

“MY NAME IS STANLEY”:

Twentieth-Century Missionary Stories and the Complexity of Colonial Encounters

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IN THE YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH in 1983, Stanley Eaton Higgs (b. 1904) composed in longhand, in some forty spiral-bound notebooks, the story of his life as an Anglican missionary in south-central British Columbia from 1928 to 1941. According to George Bramhall, family friend and later editor of Higgs’s story, the project began when he and his wife, Arlene, urged Stanley to record the stories of his interesting life in the Cariboo.¹ The result was an engaging personal chronicle of the experiences of a young man with humanitarian tendencies who left his home and family in England for Lytton, British Columbia, to take up missionary work for the Church of England in Canada. Higgs’s writings do not attempt to record and reconstruct the pre-contact culture and history of local Indigenous peoples (in the manner of slightly earlier ethnographies) but, rather, offer coeval accounts of day-to-day interactions with specific Nlha7kápmx individuals and families in the communities that were considered part of the Lytton Indian Mission² – interactions that complicate and enrich understandings of Indigenous-settler contact, conflict, and change.

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¹ Stanley E. Higgs, *That They Might Have Life: An Autobiography by the Late Reverend Canon Stanley E. Higgs*, ed. George Bramhall (Lytton, BC: Freedom Graphics Press, 2009), “Post-script,” George Bramhall, 48r.

² In the autobiography, the Indigenous peoples in and around Lytton are referred to as “the Thompson Indians.” Unless in a direct quote, the more accurate “Nlha7kápmx” will be used to refer to the Indigenous peoples along the Fraser River Canyon from Spuzzum to just below Lillooet, and along the Thompson River from Lytton to Ashcroft. Similarly “Nlha7kápmxtsin” will be used instead of the “Thompson language,” except where cited in the autobiography. These orthographies are from Darwin Hanna and Mamie Henry, eds., *Our Tellings: Interior Salish Stories of the Nlha7kápmx People* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 3. Place names will appear as written in the autobiography.

Higgs's autobiography recounts the experiences of almost twenty years in the life of an individual who was able to recall events in great detail. The handwritten original was probably composed with reference to diaries from the periods described, but there is as yet no trace of such documents. The handwritten version was passed to George and Arlene Bramhall, who edited it considerably to reduce redundancy and repetition, visited archives in British Columbia and the United Kingdom to verify dates and details, and typed the manuscript.³ Despite these considerable efforts, no one would publish the work, which ran to more than 200,000 words and was likely regarded as too personal to be of interest to a wider audience.⁴ So, George Bramhall donated some of the original notebooks, and two typescript versions of the autobiography, to the British Columbia Provincial Archives and offered copies of the shortened transcript to several BC archives. For at least fifteen years, the autobiography was available in this form but was little used.⁵

In 2009, Freedom Graphics Press of Lytton, a print-on-demand publishing company specializing in local history, published the Bramhall version of Higgs's story. This version includes eight photographs, chronologies of Higgs's work and of the Lytton mission from 1859 to 1928, a map of the Lytton area, and an index.⁶ Valuable as it is, this limited publication under-emphasizes the potential relevance of Higgs's memoir to researchers. To address this, I first discuss the contents of the autobiography, with particular focus on the stories of Higgs's engagement with Nlha7kápmx people, and then suggest some reasons why his memoir has been largely overlooked by researchers, despite its

³ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, Bramhall, "Postscript," 48r.

⁴ The typescript prepared from the original handwritten runs to more than 400,000 words.

⁵ Stanley E. Higgs, "'That They Might Have Life': An Autobiography by the Late Rev. Stanley E. Higgs," edited by George Bramhall, unpublished manuscript, 1987, Add. mss 1332, British Columbia Archives (hereafter Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA). Two found references to the Higgs autobiography contain small errors indicating it has not been the subject of specific study. See Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 272; Mary-Ellen Kelms, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 47, 105.

⁶ As mentioned, several typescript versions of the autobiography exist, all edited by George Bramhall. This article depends on the copy held at the British Columbia Archives (BCA), although the copy held in the archives of the Lytton Museum was also consulted. Editorial changes in the Freedom Graphics publication mean that a few of the incidents referred to in this article do not appear therein and that others are changed or omitted from the typed manuscript version. In the footnotes, references are to the 2009 publication, except as this differs from the BCA typescript copy. *That They Might Have Life* is available directly from Freedom Graphics Press for \$42.50. The address is: Freedom Graphics Press, PO Box 549, Lytton, BC, V0K 1Z0; e-mail: freedomgraphics@botaniccreek.com. It is also for sale at the Lytton Museum and Archives and the Lytton Info Centre, Lytton, British Columbia.

value for the study of Indigenous-settler histories in British Columbia. I conclude by urging engagement with twentieth-century missionary stories in order to unsettle and complicate our understandings of colonial dynamics, past and present.

