

Rainbow Women Of The Fraser Valley: Lifesongs Through The Generations

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The following paper includes four sections: comments on the purposes, strengths, weaknesses and methodology of oral or life history projects; brief information on the historical and cultural background of the grandmothers or great-grandmothers of the Rainbow Women interviewed; profiles of selected contemporary Rainbow Women; summary statements and conclusions.

Then Copper Woman said . . . "the wisdom must always be past on to women . . . whatever the color of the skin, all people come from the same blood, and blood is sacred . . . A time would come when the wisdom would almost disappear, but it would never perish, and whenever it would be needed, a way would be found to present it to the women . . . and they could decide if they want to learn it or not."¹

We are reminded by Copper Woman that although the wisdom may have almost disappeared, a way can be found to preserve and present it to those who will in turn decide what to do with it. Although this quotation does not really address the kind of knowledge which is gained through social science research, it does remind us that much work remains to be undertaken if we are to keep the knowledge which may smooth the pathway to wisdom. Information about the lives of women, past and present, is included in this category.

While it cannot be literally true, as has been suggested, that history is simply a distillation of memory and myth, scholarly attempts to reconstruct past events and lifeways seem to incorporate more mythic components as memories fail or are unavailable. One way to capture memories for

Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Pazdro, Eds., *Not Just Pin Money*
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conversion into data includes the gathering of biographical information through the collaborative efforts of life history research.²

Some social scientists criticize life history research as less "scientific" than other research strategies. The list of criticisms which is long and oft-repeated includes charges that life history is idiosyncratic, individualistic and merely personal; life history data is gathered without the controls or clarity of operational detail which permit extrapolation or replication; life history methods entail conceptual, ethical and technological problems which must be managed in order to select informants, work with them, and finally reduce the masses of obtained data into correct distillations or profiles. Each of these criticisms has some validity. However, in spite of these problems, persistent efforts among life historians have resulted in some astounding and provocative documents, whose rich texture and informative nature cannot be denied.

The collaborative efforts of life historians have positive characteristics as well. Their work produces rich data about the minutiae of daily life, its decisions, its developmental passages and its attitudes, which are unavailable through less intensive modes of inquiry. Life history captures the dynamic quality of life-as-lived, the internal nature of decision-making, as well as the affective components of the public *persona*. Informants' responses to immediate events and circumstances provide valuable insights into the overt pattern of social change which help delineate the infra-structure of larger community events. Life history offers a rare opportunity to amass phenomenological descriptions of quotidian lifeways as well as descriptions of peak social rituals which are surrounded by deference.

Through life history techniques, researchers gain the rare opportunity to modify, clarify, enrich or correct their own data. Since the informant is, after all, the "expert witness," she or he can be asked to correct or elaborate on the perceptions, notations or conclusions of the researcher. Periodic review sessions reassure the informant and help recheck previous information.

The ethic of life history research must be carefully considered.³ Intrusion into personal privacy, the imputation of moral or religious values to informants or others, and the reporting of informant information about others in the community remain of considerable importance. For example, prior to releasing profiles of living informants, whether or not they are in the immediate area of publication, researchers should give informants every opportunity to review the final data and guarantee an "imprimatur" prior to public hearing, presentation or publication.

Perhaps the most unique and productive aspect of life history is that this informant contributes greatly to data for groups, institutions or classes of persons for whom no previous history has been documented. The subjects of this study compose such a class or group, firstly because they are women, and secondly because they are Métis and "non-status." While mixed-blood women have been labelled and discriminated against, they have been poorly researched. From life history data and profiles gained through pilot studies, hypotheses can be posed for and by other researchers, so that subsequent work can be more directed and informed.

It should be emphasized here as it is elsewhere ⁴ that the creation of life

history rests on a collaborative effort. The epistemological status of "data" or "knowledge" which emerges from collaborative research is complex in that it results from aural/verbal and visual information; cross-cultural or personal biases in the selective recording and reduction of data during analysis; the ethics and censorship of the information-sharing relationship between researcher and informant; and especially, the sharing of interior perception and memories across consciousnesses, language differences, and barriers of age, status and sex. The philosophical questions which emerge from this realization deserve serious consideration which unfortunately exceeds the limits of this essay.

The richness of the relationship which develops between informants and strangers-who-become-more-than-friends as life events and personal views are shared cannot be denied. Since logical positivism has been despatched from our purview--at least for the present work--the authors openly celebrate the warmth and generosity they experienced while working with the informants for this pilot study, the Rainbow Women of The Fraser Valley.

