

**“...With A Stout Wife”
Doukhobor Women’s Challenge to the Canadian (Agri)Cultural Ideal**

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Dr. Ashleigh Androsoff
Faculty, Dept. of History
Douglas College (Canada)

Fleeing religious persecution in Russia, nearly 8000 Doukhobors immigrated to Canada in 1899 to take up free homestead land in the Northwest.¹ Repeated exile to the remote outreaches of the Russian empire had prepared them well for the challenges associated with adapting to new and unfavourable conditions despite limited resources. Their reputation for hard work and agricultural acumen made them attractive as prospective prairie settlers. Though these qualities recommended them for the rigours of farm labour, their fit as prospective Canadians was called into question soon after their arrival. Some of their more “reluctant hosts”² wondered whether Russian “serfs” would have trouble adjusting to Canadian political and economic practices.³ These “vestiges of serfdom” were evident within a few months of their arrival: while most settlers depended on teams of horses or oxen to break the soil, the Doukhobors depended on their women.

Descriptions and photographs of Doukhobor women harnessed to their ploughs in place of draught animals were widely circulated in 1899 and thereafter. These have often been reproduced in volumes focused on Canadian immigration, minorities, women, agricultural, and prairie history, as well as in general Canadian history survey textbooks. Graphic and narrative accounts of this incident have been used at the time and since as evidence of the Doukhobors’ particular strangeness. At best it has been used to demonstrate the Doukhobors’ exceptional physical size and strength: even the women of the group were strong enough to take the place of horses. At worst, it has been used as evidence of the Doukhobors’ outlandish backwardness – as proof that they were culturally unfit as future citizens of Canada. It also serves as an illustration of the risks implicit in welcoming a broader diversity of Europeans to Canada’s Northwest. By opening Canada’s immigration gates wider between 1896 and 1905, Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton permitted such “peculiar” foreigners as these to enter the country.⁴

This incident proved that women could rise to the physical challenges of agricultural work, providing they were willing to depart from gender conventions, liberalist assumptions, and standard agricultural practices. In so doing, however, the women challenged Canadian nation-builders’ expectations concerning gender roles, the agricultural ideal, the value of severalty, and white newcomers’ potential for complete assimilation. In order to explain the resonance of this event, it is important to consider the cultural and agricultural expectations nation-builders had of the Northwest. In particular, it is important to consider the liberalist and gendered assumptions embedded in Northwestern development policy and discourse. It is also important to consider how the Doukhobors fit, and did not fit, with these ideals. Drawing mainly from public critiques of this incident, this paper explains the conflict between the cultural and agricultural priorities of Canada’s homesteading program, using the plough-pulling Doukhobor women as a case study.

While investing in Canada’s industrial development, nineteenth-century nation-builders idealized agrarianism as a firm foundation for Canada’s physical and cultural growth.⁵ They extolled what they supposed to be the particular and enviable virtues of farmers: they were simple, strong, scrupulous, and self-sufficient.⁶ As proprietors and producers, farmers protected the nation’s land while providing for its people. Mastery of the land was connected, ideologically and politically, to mastery of the nation. Linking enfranchisement with property ownership reflects both the class biases of political elites, and their assumption that those best qualified to govern the nation are those who have a stake in its land.⁷

In the late nineteenth century, Canada’s destiny as a key player in the British empire and as a prime competitor to its American neighbours seemed to depend on its ability to incorporate and develop the Northwest.⁸ Construed during the colonial period as a hinterland fit only for

Aboriginal inhabitation and the seasonal forays of brawny fur traders, nation-builders recast the Northwest in the mid-nineteenth century as fertile soil for family farms. Northwestern settler colonists, enticed by free homestead land, could stake a physical and cultural claim on Canadian territory while producing food for nation and empire.⁹ Farmers who were white, hard-working, God-fearing, law-abiding Canadians subject to the British crown could be trusted to transform the wilderness into the kind of civilization Canadian nation-builders had in mind.¹⁰

White men had a particular role to play in Canada's Northwestern imperial project in the late nineteenth century: as settler colonizers, they were to tame the wilderness into agricultural productivity while constructing communities civilized by church, communications, and corporate infrastructure. They were to be supported in this project by white female partners who had, in turn, their own civilizing responsibilities. As wives and mothers, white women were commissioned to encourage stability and social respectability by "gently taming" their male partners, maintaining clean and productive homes, and raising responsible and hard-working children. White women were expected to be more angelic than Amazonian: able to heroically and selflessly manage farmhouse and family while setting a high moral standard for prairie life. While strength and endurance were essential to her success (and often her longevity) as a farm wife, her physicality was not expected to equal her husband's or eclipse her own femininity.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Canadian nation-builders were stuck. Promoters had done their best to sell the rough and ready Northwest as fertile soil capable of producing fantastic crops with minimal agricultural effort, but few settlers were buying it; in fact, immigration authorities could hardly give the land away. So long as free land was available in the western United States, Canada had difficulty competing for "desirable" immigrants – Canadians, Britons, Americans, and north-western Europeans whose cultural attributes most closely matched the nation-builders' vision of a "Canadianized" and "civilized" Northwest.¹¹ Given the perceived importance of settling the territory to Canada's national identity and future prospects, as well as the sunk cost of building railways, negotiating treaties with displaced Aboriginal peoples, and soliciting immigrants, failure to properly populate the prairies was unacceptable.