FROM BIRMINGHAM TO LYTTON:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MISSIONARY

The youngest of six surviving siblings, Stanley Eaton Higgs was born on 8 April 1904 in Stechford, Birmingham, England, to Mary (née Down) and Walter Higgs.⁷ The close-knit family was active in the Church of England, and, as a teenager, Higgs was a server, sang in the choir, taught Sunday School, served on the church committee, and belonged to the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA).⁸ His autobiography begins in 1919, when, during a church service, he suddenly became "conscious of a desire to become a missionary."⁹ Though this desire was strong, the difficulties involved were daunting, and he tried to resign himself to a career as a bank clerk.¹⁰ Two years later, a sermon on missionary work at the annual UMCA meeting in Birmingham fixed Stanley on becoming a missionary priest.¹¹ After completing his education at King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham, Higgs gained a place at St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, "the premier missionary college in Britain."¹² His family gave him "total and unstinted [sic] support."¹³

Higgs's years at St. Augustine's (1923–27) were, for the most part, happy ones. He took part in sports, including cricket and rugby, and, although not one of the strongest students, succeeded in qualifying for ordination as a deacon able to take up foreign missionary work.¹⁴ In the summer of

⁷ In order of age, the siblings were: Walter Norman ("Norman"), Nora Jane (called "Sis" within the family), Alice May (who died in 1899, age three), Arthur, Howard, Laura Kathleen ("Kath"), and Stanley Eaton.

⁸ Canterbury Cathedral Archives, Stanley Higgs file, U88 A2/6 C4SS, application to St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, completed by Stanley E. Higgs, 1922.

⁹ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 1.

¹⁰ Canterbury Cathedral Archives, Stanley Higgs, file U88 A2/6 C4SS, Stanley Higgs to the Warden of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, 1 September 1922.

¹¹ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 3. See the opening lines of the letter sent by his parents to the Warden of St. Augustine's College supporting his application: "Mother & father are both willing for their son Stanley to adopt a missionary life, and are greatly pleased with his decision, but to lose him will be a severe wrench." Canterbury Cathedral Archives, Stanley Higgs file, U88 A2/6 C4SS, Walter Higgs to the Warden of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, 28 August 1922.

¹⁴ To qualify for ordination at St. Augustine's, the required examinations were The Durham Matriculation, and parts 1 and 2 of the Durham Licentiate in Theology. Higgs completed

1927, Bishop Walter Adams of the Diocese of Cariboo, British Columbia, offered Higgs an appointment as “assistant Missioner to work under the Mission Priest to the Indians at Lytton.”¹⁵ Special arrangements were made for Higgs to be ordained as deacon in England, instead of in his new missionary diocese, so that his family could attend the ceremony. The event took place on 15 December at Lambeth Palace and was conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Reverend Stanley Higgs departed for Canada from Liverpool on the RMS *Ascania* on 28 January 1928.¹⁶

Stanley Higgs arrived in Lytton in February 1928. A small village situated at the confluence of the Fraser and Thompson rivers, and surrounded by steep mountains, Lytton’s role as gateway and meeting place is recorded on its landscape. Long before the news of the discovery of gold attracted tens of thousands of miners to the gravel riverbeds in 1858, and long before a major highway and the convergence of two railway lines made Lytton an important transportation hub for the settler population, Kumsheen (Tl’kémtsin) was an important centre for Nlha7káp̓mx people. Recorded speeches of chiefs from the 1850s to the early twentieth century describe the place as the centrepost of an extensive territory: “It is the middle of my house, and I sit there” as Sexpínlhemx (or Spin’tlam), head chief of the Nlha7káp̓mx, stated in the 1850s.¹⁷ Chief George echoed this point in November 1917 before the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission (1913-16) at Boston Bar: “from Spuzzum to Lillooet, from Lillooet to Lytton, from Lytton to Kamloops, back again to Lytton, and Lytton to Nicola, and Lytton is the centre of our district.”¹⁸

As the youngest (and most physically able) missionary at Lytton, Higgs was responsible for most of the visitation to outlying communities, some accessible only by horse. He was preceded in these duties by several clergymen, of which two, J.B. Good and Richard Small, have received some scholarly attention. The Reverend J.B. Good (1833-1916) set up the first Anglican mission in Lytton; oversaw the construction of a mission house, schoolrooms, and chapels; and remained there

these in 1925, 1926 and 1927, respectively.

¹⁵ Canterbury Cathedral Archives, Stanley Higgs file, U88 A2/6 C4SS, Bishop Adams to the Warden of St. Augustine’s College, Canterbury, 18 August 1927.

¹⁶ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 38.

¹⁷ James Teit, unpublished fieldnotes (1898-1918), American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. Quoted in Michael M’Gonigle and Wendy Wickwire, *Stein: The Way of the River* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1988), 28.

¹⁸ See transcripts of the testimonies of the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission at the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, “Our Homes Are Bleeding,” <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/Resources/ourhomesare/> (viewed 28 December 2010).

until 1883.¹⁹ Archdeacon Richard Small (1849-1909), remembered as the "archdeacon on horseback," worked in Lytton from 1884 to 1909, supervising the construction of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in 1893 and seeing the opening of St. George's Residential School in 1902.²⁰ The Reverend E.W.W. Pugh (d. 1950) also had a lengthy incumbency at the mission. He arrived at Lytton in 1902 and took over as senior missionary in 1909 after Archdeacon Small's death. He retired in 1925, and, during his time in Lytton, the mission seems to have been maintained though not significantly expanded. By 1928, the mission extended from Lytton to encompass the Fraser River communities between Spuzzum and Lillooet as well as those along the Thompson River as far as Ashcroft. Indeed, the mission range was approximately congruent with the traditional Nlha7káp̓mx territory described by Chief Səxpínlhemx above. It encompassed seventeen churches; "another nine centres where services were less frequently held";²¹ the renovated St. Bartholomew's Hospital (1908), for which Higgs assumed bookkeeping duties; and the newly renovated (1928) St. George's Residential School (which was administered separately from the Lytton mission).²²