The results of this pilot study were first presented as a media lecture, with two 35mm slide projectors and voice-over explanation.⁵ The data was gathered during several extended visits to British Columbia during a period of slightly over one year. During the extended visits, a loose list of topics to be covered was used in combination with an open-ended interview format. The initial inquiry elicited genealogical materials. Permission was secured to record portions of the interviews, and working sessions were interspersed with visits of a more social nature. The general nature of the projected study was explained to the informants prior to their agreement to work with the researchers. Permission was also secured to obtain photographs of the informants, their families, possessions and ancestors. Intermittent drafts of the typed materials were presented to the women, who were invited to correct or censure them. The approved version of the media lecture was presented to the women during a celebratory evening with friends and family in their own community. Each was honoured with a gift. Since one informant was too ill to attend this presentation, a private showing was arranged in her residence. The work which continues with each woman affords the researchers the nucleus for work with others.

Let us turn our mental clocks back to an earlier period now, to review briefly the events and cultural patterns out of which the grandmothers and great-grandmothers of the Rainbow Women made decisions, encountered love and created families with strangers from alien lands and other races.

Although versions of the same drama were being played out across the continental Americas, our interest is in British Columbia. The time period included the turning of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although the root events preceded these years by more than half a century. The cast included a rich panoply of Europeans--English, Irish, Scottish, with some French and Russians, a few Spaniards, and nameless bands of harriers from south of the Canadian border--along with the representatives of the Native American peoples who had long inhabited British Columbia. The plot included immigration, westward expansion, colonialism, economic and military conquest, cultural disintegration and change, bi-cultural adaptation

and the genesis of an uneasy hybrid in British Columbia, mixed-bloods, who stood politically, economically and culturally between the two ends of the spectrum.

Included in the Métis Sundance symbols of the Indians of North America are the Rainbow People: those children who are mixed racially, culturally and spiritually. This symbol, the rainbow, has been chosen to refer to those mixed-blood children of Anglo and American Indian ancestry. When the authors use the term "Métis", therefore, it is not used to designate the mixed-blood offspring of French and American Indian couples, but rather in a wider sense Métis here means blended like the rainbow, so no negative connotations are intended. Instead the image conjures up a path or a colourful bridge linking separate realities.

After early contact in 1774, the first white men who came to British Columbia to trade furs did so mostly on a seasonal basis. Those who collected pelts from their ships scarcely set ashore. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, as ships from several European nations increasingly visited the Northwest coast, the adventurous fur traders of the North West Company pushed westward from Eastern Canada over the Canadian Prairies and Rocky Mountains to reach the coast.

Trade networks increased. By 1821, the North West Company, having already established trading posts in the Interior, amalgamated with the Hudson Bay Company. A spurt of expansion, exploring and building followed. Much of this activity was focused along the coast as well as up the Fraser River, which rises deep in the Interior to run a twisted course westward to an estuary near Vancouver. Simon Fraser, who explored this mighty river in 1808, was one of the first white men to descend it all the way to the sea. He was soon followed by others who were excited by this new area and the riches it promised.

The building of forts followed in order to strengthen the position and security of the more simple trading post. By 1824, Fort Vancouver (now in the U.S.A.) was established as the centre for coastal and river fur trade. Fort Langley was built in 1827, to be followed by Fort Simpson (1831), Fort McLoughlin (1833), Fort Durham (1840), Fort Victoria (1843) and Fort Rupert (1849). Some forts were established only to be abandoned, while others furnished the nuclei for future cities. These forts were linked by the trade routes with Fort Hope, Fort Kamloops, Fort Alexandria and Fort St. James.

By 1849, the Americans had firmly established their claim to the lower Columbia River, and the Hudson Bay Company moved its coastal headquarters to Fort Victoria. In that same year, Vancouver Island was granted by the British Crown to the Hudson Bay Company, with the idea that colonization would be encouraged.

By 1851, when James Douglas was also appointed governor of Vancouver Island, political and economic problems abounded. A wider base of economic and political activities, which necessarily involved increased immigration and colonization, appeared to be necessary in order to confirm British sovereignty in the area. By 1871, when the united mainland and island colonies became the Province of British Columbia, the foment generated by

the gold rushes of the 1850s and 1860s and by the arrival of a cadre of service professionals, culminated in settlements of immigrants who not only traded, but also farmed and raised livestock.⁶

Colonization affected the Indians who clustered in bands along the coast and river valleys of that area, not only the fish, animals and natural resources sought after and prized by the immigrants and their distant rulers. The policies of the Anglo traders and the provincial government initiated changes which continue to reverberate.

Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, this area was home to a sizeable population of Indians of rich and varied cultural and economic patterns which had developed through intimate exchange and use patterns supported by their river and maritime environments. The waterways which had been the source of food and means of travel were the powerful earthly threads which bound them together. Food, clothing and tools were fashioned from the fur, flesh and bones of the animals with whom they shared the environment. Wood, bark and grasses furnished the materials for baskets, homes and canoes. Food was plentiful from the bushes and plants which normally flourished in the area, and only had to be gathered and processed with care for less fertile seasons.⁷

The Indian religious systems were tied closely to the environment. Sky, earth and waterways were honoured and their inhabitants were judged to be sacred. Their religious ideas were often expressed through Guardian Spiritism, shamanic practices, dance, art and rituals. Since nature was bountiful, it supported the exchange of goods used to shape alliances and express social status through sacralizing feasts and ceremonies.⁸

As the Anglo culture impinged with its building of forts, its trading enterprises and its need to harvest the inhabitants of nature, old ways of life and social patterns changed. While the Indians provided furs, fish, fish oils and the products of nature and labour and friendship when it was needed, from the Anglo settlers and traders came the blankets, beads, buttons, cloth, needles, tobacco and containers. Rum also came to the Indians, along with new diseases which decimated the population of the area. Population decreased steadily after contact until 1939 when once again an upward trend was noted.⁹

As the black-robed priests and missionaries indoctrinated the Indians with ideas of Christian values and practices, Native customs of potlatching, spirit dancing and ceremonialism were outlawed. The impact of the missionaries was especially instrumental in the destruction of traditional social patterns, including lineage and clan organization, marriage patterns, class and status structures and the ways in which these were all maintained. Catholic, Anglican and various Protestant groups vied for acceptance through their mission activities among the Indians of British Columbia.¹⁰ These changes were even reflected in dress, since Indians were forced to adopt clothing not made from the products of nature but cut from the calicoes and fashions of Europe.

While not all these changes were negative, they resulted in forcibly changing the historic life patterns of the Indians. The old ways of child-rearing, feasting, spiritism and the arts virtually died out when they were

outlawed. Indian children who attended boarding schools as "status" students were forbidden to speak their own languages, required to wear European clothing styles and work according to Anglo patterns and economic goals. They spent at least half the day working on domestic tasks such as sewing, cleaning, and cooking while only one-half was spent on learning more academic subjects. There is a rich literature of mission memoirs to document these practices.¹¹

With the arrival of more Anglo women, sponsored by the trading companies, the Crown and the missionaries, more laws were enacted to discourage the marriage of Anglo men to Indian women. Before the entry of Anglo women into the wilderness of the Northwest, the Indian women performed many important economic and subsistence functions to help the Anglo traders. Their role in the settlement and trading world of Western Canada was very important, as ably documented in *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870*.¹²

As white culture increasingly impinged, changes were codified into laws. A "status" Indian was one who could live on government established reserves, be educated in sponsored schools, and perhaps receive other rights. The Indian Acts mandated that women who married non-Indians lost their rights to land, tribal affiliation and ultimately, even to burial on ancestral lands. Legal Indian "status" could only be acquired through the father, or by marriage to an Indian man, in which case this status is passed on to the children. In contrast, an Indian woman who married a non-Indian husband lost her status, as did any of the children she already had, and all of the children which resulted from the non-status marriage. This reflects the attempts of the Indian Acts to legislate morality. These laws are still in effect, although they are currently being challenged.¹³

Earlier Northwest indigenous patterns, which sometimes included matriarchy, broke down under the onslaught of European patriarchal pressures. Typical Anglo residence patterns developed to displace not only indigenous patterns of extended residence, but also those which had been honoured among the earlier Indian-Anglo marriages contracted under the more generous terms of marriage *à la facon du pays*. Under this earlier intermarriage pattern, Indian women retained closer relationships with their own people while they performed important functions in trading activities.¹⁴

Not until the 1950s did a resurgence of interest force the repeal of some of the repressive aspects of the Indian Acts. A rebirth of interest in old indigenous patterns arose. Not until 1949 did Indians gain the provincial franchise; an unrestricted federal franchise in national elections was not enacted until 1960.¹⁵

The rebirth of interest in Indian practices and ideas we shall find expressed in the lives and activities of the Rainbow Women of the Fraser Valley, those women whose grandmothers and great-grandmothers were examples of the Indian women who chose to marry Anglo traders or settlers. Their marriages, whether or not they were blessed by the church, gave birth to a rainbow of mixed-blood or métis children amongst whom the social regrouping commenced. The restructured social patterns initiated by European settlement are still reflected in current statistics.¹⁶

Aside from the available statistical data which describes the status Indian population of the Northwest, there is little information about the métis population of Western Canada, and even less about the granddaughters or the great-granddaughters of those women who elected to marry out of their ethnic backgrounds. To fill this gap the authors have begun to gather life history information from a sample of women who live in the lower Fraser River valley. While the profiles of only four of the women are included in this essay, a larger project will elaborate upon and test the validity of the emerging patterns.

