victoria in 1861, Sophie Cracroft was critical of any Indigenous features she perceived. When describing Jane Dallas (née Douglas), she noted that "she has a very bright complexion, pretty dark eyes & the other features very tolerable- but with great width and flatness of the face are remarkable, & even her intonation & voice are characteristic (as we now perceive) of her descent."<sup>142</sup> Similarly, when Charles Wilson, the

<sup>140</sup> Philip J. Hankin, "Memoirs of Captain P. Hankin, R.N." (transcript), BCA, E/B/H19A, 34.

<sup>141</sup> Philip J. Hankin, "Memoirs of Captain P. Hankin, R.N." (transcript), BCA, E/B/H19A, 34.

<sup>142</sup> Cracroft, *Lady Franklin Visits the Pacific Northwest*, 12-13.

secretary of the British Boundary Commission, visited Victoria, he also took a critical lens to the Douglas daughters' appearances once he learned of their heritage. He reads into small signs and comes to the incorrect conclusion that they “had their heads flattened whilst they were young” despite admitting that “it is now scarcely visible.”<sup>143</sup> He also states that they “just had some hoops sent out to them” and was amused to see “their attempts to appear at ease in their new costume.”<sup>144</sup> The hoops the Douglas daughters wore could have been new, but this is not surprising, as this type of hoopskirt only became popular in England in the late 1850s.<sup>145</sup> In both cases, he racializes the Douglas daughters in ways that other high-class women would not have experienced, reading into their appearance to draw his own conclusions about their heritage and success in colonial society.

The fur-trade elite of Victoria thus used fashion to validate their position as the elite of colonial society. Through colonial fashion education, they taught their children to look the part of respectable British upper-class citizens. Clothing provided them a way to associate themselves with their white heritage and even potentially obscure the negative social impacts of their métis heritage. However, inevitably, many social observers knew about their mixed-race background, and as a result, they often faced increased scrutiny and thus had to navigate the fashion system with skill. Fashion, in general, provided a technology with which they could make claims about how they identified and what rights that permitted them within this society. As a result, they were often at the centre, not on the outskirts as Hankin had observed, of colonial society.

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<sup>143</sup> Charles William Wilson *Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diary of the Survey of the 49th Parallel, 1858-1862, While Secretary of the British Boundary Commission*, ed. George F. G Stanley, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), 28.

<sup>144</sup> Wilson, *Mapping the Frontier*, 28.

<sup>145</sup> Setnik, *Victorian Costume for Ladies*, 44.

## Conclusion

Fashion was a powerful tool in settler cities because it could help an individual navigate social categories of race and class that were far from stable. As settler society organized itself and others into categories, it decided who would have a place, a voice, and a home in the cities that developed. Different social groups used clothing to discover where they fit. For the British elite, they considered themselves fashionable but had to reconsider their ideas about what was respectable to construct themselves as morally superior and set themselves apart. For innovative Indigenous cultures, Western fashion was a historically recognized tool to facilitate engagement with settler society, rather than one that replaced meaningful traditional dress. But settlers nonetheless saw their use of Western clothing as a mere act of mimicry, one that both confirmed the supposed superiority of Western culture but could never provide Indigenous people with a true place in the colonial city. In this decade, ideas developed that would eventually lead to state assimilation and exclusion policies like the Indian Act and residential schools that would try to displace traditional dress.<sup>146</sup> Finally, the fur-trade elite utilized dress education and dress in a way that both confirmed their status and place in the colonial upper-class but also attempted to obscure their mixed-race heritage. Whether as a result of this intent or because of historians' own biases, in the early 20th century pioneer historiography, the mixed-race heritage of these elite families was essentially erased until the work of recent historians.<sup>147</sup>

This study has offered a way to unify sociological approaches to dress with methodologies of social and material history to draw out the way that ideas communicated through fashioned appearance were enacted in the past. It demonstrates that social identity was

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<sup>146</sup> For further study on the role of clothing in the Canadian residential school system, see Shawkay Ottmann, "Indigenous Dress Theory in Canadian Residential Schools," *Fashion Studies* 3, no. 1 (2020): 1-33. <https://doi.org/10.38055/fs030105>.

<sup>147</sup> Nellie de Bertrand Lugin, *The Pioneer Women of Vancouver Island 1843-1866* (The Women's Canadian Club, 1928).

constructed, both intentionally and unintentionally, through the physical embodiment of ideas, values, and morals. This allows for both the agency of individuals to negotiate their place in developing societies and the structures of meaning created through the discourse of their contemporaries. As such, Entwistle's "dressed body" assisted in the construction of social categorizations and identity. Clothing created visual associations with certain meanings, while the body informed how dress was understood.

This study provides what previous scholars were missing and future scholars will need: the necessary context of access, education, and social meaning that inform the analysis of dress as a primary source. This will support further efforts to understand the social complexities of settler development, colonization, and social stratification in the colonial stage of British Columbia. But its implications go beyond this historical place and time. This methodology can provide insight into social organization, a useful tool for any social historian. It is also helpful in its ability to garner meaning from sources that are often passed over for their mundanity and take a new approach to understanding those who are underrepresented in textual archival sources. The many possibilities make fashion a compelling area of study, which I hope may inspire future scholarship and provide a place to begin.

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