Higgs travelled by rail, car, horse, and foot, often in difficult conditions, to provide religious services to his new parishioners. He often stayed overnight in Nlha7káp̓mx homes, which allowed him to develop relationships with Nlha7káp̓mx parishioners and to experience the often impoverished living conditions of the communities. Towards the end of his tenure in Lytton, he reflected on this. Having seen a considerable amount of money taken during a holiday collection at a large urban church he asked himself: "But then ... 'How often has the rector of St Paul's [sic], Vancouver, gone on a week's journey among his people, and from the first day to the week's end, have every need provided for, lodging every night, three meals a day, a horse for his convenience all the time, and companionship whenever he sought it?'"²³ His work included

¹⁹ For an excellent study of Good's missionary project, see Brett Christophers, *Positioning the Missionary: John Booth Good and the Confluence of Culture in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

²⁰ Cyril E.H. Williams and Pixie McGeachie, *Archdeacon on Horseback: Richard Small, 1849-1909* (Merritt, BC: Sonotek Publishing, 1991), 68; "St. George's School, Lytton, BC," the Anglican Church of Canada, "Residential Schools: The Living Apology" <http://www.anglican.ca/rs/history/schools/st-georges-school-lytton.htm> (viewed December 2010).

²¹ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 89.

²² St. George's was an Anglican institution; Catholic Nlha7káp̓mx children could be sent to the Catholic Indian Residential School at Kamloops.

²³ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 354.

conducting baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and funerals; attending at sickbeds; and providing, when possible, basic medical assistance.²⁴

Higgs's autobiography suggests that Nlha7kápmx individuals may have welcomed him more warmly than his professional position required. His youth probably played a role in this. On his first meeting with Jane Riley of Intlpam (mother of Chief Sam Mack), she said, "So young! So young!" and her son explained that it had "been a long time since anyone young came among us."²⁵ Higgs's efforts to learn Nlha7kápmxtsín, the local language, also played a role in how he was received in Nlha7kápmx communities. After a Sunday service in April 1928 at St. Mary and St. Paul's Church on the Lytton Indian Reserve, the congregation gathered on the lawn and watched while Chief Meschell taught Higgs how to say "what is your name?" Soon, he was able to ask "Shweat ka squesht" and to respond "Stanley" when the question was asked of him. According to Higgs, from this time on, he was widely known by his first name, and the older members of the congregation took turns teaching him new words or phrases after Sunday services.²⁶

Stanley Higgs developed a close relationship with Jane Riley. She frequently hosted him at her home and he nursed her through an acute illness.²⁷ Jane and her family were among Stanley's most exacting teachers of Nlha7kápmxtsín. As he recalled:

An example of the older or senior Indian's [sic] keen desire to teach me, and also evidence of the rich sense of humour possessed by most of them, was the meal-time game at Jane Riley's. So far in my several visits I had been given the same seat at the table. As a rule, the food, meat and vegetables and dessert, were grouped near for my convenience, but on the day on which the kitchen-dining room became a classroom, all food and drink had been placed on the other side of the table. On this occasion Chief Sam Mack was present, and when we had said grace he advised me that his mother had said there would be no food for me until I asked for it in Indian. It threatened to be a meagre meal. There sat Jane ready to explode with laughter, eyes bright with little fans of crinkly lines indicating her struggle to avoid laughing at my expense. I struggled to ask for some salmon, bread, water, and cherries, but with most of these I was mercifully assisted.²⁸

²⁴ He was priested on 14 October 1928 by Bishop Adams, permitting him to perform a fuller range of religious services than he could when he first arrived.

²⁵ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 103-4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁷ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 325.

²⁸ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 134.

Here, the sharing of food, language, and humour bespeak a close and mutually enjoyable relationship.

Higgs placed great weight on the moment he felt he was fully accepted by the Nlha7kápmx. Late one night, while staying at the home of Chief Sam Mack in Intlpam, he was called to the home of Tommy and Julie, eight kilometres away. Earlier that day, while mending fences, Tommy's axe had slipped and cut deeply into his foot. Higgs, who had been trained in first aid during his time at St. Augustine's College, spent the night with Tommy, cleaning and splinting his foot and tending to him as best he could. The next morning, the whole community came to celebrate Holy Communion together. Stanley found this service more moving than usual and reflected: "The meaning of it all was coming through. During the past two years I had been received as a missionary in the old tradition and, as such, they would wait for me to prove myself. This morning I was accepted, quite simply, as one of the family."²⁹

Not all clergy at the Lytton mission seem to have enjoyed this level of intimacy with their Indigenous parishioners. Although the incumbency of Archdeacon Small was recalled with fondness, Higgs wrote that there were few warm memories of the Reverend Pugh.³⁰ Stanley's colleague, the Reverend Theo de Pencier (1896-1977), who was senior missionary in Lytton from 1930 to 1934, reportedly tried to learn Nlha7kápmxtsín on his own, only to enjoin his congregation to "journey with him to the toilet in peace, in the name of the Lord." This, wrote Stanley, offended the group considerably as "the [Nlha7kápmx] are proud of their language."³¹ During a building project that disturbed a gravesite, de Pencier so offended a group of Nlha7kápmx men with his comments about "dead Indians" that they reported the matter to the bishop.³²

Higgs's years among the Nlha7kápmx were marked by intense social upheaval and change: the post-First World War political, social, and economic reconfiguration of Canada coincided with steadily increasing settlement by outsiders. Aggressive government policies of assimilation and dispossession exerted heavy pressure on Indigenous peoples in British Columbia. However, the Nlha7kápmx were not passive vessels for Church or state interests. They objected to the reduction in reserve size recom-

²⁹ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 169.