The four women selected as a pilot sample were all over 65 years of age. They were all from the same area of the Fraser Valley and all had elected to return to or remain in their natal areas. Their brief profiles follow.¹⁷

Helen Brooks, Rainbow Woman, was born in 1920 in Port Douglas on Harrison Lake, British Columbia. Both Helen's grandmothers were Salish. Her grandfather, Goodwin Purcell, ran a Hudson Bay Trading post in Douglas.

Helen spent her childhood in the beauty and isolation of the Douglas area, living in a log cabin built by her father. The family was without electricity; wood and water had to be packed into the cabin. Helen's father told her boyhood stories about travelling with his father to gather furs, and about taking them by boat down to the city of Victoria. This long journey constituted one of the few contacts with the outside world. Helen herself took this journey. She recalled secretly offering bits of food to the Sacred Doctor rock, whose natural lineaments appeared to guard the stone walls of the shore of the waterway, to insure her safe passage through the water of Harrison Lake, just as custom recommended from time immemorial.

Helen remembered her mother as a strict disciplinarian, yet also as someone who was loving and caring. She was a pioneer woman who worked hard to preserve meats and vegetables for the long winters. Helen's mother embraced Catholicism for the family. While Helen had no specific memory of seeing Indian ceremonies as a child, she recalled that when a local priest was not available to conduct a funeral, for example, the chief of the local band would lead the prayers.

Helen was sent to St. Mary's Indian School in Mission. Those were lonely years away from the family. She recalled that a typical school day consisted of one half day of education, while the rest of the day was devoted to washing, sewing, cooking or other school maintenance tasks.

At fifteen, continuing her education became a crisis for Helen. The only available school was St. Mary's. However, the demand for entrance was so great that the parents of status Indian children felt they should have priority. Because Helen's parents lived outside the Douglas reserve they were not considered "Indian." Helen's father was particularly non-status, since his Salish mother in marrying a Hudson Bay trader had lost her Indian rights.

Helen never returned to St. Mary's school after that incident. Yet her wonderful spirit and energy showed through during this early period. She made an important life decision to continue her education another way. Helen went to work in a logging camp as a waitress. She saved her money and

wrote to a beautician's school about enrolment. She had wanted to become a nurse, but her lack of educational background and money made this impossible. Without sharing her dream with her family, for fear of opposition, Helen went alone to Vancouver with her savings. While she worked for room and board she learned to become a hairdresser.

In 1945 Helen returned to Mission where she bought her own shop, the "Cameo." Helen described those years as "good." "I was independent, economics were good and my customers were also my friends." Helen owned and worked in the Cameo for seven years. Then, after marrying in her thirties, she sold the shop to devote herself to rearing a family of eight children.

Helen continued to live her Rainbow heritage in her own way. Displayed in her home is a basket made by her Aunt Mathilda, of the Mt. Currie Reserve, whose beautiful creations have been presented to the Prime Minister of Canada. Of much personal significance to Helen was an opportunity to attend a local seminar last year at the Mission. A medicine-man-priest came from the Catholic church to present a broadening look at combining these two sacred paths.

In her youth, Helen saw that in order to explore the world and develop more completely as a person, she had to live in more urban settings, outside the realm of her parents' generation. As a Rainbow Woman, Helen continues to weave the colours of her two cultural heritages within her own expanding Rainbow family.

Rainbow Woman Irene Kelleher was born in 1901, granddaughter on her mother's side of Keykohkwah of the Douglas tribe, who married J. Willard Wells in a traditional Indian ceremony. Wells was an adventurer who looked first for gold and then for land upon which to settle. Keykohkwah had seven children, and made trade baskets. Then, for uncertain reasons, she returned to live with her people.

Irene's paternal grandmother, Madeleine, was a Nooksack woman who married Mr. Mortimer in a traditional Roman Catholic ceremony. Irene's mother, Julia, travelled the Interior of British Columbia with Mortimer during her teens. After she learned to be a dressmaker she practiced her trade. Irene's father, Cornelius, worked for the railroad and also farmed a homestead halfway up the Sumas mountains.