As such, immigration promoters had to become increasingly flexible in order to ensure the settlement of the Northwest, prioritizing agricultural capacity over perceived cultural affinity.¹² As Minister of the Interior¹³ between 1896 and 1905, Clifford Sifton masterminded Canada's new immigration strategy. In order to stimulate immigration to and cultivation of the land in question, Sifton was forced to expand Canada's definition of "preferred" immigrants. Whereas Canadian, British, and (to a lesser extent) American immigrants were considered "ideal" for cultural reasons, there were not enough interested applicants from these pools to fill Canada's agricultural need in the Northwest. Of those who volunteered, too few proved ready and willing to take on the challenge of converting Canada's prairie wilderness into productive fields. In light of this shortage, Sifton was prepared to welcome hard-working and experienced farmers from eastern Europe, exercising flexibility on Canada's cultural preferences in order to guarantee agricultural success.

Broader cultural diversity could be tolerated temporarily under these less-than-ideal circumstances. Providing newcomers could convert the land in the short-term, their cultural differences could be corrected in the long term. As Deputy Minister of the Interior James Smart explained in 1900, "whether [a settler] be rich or poor, Galician, Austrian, Russian, Swede, Belgian or French" did not matter, so long as he was willing to "occupy our land and to break up our soil and assist in developing the resources of the country, and in this way enrich himself and

Canada.”¹⁴ So long as Northwestern immigrants were hard-working and resourceful farmers of good character, they would do well enough on the land. So long as they were white and prepared to become British subjects, there was – in theory, at least – no impediment to their full Canadianization in due course.¹⁵

It was under these circumstances that such immigrants as the Doukhobors were welcomed to the Canadian prairie.¹⁶ Though many Liberal party supporters touted the Doukhobors as exemplary Northwestern citizens because of their physical strength, agricultural skill, and Christian piety, critics quickly pointed out that the Doukhobors were a poor cultural fit. Sifton’s immigration policy was often subject to severe criticism because of the cultural diversity it imposed on the Northwest. In some cases, Canadians, Britons, and Americans who had pioneered in the Northwest in the 1870s and 1880s made it clear that they had expected to be reinforced by settlers much like themselves who would assert a British-inspired Canadian identity on the newly-acquired western frontier.¹⁷ Likewise, French Canadians hoped that a stream of francophone immigrants would boost their numbers in the Northwest.¹⁸ Instead, they found themselves swamped with foreigners. As one Northwesterner confided in his letter to the editor of the *Yorkton Enterprise* on 17 May 1900, “it is hard... that after living from six to twelve years and building houses and stables, making gardens, etc., British men and women should be crowded out by a lot of paupers.”¹⁹ The *Calgary Herald* pointed out Sifton appeared to want to “crowd out all the good Canadian settlers” who laid the groundwork for the railway and “helped to build up the country and make it what it is now” to accommodate “more Doukhobors and Italians and Finlanders, and all the scum of the earth that he can get.”²⁰

Anglophone settlers who wrote to the government to protest this outcome identified two primary concerns. One was community-building: they indicated that they had waited a long time to establish churches, post offices, schools, and commerce, not to mention friendship and courtship opportunities. Letter-writers feared that cultural diversity would impede progress on these projects. Cultural variation on the prairies would also delay or prevent a British-Canadian identity from taking root in this territory, and some of its residents were sorely disappointed. As the *Macleod Gazette* put it in its reflection on Canada’s immigration policy in October 1900, Sifton and his party had “flooded the country with Galicians and Doukhobors - a class of people in many respects considerably below the standard of the Indians - and to them they have given the best of our farming lands.” In so doing, “the Liberal government has certainly incurred the enmity of people all over Canada, but the people of the North-West in particular have mighty little to thank them for.”²¹

Even fellow Liberals criticized the government’s expansive immigration policy. Chief among these critics was Sifton’s colleague and successor as Minister of the Interior, Frank Oliver. Oliver disputed the claim that “the prosperity, welfare and progress” of the Northwest depended on immigrants such as the Doukhobors. He claimed that it was the eastern Canadians who had migrated to westward who “are developing the industries and resources of that country, and who are building up a nation, a Canada.” Their progress was in fact “handicapped by the presence in thousands and tens of thousands of a class of people who, however worthy they may be, however capable they may be as agriculturists, are not, and cannot be of this country.” Oliver insisted that culture should take precedence over agriculture. “It is not enough to produce wheat out of the ground,” he insisted. “We do not live to produce wheat. We live to produce people, to produce social conditions, and to build up a country,” he argued in 1901.²² Such as the Doukhobors were simply not a good fit, and they were unlikely to change any time soon.²³ The *Calgary Weekly Herald* asked how long it would take for these immigrating “creatures” to

overcome their “animal instinct” and adopt the “distinctly Canadian type of character and manners of which we are wont to be so proud?”²⁴

In response to critiques of this nature, Sifton and his associates minimized the impact of European diversity in the Northwest. This was, according to Sifton, a short-term issue: “within a generation or two” the European immigrants would shed their cultural differences and integrate into the mainstream of (Anglo-) Canadian identity.²⁵ Their diverse origins would soon be moot; in the meantime, other Northwestern objectives were being realized. By the early 1900s, the Northwest was well-populated by white farmers who were already feeding Canada’s people and fuelling its economy.