³⁰ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 123. Indeed, in 1937, when St. Paul's Church on the Lytton Reserve was renovated, a stained glass window depicting Archbishop Small on horseback was commissioned. See Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 416. On fond memories of Small, see Hanna and Henry, *Our Tellings*.

³¹ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 181.

³² Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 305-06.

mended by the McKenna-McBride Royal Commission,³³ participated in church leadership, and engaged sympathetic white individuals to further their own community interests.

Archdeacon Small's diary indicates his preoccupation with converting and Christianizing Nlha7káp̓mx individuals;³⁴ however, by Higgs's time in Lytton, Nlha7káp̓mx communities were organizing their own worship services and were active in church leadership and worship. Lytton church chief Charlie Cisco "frequently led a service of prayers and hymns for people in the reserve on Sunday afternoons," and Higgs often praised his efforts.³⁵ The celebration of Easter seems to have been used for a double purpose during Stanley's time in Lytton: he observed that there was a Nlha7káp̓mx tradition for communities "from Ashcroft to Yale, and even from near Merritt ... to about ten miles south of Lillooet" to converge at Lytton to celebrate Easter.³⁶ This "homecoming" had more than one purpose. It was an opportunity for individuals to share Communion on an important religious day and to seek out the priest for confession or advice as part of a spiritual cleansing before this important religious ceremony. It was also a chance for a reunion with family and friends at a time when movements of Indigenous peoples were usually supervised and scrutinized.

The Nlha7káp̓mx did not set aside their traditional practices wholesale in favour of Christian practice (the goal of the missionary project).³⁷ Higgs recounts a funeral for a three-day-old baby girl who was survived by her twin. At the moment of interment, a woman at the river threw a bundle into the water. Discussion with a member of the community, John Maltze, revealed Nlha7káp̓mx protocols around the birth, life, and death of twins.³⁸ To avoid offending de Pencier while, at the same time, following the wish of Nlha7káp̓mx community members, a Christian

³³ The commission's report was filed in 1916. The Allied Indian Tribes of British Columbia mounted a challenge to this report, and, in response to Aboriginal opposition, the federal government revised the Indian Act to prevent Aboriginal peoples from pursuing land claims in 1927.

³⁴ Anglican Provincial Synod of British Columbia Archives, Richard Small fonds, PSA55, diary of Archdeacon Richard Small, dating from 1903 to 1909. This is echoed in Anglican Provincial Synod of British Columbia Archives, Richard Small fonds, PSA55, pamphlet *In Memoriam: Richard Small, Archdeacon*, 4.

³⁵ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 91. Charlie Cisco is also mentioned in a story told by his granddaughter, Edna Malloway, in Darwin and Henry, *Our Tellings*, 152-53.

³⁶ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 93-96.

³⁷ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977), 144-45.

³⁸ On important Nlha7káp̓mx protocols relating to the birth and death of twins, see Wendy Wickwire, "The Grizzly Gave Them the Song: James Teit and Franz Boas Interpret Twin Ritual in Aboriginal British Columbia, 1897-1920," *American Indian Quarterly* 25, 3 (2001), 431-52.

ceremony was held but the body was thrown into the river.³⁹ This way, both sets of beliefs were respected, even if not all the people participating were aware of the compromise.⁴⁰

Thirty-five years ago, historian Robin Fisher noted that early "missionaries were the representatives in British Columbia of the optimistic, humanitarian view that European colonization need not necessarily be an unmitigated disaster for the Indians."⁴¹ He also pointed out that early missionaries sometimes sided with Indigenous peoples (often taking the role of "spokespeople") against hostile government agents or bodies.⁴² Higgs seems to have believed and behaved similarly. Perhaps in part because his responsibilities focused on pastoral care rather than on conversion and religious education and, in part, because of a personal humanitarian ethic, Higgs found time and energy to advocate for improvements to the material circumstances of Nlha7káp̓mx communities.

Lack of access to water had long been a serious concern in Nlha7káp̓mx communities in the Lytton mission area.⁴³ Higgs learned of the extent of the problem from Chief Harry James at T'zea, who explained that frequent water shortages made even subsistence farming difficult along the Fraser River.⁴⁴ Lack of access to land and water was also cited at a community meeting at the home of Henry Paul as a reason for friction within communities that sometimes led youth to leave or run away because they had such limited prospects in their home region.⁴⁵ In one extreme case, a fire that destroyed four Nlha7káp̓mx homes could not be quenched because water rights at that end of the town belonged to the Canadian Pacific Railway, leaving only "a trickle [flowing] spasmodically from a half-inch stand pipe" for the entire Lytton Reserve.⁴⁶

At the end of the summer of 1929, Higgs confronted Lytton Indian Agent Harry Graham regarding the situation of the Lytton Band. When pressed, Graham "volunteered no remedy" for the low priority of Nlha7káp̓mx water access, but he told Stanley that a plan had been

³⁹ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 246-47.

⁴⁰ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, 184. On syncretism see, for example, John Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); Michael E. Harkin, *The Heiltsuks: Dialogues of Culture and History on the Northwest Coast* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

⁴¹ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 142.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 144.

⁴³ See note 18.

⁴⁴ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 90.

⁴⁵ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 145-46. On the lack of water for irrigation along the Fraser River, and its impact on farming, see Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 277.