Irene described her childhood as happy. She and her only brother, Albert, did not attend a church-sponsored school because Cornelius felt that their educational methods were poor and that religion was overemphasized. Irene and Albert walked to school, although sometimes they needed to raft or walk along the fences because flood water inundated the fields and roadways. The years rolled by. Irene remembered her father telling stories, and describing the Passion plays at the local Mission during the celebrations of the church year.

Irene did very well at school. She attended the Normal School and was able to attend the new University of British Columbia for one additional year in order to earn her First Class Teaching certificate. Then Irene started her teaching career, moving to valley communities as assignments demanded. She had wanted to be near home, but she learned that local officials did not

want a “half-breed” teaching their children. That was Irene’s first serious brush with prejudice.

During World War II, she was appointed to be a principal. Eventually Irene was assigned to teach in her own area where she purchased her home. She also worked with her father on many local committees dealing with Indian problems and issues.

Irene taught for 43 years before her retirement. She remembered those as good years and recalled her students fondly. She never married. Irene was appointed to research, edit and publish a local history entitled *From Wigwams to Windmills*. Using her father’s diaries for data, she now plans to work on a second book about travel on the Fraser River. Several years ago, Irene travelled to the Holy Land and Europe, fulfilling a lifelong dream. Last year, Irene attended a class at Fraser Valley College to learn more about the Indian history of British Columbia.

Irene and her parents became Rosicrucians some years ago. Her view of life, death and nature transcends narrow ideas, and seems somehow closer to her Indian heritage. Irene speaks of her parents’ deaths as a “passing” and a new incarnation. When others are clearly found wanting, she merely states, “That’s their karma, not mine.” She values warmth and acceptance in those she meets.

Irene says that she has seen much, and holds high hopes for the future. She is proud of her young cousin, Gloria, a lawyer working for Indian rights. She believes that more opportunities exist for Indians and métis these days. Irene is very proud of her métis ancestry.

Irene, who likes to recall her 83 years, sums up her life and credo by commenting that “It’s what you do with what you’ve been given that counts in this world.” Like a dramatic actress, Irene liked to close her interviews by quoting lines of poetry which she learned and taught. They recalled to her a métis childhood, halfway up a mountain in the Fraser Valley.

Rainbow Women Ann Lindley was born in 1914 in Hope, British Columbia. Ann’s grandmother was a Salish woman from the Jimmie Reserve. She was the daughter of Sogwo-les, the chief of the Squiala Band at the time of her marriage to a Spanish immigrant. Ann’s mother, Susan Alvarez, in turn married Samuel Ryder of Irish-English descent.

While Ann’s father was off at war in Europe during World War I, Ann’s mother supported the family of eight children by picking hops in the lush fields of the Fraser Valley. She and all the children had to help. Ann remembered her Salish grandmother, who lived with them, weaving cedar bark baskets for trade and money. Ann asked her mother to help her learn the language of her grandmother, but she was told “no,” since the words would be “too difficult” for her to learn and pronounce.

As a child, while she was playing, Ann was accidentally injured in a rock fight. This injury, coupled with other problems, required her hospitalization for an extended period. She returned home from her hospital stay to begin grade one at the age of ten. Because the Indian children were sent away from Hope to residential schools, only the Anglo and métis children went to school together. Ann remembered that the métis children were teased with the

Chinook term for half-breed, "Siwash." Her response was to grab any light hair she saw and do a little punching. The result, she recalled, was new friends and more respect.

A key story Ann recalled from her childhood involved the mixing of Anglo and Native medicine. Ann's father was stabbed by a man whom he had found lying in a ditch and tried to help. Her father was brought bleeding to the local pharmacy for help. Aunt Mary, a Shuswap woman, lived across the street from the pharmacist. When she noticed the lights of the pharmacy were on unusually late, she followed her intuition, and went to the store where she found her brother-in-law bleeding to death. The pharmacist who had tried everything from his pharmacopoeia was unable to stop the bleeding. Aunt Mary ran to the woods to gather a leaf known by the Indians to stimulate clotting. She returned in time to use this medicine which saved Ann's father's life.

Ann met her husband, Daniel, when he came to visit relatives in Hope. Since both had been reared as Catholics they had a church wedding. As the children were born, Ann often added to the family income by picking hops with the children. She feels that the hop fields hold many stories for the Native and métis people of British Columbia.

In mid-life, Ann dealt with the problem of alcohol. Socializing in the pub had replaced socializing in the hop fields. However, when Ann's doctor told her to cut down on her drinking, she immediately stopped "cold turkey" for the sake of the children. Also, Ann influenced her husband to do the same.

The Coqueleetza Centre is a project funded by the Canadian government to create a place for Indian and Métis people to reclaim their heritage. Ann is proud of her son, Peter, who works as an illustrator in the Education Department of the Coqueleetza Centre. Ann joined the Centre. She said that she lives for Wednesdays now, when the elders gather to "learn the heritage." Ann laughed with pleasure as she recalled how she felt when she wove her first cedar root basket. She said that she was as proud to weave that basket as she was to birth her first child. She described other activities with the elders, such as learning to cut and dry salmon. She added that by the third salmon she was talking to it as humans and salmon have since the beginning. Ann said of Coqueleetza, "We learn from each other there." Ann taught the elder who helped her to make her treasured cedar root basket how to crochet an afghan blanket.

At last, Ann has had an opportunity to study and learn with the elders. She is working to learn her grandmother's language now, which is being reclaimed through such books as *Wisdom of the Elders*. Ann who is now the storyteller visits schools to tell the children old Indian stories that she recalls or learns.

Ann has walked the rainbow full circle: now she is an elder who is a basket maker, salmon dryer and storyteller. Her life has been fully lived in this way she feels.

Zena Buker, Rainbow Woman, was born in 1918 in Mission, British Columbia. She recalled a few Chinook words, such as greetings, as they have extended down from her Rainbow heritage. Zena's paternal great-

grandmother was from one of the far north tribes of the Fort Simpson area. Her maternal grandmother was a Salish woman.

As a child, Zena remembered her grandmother, Mary Louise Newton, who lived with the family. Grandmother Newton came from the northern Babine Lake area, where her father was a factor for the Hudson Bay Company. After she was sent to St. Mary's school, she married and had nine children. Later, grandmother Newton came to live with Zena's mother on the family farm in Dewdney where she served the community with the medicine ways of a healing woman, as a mid-wife and an herbalist. Zena recalled her grandmother's cough medicine made from licorice root, and spring tonics for blood-cleansing made from barberry bark. Zena also remembered her grandmother speaking Chinook with Indian families who came to the farm to trade baskets for blankets, food or clothing. Grandmother Newton is fondly remembered for her healing, strength and sense of humour.

Zena's mother, Teresa Hairsine, continued grandmother Newton's interest in healing. Her medicine included tonics, poultices, and dandelion wine which she said was good for the obvious "aches of life." Teresa who was a farm woman reared five children, managed the yearly preserving and extended healing to the community. Zena said of her mother, "She experienced heartaches and hard times throughout a lifetime, and yet she could rise above all that. She had tremendous strength."

Going to school in the small towns of Mission and Dewdney as a shy child, Zena experienced the confusion of having other children call her "squaw" or "siwash." When she was fifteen, Zena had to leave school, to go to work caring for children and assisting with housekeeping. She needed to work instead of continuing her education. She finally overcame her shyness when she became a waitress in Mission.

When World War II broke out, Zena decided to assist in the war effort by moving to Vancouver to become, in her words, "Rosie the Riveter." She recalled how on the morning after VJ Day the Canadian Workmen's Compensation Board passed a law that, in effect, prevented women from performing those jobs which they had already been working. She went from making \$1.00 an hour to 40¢ an hour. Since war veterans were returning home to Canada to work, the women were phased out of the good-paying jobs.

In 1947, Zena married the boy next door. She and her husband, Lyle Buker, were given a wedding present of acreage from her mother's land where they built their home and reared two children. For Zena, her Rainbow heritage is quietly recognized and respected in her own home. In an intimate expression of her roots, she has collected Indian baskets for over thirty years. She told the story about a high ridge on a part of the family land which was reputed to be a ceremonial site for the Salish for their summer residence. Years later, after this farmland was sold, when the ridge was unfortunately levelled for building, artifacts of stone and charcoal were discovered.

Zena continues her keen interest in reading about the history of the Native peoples of Canada, and in the renaissance which she noted is now occurring among young Indian and métis artists of British Columbia. As a Rainbow elder, it is important to Zena that the old stories be passed along the generations. Zena has plans to create a tape collection of the stories she

remembers. Together with artifacts and photographs, she plans to hand them down to her own four grandchildren, so that they too can celebrate with her the songs she recognizes from her Rainbow heritage.

Although a pilot sample of four is small, trends and patterns already emerge as foci for the selection of future informants and as guides for areas of specific research. These can be summarized in nine categories.