⁴⁶ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 210.

drawn up by an engineer from the Department of Indian Affairs to bring water from a different source into the Lytton Reserve. His explanation for why the work had never been completed was that, while money was set aside for the project, “no Indians turned up to do the work.”⁴⁷ Higgs recounts that he returned within the week with twenty-six Nlha7káp̓mx men ready to give three weeks’ work to complete the project. This angered Graham, and he declared that the money was no longer available. Although unsuccessful, this intervention exemplifies Stanley’s relationship with the Indian agent and how he tried to advocate for Nlha7káp̓mx interests.

At community meetings, during visitations, and through his own observations, Higgs learned of the difficulties encountered by youth leaving St. George’s Residential School. To address this situation, he drew up a settlement plan intended to provide access to agricultural land, homesteads, and support for Nlha7káp̓mx youth leaving that institution. He presented this plan to the board of the New England Company in London while he was on furlough in the winter of 1931–32. This society was the initial sponsor of St. George’s Residential School (opened in 1901, then rebuilt and reopened in 1928) and also of Stanley’s work in Lytton.⁴⁸ However, Higgs’s unauthorized presentation of the plan to the company, and the latter’s interest in it, elicited a hostile response from Bishop Adams, who seems to have perceived the plan as implying the failure of missionary work in the diocese.

In November 1933, in the *Vancouver Province*, Higgs published an article entitled “Let’s Give BC Indians a Chance.” In this article he suggested that the Department of Indian Affairs used neglect as a tactic to bring about the extinction of Indigenous peoples in British Columbia. He also wrote that educational programs at Indian residential schools in no way prepared students for the limited prospects they could expect to encounter on leaving. Further, he decried government rhetoric extolling the generosity of its gift of free education to Indigenous peoples, noting that “the government was spending money which did not rightly belong to it; amounts which only represented a very small percentage of the money earned by the development of Indian property.”⁴⁹

Bishop Adams reacted very negatively to these two actions, which he perceived as challenges to his authority. It is also likely that he saw Higgs’s discussions of the socio-economic disadvantages in Indigenous commu-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁴⁸ At this time, all funding for the diocese went to the bishopric, not directly to individual missionaries.

⁴⁹ Stanley E. Higgs, “Let’s Give BC Indians a Chance,” *Vancouver Province*, 11 November 1933.

nities as implying the failure of the Church to ameliorate the situation. This risked exposing both the bishop and his See to censure, which, in turn, could endanger the already precarious financial situation of the Cariboo diocese.⁵⁰ Higgs recounts that the bishop began to undermine him with great hostility, finally stopping his salary and dismissing him from the Lytton mission on a pretext that involved an argument about storm windows.⁵¹ Stanley responded in his autobiography: "Loyalty to my Church was still required of me, though I would now have serious reservations regarding loyalty to the local authority. There was no question in my mind as to where my first priorities lay. Service to the Indians came first, and to all others to whom the Church of England had become a spiritual home."⁵²

After his removal from Lytton, Higgs worked in Clinton and then in Quesnel, primarily serving the settler population. By his own account, his concern and interest still rested with the work and inhabitants of the Lytton mission, specifically the Nlha7káp̄mx parishioners. After the appointment of Bishop Wells to the Cariboo diocese, Higgs was returned to the Lytton mission in 1937, and he began an earnest quest to secure medical care for Indigenous people stricken with tuberculosis (TB).

Since his arrival in the province, Higgs had seen Nlha7káp̄mx people suffering and dying from TB. He regarded the government's failure to provide treatment for Indigenous people with the disease as a "very cruel way of thinning the ranks of our Indian people," imposing "little cost upon the administration" – less than ten dollars per burial "at the going rate."⁵³ With the assistance of the chiefs and councils of the Nlha7káp̄mx bands in the Lytton mission, and after several years of study and lobbying, Higgs was able to secure a promise from Dr. McQuarrie, medical superintendent of the Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, that treatment and a treatment facility would be provided. This promise was eventually fulfilled, and the residential school at Sardis was established as the Coqualeetza

⁵⁰ Bishop Adams discussed the precarious financial situation of the Cariboo diocese in his correspondence with missionary societies, including expressing his "alarm" at the situation in a plea for additional support to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London. See Rhodes House, Oxford, Archives of the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, USPG E series 82A (1927), Walter Adams, Bishop of Cariboo, to Mr. Waddy, Secretary of the SPG, 28 December 1927.

⁵¹ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 307-8.

⁵² Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 217.

⁵³ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 458.

Tuberculosis Hospital. It served Indigenous patients, including those from the Lytton mission area, from 1941 to 1968.⁵⁴

In 1941, Stanley Higgs volunteered for national service with the armed forces. On the morning of 14 April, he shook hands for the last time with the congregation of St. Paul's Church on the Lytton Reserve. This leave-taking was momentous as it involved goodbyes to dear friends and valued colleagues in the Lytton mission as well as to his wife Margaret (née Owen), whom he had married in 1932, and to his daughter, Wendy, born in 1937, both of whom were to remain in Vancouver. Dressed in his new uniform, and with tears in his eyes, he drove the length of Lytton's main street on his way to five years of service as a Canadian military chaplain.⁵⁵ On his return from military service in 1946, he settled with his family in Vancouver and never returned to missionary work.⁵⁶ However, Lytton and the Nlha7káp̄mx remained in his thoughts. He told stories of his time in the Cariboo and put considerable effort into recording those experiences in his autobiography, which he completed just before his death. It is significant that his account ends with his departure from Lytton in 1941 and that the entire work is dedicated to Jane Riley. He also requested that his earthly remains be returned to Lytton and that his ashes be scattered on Riley's grave in the Staiyn cemetery. This was done in May 1983.⁵⁷

FROM PERSONAL HISTORY TO HISTORICAL SOURCE

Stanley Higgs's autobiography encompasses a range of themes and historical experiences of potential interest to researchers, including the local histories of Lytton, Clinton, and Quesnel; national and international travel by ship and train; the impact of the Depression and how communities tried to cope with it; construction of church buildings; and the dynamics of Anglican Church activity in a sparsely populated rural diocese. This article's focus on Stanley Higgs's experiences and interactions with Nlha7káp̄mx people in the Lytton mission highlights

⁵⁴ The hospital was closed in 1948 after a fire and officially reopened in 1953. See Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, 125.

⁵⁵ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 478. Higgs served overseas from 1942 until the end of 1945, and he returned to Vancouver at the end of January 1946.

⁵⁶ Following his return to Vancouver, Higgs's appointments were as follows: assistant priest at Christ Church Cathedral, 1946-49; rector of St. Michael's Church, 1949-60; chaplain of Haney Correctional Institute, 1960-68; executive head of Vancouver's Central City Mission from 1968 until his retirement in April 1974.

⁵⁷ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, Bramhall, "Postscript," 484. Bramhall notes here that this wish was carried out "with the assistance of Rev Colin Dickson, Rev Jack Phelps and Chief Hilda Austin."

the specific relevance of his autobiography to the study of Indigenous-settler relations in British Columbia. In doing so it raises the question: why has this unique work received so little analysis?

Missionary writings have been important sources for scholars exploring the history of British Columbia. Anthropologist Michael Harkin, who has written extensively on this subject, highlights the evangelical dialogue between missionaries and Indigenous peoples as offering a "sustained and intensive exchange of ideas, stories, material goods, practices, technologies, and ways of being."⁵⁸ Because missionaries were intimate participants in this dialogue, Harkin argues that they often provided more accurate comments on cultural dynamics than did ethnographers, many of whom were so fixated on the pre-contact past that they neglected contemporary cultural dynamics.⁵⁹ Similarly, historian Mary Ellen Kelm writes, "twentieth-century missionaries in British Columbia were sometimes very astute at picking up on how the social relations of colonization bore upon Aboriginal communities."⁶⁰ Missionaries who lived and worked with Indigenous communities over prolonged periods and who developed relationships with Indigenous individuals were able to identify and reflect on the cultural dynamics of their times in ways that other outsiders were not. Further, the careful construction of scientific authority in professional publications in the early twentieth century, such as that identified by anthropologists Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman in Boasian ethnographic work, involves the intentional obfuscation of biases and the elision of the often imperfect nature of the research conducted.⁶¹ In their writing, on the other hand, missionaries tended to be rather candid about their positionality and, thus, their biases. This candour makes it easier to disentangle perspectives and observations about Indigenous peoples in missionary writings. As Harkin concludes, "ironically, the positioned observer, such as the missionary – provided he or she is reasonably

⁵⁸ Harkin, *Heiltsuk*, 100.

⁵⁹ James A. Teit was a notable exception. He arrived in British Columbia in 1884 and settled in Spences Bridge, just upriver from Lytton. He established close relationships with Nlha7kápmx communities. In 1894 he met Franz Boas, who employed him to gather ethnographic material on these peoples. Historian Wendy Wickwire's extensive work on this subject highlights the unusual – and often mutually beneficial – aspects of Teit's ethnographic project and his relationships with the Nlha7kápmx. See, for example, Wendy Wickwire, "'We Shall Drink from the Stream and So Shall You': James A. Teit and Native Resistance in British Columbia, 1908–22," *Canadian Historical Review* 79, 2 (1998): 199–235.

⁶⁰ Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, 41.

⁶¹ Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, "'The Foundation of All Future Researches': Franz Boas, George Hunt, Native American Texts, and the Construction of Modernity," *American Quarterly* 51, 3 (1999): 479–528.

sympathetic – is more reliable than the objective scientist.”⁶² Harkin’s caveat is an important one: an observer unsympathetic to Indigenous peoples would be unlikely to interact closely with them and would also be unlikely to include much recoverable information for researchers. So, does Stanley Higgs’s autobiography satisfy this important condition?

In the years he was posted to the Lytton mission, Higgs cultivated friendly and respectful relationships with Nlha7káp̓mx individuals and families as well as an appreciation for the abilities of particular individuals as advisors, church leaders, and craftspeople. For example, he considered Henry James of T’zea a valued confidant, and he credited Chief Johnny Raphael and his council (Lytton) with collecting the information that demonstrated the necessity for TB treatment for Indigenous peoples in the region. Higgs described the basketwork of Annie Lee of Spuzzum as “exquisite.”⁶³ He was also deeply attached to the people in the Lytton mission, as is demonstrated by the fact that whenever he was offered a choice of assignments he chose Lytton. And he did so despite difficult relationships with senior clergy at the mission, strenuous travel, and little monetary reward.⁶⁴ His view of Nlha7káp̓mx people and communities, however, was not uniformly positive or idealized. He held traditional healers in disdain, and sometimes complained about meals and accommodation offered to him in Nlha7káp̓mx homes. He witnessed the impoverished state of the homes and communities he visited and the effects of alcohol, family disruption due to residential schooling, and disease. However, he believed that the lamentable situation of many of his Indigenous parishioners was due to government neglect and poor administration of government services – not to any inherent fault of their own.⁶⁵

Nonetheless, Higgs displays a paternalistic attitude towards Indigenous peoples in his autobiography. The title he chose, *That They*

⁶² Michael Harkin, “(Dis)pleasures of the Text: Boasian Ethnology on the Central Northwest Coast,” in *Gateways: Exploring the Legacy of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition*, ed. Igor Krupnik and William Fitzhugh, *Contributions to Circumpolar Anthropology* (Arctic Studies Center, Smithsonian Institution, 2002): 1:93-106, esp. 94.