Three of the four women had maternal *and* paternal grandmothers or great-grandmothers who were full-blood Indians. One woman's grandmother was fully Indian, while her paternal grandmother was of mixed-blood Spanish and Indian heritage. This pattern appears to be consistent with the documented historical pattern of the woman, not the man, who marries out. This pattern still predominates and characterizes Anglo-Indian miscegenation today, although there are hints that the trend may change.¹⁸

Two of the four informants have paternal grandmothers who were either not remembered or with whom familial ties were extremely weak. One had a maternal grandmother who returned to her tribe of origin. Only two had maternal grandmothers who lived with the family during their childhoods. The latter pattern, *i.e.*, of live-in grandmothers, appears to have strengthened the continuity of Native American traditions when it occurred, through handicrafts, healing practices, language maintenance and trade. Extended families across generations still are characteristic of the status Indian family unit.

All four of the Rainbow women lived in relatively rural areas of British Columbia where interracial patterns were and are apparent. Each elected to return to or maintain residence in her natal area. Only one, Helen, actually lived close to a Reserve and attended an Indian residential school. Rural areas with prevalent *métis* populations should be further investigated, inasmuch as these provided a social and economic context for the childhood development of thousands of *métis* or mixed-blood persons in Western Canada. The role of *métis* as "cultural broker" should be explored and better understood.

Only one of the sample of four attended an Indian residential school, although it was not expected that this would have been the case, inasmuch as women who married out lost their "status" and thus their progeny had no right to attend such schools. Two women were forced by pressing economic needs and uncontrollable circumstances to drop out of formal school at the age of fifteen. The third completed only a grade school education and the fourth continued with post-secondary education long enough to obtain her first-class teaching certificate. One of the fifteen year old dropouts returned to a professional school to obtain her beautician's license. It would appear that the educational level of at least three of the four exceeded the then average level of education attained by the status population.¹⁹ This topic merits more investigation from the standpoint of collective personal attitudes.

Three of the four women were educated as Roman Catholics and the fourth (Buker) was given a Protestant orientation. One of the Catholic women was expressly not sent to church school because of her parents' desire for a "better education" with less emphasis on religion. This woman and her parents later became Rosicrucians. Only one of the Catholic women has

maintained a fairly strong connection with the church in her older life. All four have syncretistic attitudes consistent with the Indian belief that it is possible to maintain membership in religions of differing ritual and iconographic persuasions.²⁰ None of the four remembered witnessing specifically Indian ceremonies as a child.

Three of the four women married. Two married relatively late in life (in their thirties), and all three of the married women had church ceremonies. Two married Métis husbands, and the status of the third husband is uncertain. None of the marriages ended in divorce.

All of the women moved around Western Canada to some extent for reasons of family, work and/or education. All returned finally to the same general area of their childhood and settled. Three of the four moved to a larger urban area for work or education during their young adulthood. Although mobility and seasonality have consistently been noted as characteristics of Indian life in British Columbia, it is impossible to say whether the relatively high mobility of this small sample is the natural result of economic or historical pressures, or rather some artifact of a métis background in which residual attitudes of an indigenous nature still prevail. All four of the women worked outside the home at some period in jobs as varied as housekeeping, waitressing, factory work, hops picking, teaching and school administering, beautician (and self-employed shop owner).

The arts appear to play a major role in introducing and maintaining Indian culture in the Rainbow heritage. All of the women are interested in Indian arts and crafts and all have tried their hands at either creating or collecting these works. All four have studied Northwest Indian culture informally, while three have also attended formal classes or seminars on this subject. Three of the four women have or had female relatives recognized as herbalists, midwives or healers. Language has played a lesser, yet significantly symbolic, role. One is actively engaged in learning some of her ancestral language, while all four remember a few words, even if they were pejoratives from their childhood.

Three of the four women remember being called such pejoratives as "squaw" or "siwash" when they were children, and the fourth suffered job discrimination because of her métis status. Helen, as non-status, suffered the reverse "discrimination" of not being able to attend the only educational institution available to her, a school for status persons. Yet each has taken positive steps in adulthood to deepen her ties with the Indian part of her heritage. These steps took many forms including:

- collecting and appreciating many forms of Indian arts and crafts;
- learning an Indian craft or skill such as weaving, basketmaking, or salmon drying;
- doing personal research and reading about Indian culture and history and/or attending formal classes about these topics;
- taking an interest in assisting young Indian or métis artists, or participating in local organizations dedicated to the perpetuation of Metis/Indian cultural events and concepts;

- encouraging family members to serve Indian populations either as professionals or by learning about indigenous healing techniques in order to serve non-Indians with these;
- becoming a collector of stories, songs and photographs for family members, or to inform grammar school students through a story-telling program;
- researching, writing or compiling books about local history.