⁶³ On Henry James, see Higgs, unpublished autobiography, 342. It goes on to say: “I often thought that Jimmy Dunstan, Jimmy Stone, and Henry James would have made a splendid advisory team.” On Chief Johnny Raphael and Annie Lee, see, respectively, Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 454-55 and 303.

⁶⁴ Higgs had a reasonable entry-level salary, though he was not given a pay raise for many years. He seems to have been expected to pay mission costs (i.e., the considerable costs associated with transportation) out of his own pocket. See Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, Bramhall, “Postscript” 483.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 82, 361; See, for example, Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 420. Complaints about the quality of food and lodging occur frequently.

Might Have Life: An Autobiography by the Late Reverend Canon Stanley E. Higgs, offers an illustrative example. The first part comes from John 10.10: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Higgs relates the phrase "that they might have life" to his goal of bringing modern medical services to "our Thompson Indian family."⁶⁶ This opening phrase, which aligns his efforts with Godly actions, underscores his paternalistic attitude towards Indigenous peoples. Further, as historian Celia Haig-Brown notes in her study of the residential school at Kamloops, phrases such as "my Indians" convey in the writer a sense of possessiveness that "while showing attachment to the people, also belittles and relegates the people to being possessions of another human being."⁶⁷ Though not unusual in missionary writing, it should give us pause; the juxtaposition between this ethic and Higgs's relationships and efforts on behalf of the Nlha7kápmx emphasizes the complexity and heterogeneity of his individual involvement with the colonial aspects of the missionary project.

The style of the autobiography is an important consideration: in that there is little attempt to memorialize universal experiences or generalize beyond the incidents recorded, it is an example of what can be termed "non-literary life writing."⁶⁸ With candour and simplicity, a specific personal history is chronicled for the purpose of preservation. In part because of this simple style it is possible to tease apart the missionary's perspective on Indigenous peoples, on the one hand, and historical/ethnographic information, on the other. So, as long as Harkin's criterion of "sympathetic observer" is taken to mean a person who demonstrates some compassion, and whose biases or prejudices do not prevent the development of relationships and so preclude working with Indigenous individuals, Stanley Higgs was such an observer. This implies that reasons other than the question of utility are needed to explain why this autobiography has not been more fully and more frequently utilised.

Although Harkin, Kelm, and historians Myra Rutherdale and Paige Raibmon have written of twentieth-century missionaries in British Columbia, there is far less scholarship on this group than there is on their nineteenth-century predecessors. In this context, Raibmon's work on the Reverend George Raley provides an important context

⁶⁶ Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 443.

⁶⁷ Celia Haig-Brown, *Resistance and Renewal: Surviving the Indian Residential School* (Vancouver: Tillacum Library, 1988), 31.

⁶⁸ Jennifer Jensen Wallach, "Building a Bridge of Words: The Literary Autobiography as Historical Source Material," *Biography* 29, 3 (2006): 446-61.

for thinking further about Higgs's place in provincial scholarship.⁶⁹ A Methodist minister, and principal of the Coqualeetza Residential School at Sardis, British Columbia, from 1914 to 1934, Raley pursued more comfortable housing and better educational training for students. A glowing tribute to Raley at a 1972 reunion suggests that his efforts to improve the experiences of students attending the institution were successful.⁷⁰ Comparison of Raley's career with Higgs's autobiography suggests that the two men had common purposes – advocacy for better living conditions and opportunities, close relationships with Indigenous parishioners/students, and what Raibmon termed a “remarkable” interest in “Native opinions [and] issues directly affecting their lives”⁷¹ – and that these may warrant further exploration.

In the wake of recent revelations about the role of the residential school system in the colonizing project in Canada, however, it has become increasingly difficult for scholars to delve into this painful, contested, and complex history.⁷² By contrast, first-wave missionization in British Columbia (1850–1890) – distanced temporally from the present, predating entrenchment of the colonial order in British Columbia, and untainted by the excesses of the residential school system – is perhaps seen as a “safer” period of study. To write about the efforts of those who may have attempted in more recent years to soften the impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples, and to describe positive engagements between Indigenous peoples and colonial actors/systems, is to risk appearing to be an apologist for, or a defender of, colonialist and oppressive actions. If this creates a “chill,” if it marks certain areas of historical study as places where scholars hesitate to venture, if it obscures the heterogeneity of experience of those involved in the missionary project and even in the residential school system itself, then vital histories are silenced. We all need a better understanding of historical actions and contexts to help us towards a more just and peaceable coexistence in this province, and we need to remember, as sociologists Ronald Berger and Richard Quinney note, “what is included or omitted from our stories makes plausible our anticipated futures.”⁷³

⁶⁹ Paige Raibmon, “‘A New Understanding of Things Indian’: George Raley’s Negotiation of the Residential School Experience,” *BC Studies* 110 (1996): 69–96.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁷² The final reports of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (established in 2008 with a five-year mandate) are partly responsible for bringing this information to the attention of the Canadian public.