The high energy interest of these women was immediately apparent to those who collaborated with them. All four maintained active social ties, learned and shared their ideas and planned to increase their participation through study or travel.

It is impossible to know whether this resurgence of interest in Northwest Indian culture could or would have occurred if the Revised Indian Act of 1951 had not once again permitted such social celebrations as the potlatch and dancing. These relaxed attitudes were further supported by the liberalizing opinions which were engendered and elaborated during the sixties. Whatever the causes, the fact remains that this small sample has revealed an infrastructure of social relationships, sentiment, attitudes and practices which show some connection with their Indian as well as their non-Indian ancestry. This study will now form the basis for a larger projected research project to be performed among a larger sample of Rainbow women.

Life histories, as case studies, afford excellent vehicles for amassing information which will add to the research of historians, anthropologists and others who may wish to perform similar studies. Library research needs to be enriched and supported by actual case histories based on memories and verifiable trends. The events and concepts which shaped the lives of the Rainbow women reflect backwards as well as forwards. Through their marriages and relationships they continue to blend the colours of two distinct ethnic heritages. Without them we would be less rich in our own humanity.

Footnotes

1. Anne Cameron, *Daughters of Copper Woman* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1981): 53.
2. While the use of oral or life history method is not a new mode of research, it has only recently become the focus for serious critical, analytic and comparative consideration. Gottschalk, Kluckhohn and Angell, 1945; Langness, 1965; and Langness and Frank, 1981 contain rich content and extensive bibliographies for those interested in learning more about the presuppositions, methods and implications of this particular conduct of inquiry.
3. L.L. Langness and Gelya Frank, *Lives: An Anthropological Approach to Biography* (Novato, California: Chandler and Sharp, 1981), p. 117 ff. Also, L.L. Langness, *The Life History in Anthropological Science* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965).
4. *Ibid.*
5. This work was undertaken by the founding members of the Centre for American Indian Arts and Culture which is a fledgling non-profit corporation affiliate of Forecast, Inc. The Centre which is housed in Los Angeles, California, seeks in a variety of ways to serve as a liaison between the thousands of American Indian peoples who become too invisible in a metropolitan environment and the non-Indian populations who co-reside with them, but often have little knowledge about or understanding of their heritage. This paper represents the first publication of a paper under the aegis of the Centre.
6. Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia. Volume I. The Impact of the White Man*. Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 5 (Victoria: The Provincial Museum of British Columbia, 1980): 53-57.
7. Homer Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene, Oregon: University of Oregon Press, 1955).
8. Irving Goldman, *The Mouth of Heaven: An Introduction to Kwakiutl Religious Thought* (New York: Wiley Press, 1975). H.K. Haeberlin, Sbetetda'q, "A Shamanistic Performance of the Coast Salish," in *American Anthropologist*, 20 (3) 1918 : 249-257. Also, see Gunther, 1926, and Hultkrantz, 1980.
9. Duff, *op. cit.*: 38-53
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-93 and J.P. Hick (ed.), *W.H. Pierce: From Potlatch to Pulpit* (publishers impossible to document in the copy available).
11. Duff bibliography.
12. Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in the Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983; also, Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).
13. J.F. Krauter, and Morris Davis, *Minority Canadians: Ethnic Groups* (Toronto: Methuen, 1978): 11.
14. Van Kirk, *op. cit.*: 28 f.
15. Wolfgang, Jilek, *Indian Healing: Shamanic Ceremonialism in the Northwest Today* (Blaine, Washington: Hancock House, 1982).
16. H.B. Hawthorn, C.S. Bellshaw, and S.M. Jamieson, *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment* (Los Angeles: University of California and the University of British Columbia Presses, 1958).
17. We are grateful for the unselfish cooperation and interest of our Rainbow Women informants who shared their time, memories and lives with us. We are also grateful for the assistance and genuine support of Ms. Kathleen M. Hulse and Mr. Ollie Link. Their photographic and research assistance was a basic component of this work. We could not have completed this first phase without their generosity. Quotations are from data in the hands of the authors: 849 South Broadway, Eastern-

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18. Hawthorn *et al.*, *op. cit.*: 61 ff.
19. Krauter and Davis, *op. cit.*: 17,22.
20. Hawthorn *et al.*, *op. cit.*: 423-424.