⁷³ Ronald J. Berger and Richard Quinney, “The Narrative Turn in Social Inquiry,” in *Storytelling Sociology: Narrative as Social Inquiry*, ed. Ronald J. Berger and Richard Quinney (Boulder,

FROM RESEARCH TO RELATIONSHIP

Historian Margaret Whitehead notes that "missionaries, their backgrounds, their personalities, their beliefs, their methods and their biases defy generalization."⁷⁴ This article seeks to highlight the unique personal history of one missionary who made the effort to record stories he felt worthy of preservation for a wider audience. As a source for researchers interested in Indigenous-settler histories in British Columbia, Higgs's autobiography is certainly rich. Of course, it is partial as "all ... sources are..., in both senses of the word."⁷⁵ Stanley Higgs's autobiography is particularly valuable when this dual "partiality" is recognized and respected. Every missionary source – like every missionary – is best understood as partial, situated, and specific. Higgs's autobiography adds a voice to our understanding of the many lived experiences of a particular time and place, and it can help to challenge dichotomous understandings of a complex historical period hedged about by acute sensitivities.

The binary construction or assumption that must be challenged is one that locks Indigenous and settler peoples into specific historical roles, most often colonizer and victim. By contrast, the portrait painted in Stanley's autobiography is of an individual who occupied an ambiguous role in a period of massive upheaval, disruption, and disempowerment for Indigenous peoples. It demonstrates that, in British Columbia, neither the missionary project nor the colonizing project completely encapsulates the other. It confirms, therefore, the importance of examining the interrelations between the two efforts, specifically the shifting roles individuals chose to play. Stanley Higgs never contested the colonization of Nlhaʔkápmx peoples, he displayed great pride in the British Empire and its traditions and priorities, and he came to British Columbia specifically to participate in the missionary project. In his words, he believed the Indian Act to be "in many respects quite a good law."⁷⁶ On the other hand, and more importantly, he contested the state's unfair and deliberately harmful treatment of Indigenous peoples, offered assistance and pastoral care to individuals who requested it, and developed intimate and friendly relationships with Nlhaʔkápmx people during a period of general segregation. All of this transformed

CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005), 5.

⁷⁴ Margaret Whitehead, *Now You Are My Brother: Missionaries in British Columbia* (Victoria: Sound and Moving Image Division, Ministry of Provincial Secretary and Government Services, Provincial Archives, Province of British Columbia, 1981), 5.

⁷⁵ John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 20–21.

⁷⁶ Higgs, unpublished autobiography, BCA, 322.

him. Higgs's actions demonstrate that he believed Nlha7kápmx people had a future, if treated fairly, in British Columbia's changing society.⁷⁷ The ambiguity in Higgs's engagement with Indigenous peoples and the colonial project seems to confirm Rutherford's useful assertion, which is that "missionary sources can offer an understanding of both the local and the fluid nature of colonization."⁷⁸ Her point is that large-scale processes and ideologies need to be understood at the level of intimate and localized contexts in order to render individuals and their choices visible. That is to say, it is imperative to recognize the agency of actors in all areas of our shared histories, however uncomfortable the colonial implications may make us.

I began my work on Higgs's autobiography with a strong feeling of unease, for some of the reasons mentioned above. Historian Paulette Regan identifies such feelings as stemming from moments when researchers experience risk and vulnerability because their work prompts them to reconsider their participation in systems of subordination and domination.⁷⁹ Working to come to grips with the heterogeneity of Stanley Higgs as a historical actor, and as a person, has complicated my understanding of the lived experience of those involved in what is now understood as an extremely negative and harmful period of colonial settlement with respect to Indigenous peoples in British Columbia. And this is, perhaps, the biggest challenge as well as the most important opportunity presented to us by Higgs's life story: there is transformative potential in working to understand (though not necessarily in endorsing or agreeing with) the positions, contexts, and lived experiences of the settler people who preceded us in encountering and engaging with Indigenous peoples. Today we confront many of the dynamics, struggles, concerns, and resistances faced, albeit perhaps in somewhat different form, by Stanley Higgs.⁸⁰ These pasts demand the attention of researchers who are attempting to untangle legacies of colonialism.

Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson cites relationality and relational accountability as the basis of an Indigenous research paradigm. Based on these principles, he calls on readers of personal or academic "stories" to enter into a relationship with both the storyteller and the ideas presented. In this relationship, the role of the reader carries

⁷⁷ See, for example, Higgs, *That They Might Have Life*, 121.

⁷⁸ Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), xxiv.

⁷⁹ Paulette Regan, "Unsettling the Settler Within: Canada's Peacemaker Myth, Reconciliation, and Transformative Pathways to Decolonization" (PhD. diss., University of Victoria, 2006), 67.

⁸⁰ Adam J. Barker, "The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State," in *American Indian Quarterly* 33, 3 (2009): 325-51.

responsibilities: to listen respectfully, to internalize the information offered, and to form personal conclusions that are open to being revisited and reconsidered in the future.⁸¹ This respectful, relational approach to research is especially powerful when employed in the complex and emotionally charged atmosphere of settler colonialism and resistance. It is an approach that I have attempted to employ with respect to Stanley Higgs. I have tried to consider why certain events would stand out in his mind, why he would choose specific stories to tell, and why he would choose a particular style in which to tell them. I have attempted to understand the story of Higgs's life, beyond his role as missionary, colonizer, or friend. This has helped me to comprehend the complexities of Indigenous-settler contact much more intimately and to see myself in them. It is my hope that, as other academics engage with these stories (and others like them), they will see the value in relating to the people who tell them and in embracing these relationships.

⁸¹ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2008), 134.