Whatever cultural preferences Canadians espoused, the fact was that hard-working immigrants were needed to develop the nation’s prairie land, and immigrants whose ethnic backgrounds were preferable had not demonstrated much interest in Canada. As such, the Liberal government was forced to sacrifice on identity-compatibility in the interest of securing immigrant farmers. Sifton argued that the Northwest would not be settled if the government stood “on the boundary line with a club and turning a microscope on every immigrant.”²⁶ The Doukhobors had settled in areas that neither anglophone nor francophone immigrants had found attractive. Rather than standing empty, the Doukhobors’ land would be “among the most prosperous in Manitoba” within ten years’ time.²⁷

Some journalists supported the Liberal government’s approach to immigration policy in general, and their accommodation of the Doukhobor newcomers in particular. Regardless of the Doukhobors’ culture, the *Stratford Herald* reminded its readers that Canada’s greatest need was population. As such, it was inappropriate to be “over-particular and dainty, and to insist that all new settlers must wear gloves and part their hair in the middle and be experts as to when it is good table manners to use a knife, a fork or a spoon.” The *Herald* indicated that the newcomers’ ability to harvest the land and fuel the economy should be Canadians’ top concern.²⁸ Doukhobor sympathizers such as Joseph Elkinton, a Quaker who took an interest in their case, suggested that the Doukhobors would indeed become “good citizens” if given a little time and space to adjust to their new home. “Let them get at the land,” he urged, “and with their tools and machinery they will give a good account of themselves.”²⁹

As white Christian farmers, the Doukhobors possessed many of the attributes Canadians identified as “desirable” in Northwestern settlers, potential Canadian citizens, and would-be British subjects.³⁰ Newspaper reports printed before their arrival promoted them as a strong, hard-working, peaceable, and pious people.³¹ Repeated exile in Russia had impoverished them, but they “rapidly become prosperous whenever allowed the opportunity.”³² As for their character, journalists reassured readers that “they are simple, kindly, frugal, industrious,” experienced farmers, and committed to family life.³³ Their religious convictions prevented them from consuming meat, alcohol, or tobacco; swearing oaths; and performing military service.³⁴ They had neither clergy nor churches, but believed that “the Spirit of God is present in the soul of man, and directs him.” Russian state and church authorities had “persecuted” and “tortured” them, and if they remained in Russia they faced ruin and extermination.³⁵

Upon arrival, the Doukhobors were subjected to intense public scrutiny of their physical and moral characteristics. They were immediately praised for their cleanliness and good health. Their bodies were described as “handsome,” “strong,” “large,” “clean,” and “powerfully-built.”³⁶ Despite the rigours of their transatlantic journey, they presented as “a set of robust, well-nourished, rosy-cheeked, healthy-looking people.”³⁷ A Halifax paper reported that Doukhobor men and women alike boasted “magnificent physique ... characterized by broad, square shoulders,

heavy limbs, and a massive build generally.”³⁸ They managed their baggage with ease, and were “evidently able for work.”³⁹ They appeared to be a “fine-looking lot of people, with honest faces and stalwart frames,” who were likely to become “a credit to the Dominion.”⁴⁰ Canada’s Deputy Minister of the Interior James Smart reported that all who met the Doukhobors on their arrival were “favourably impressed with their fine physical appearance” and concluded that in this respect, the Doukhobors seemed “in every way fitted to successfully undertake farm life on our western prairies.”⁴¹

Likewise, the Doukhobors’ cultural characteristics seemed to recommend them as fit to “civilize” the Northwest. Those who facilitated their transportation suggested that they seemed to be “self-reliant, kindly, polite, and neighbourly,” “pleasant,” “temperate, hardworking, and thrifty.”⁴² In fact, the *St. John Daily Sun* announced: “the verdict of everybody who has seen the Doukhobors is that they are the cleanest, the best behaved and the most moral people ever brought into Canada.”⁴³

This exuberant and verbose reception reveals as much about Canadians’ observations as it does of their expectations. The Doukhobors’ “robust” physical appearance suggested their perceived fitness for Northwestern agricultural work; their “cleanliness” suggested that they would not lower Canadian living standards; their “honesty” and “thrift” suggested that their general moral character could contribute to civility on the prairies and in the Dominion more generally. As the *Calgary Herald* surmised, “all the evidence goes to show that they will make excellent settlers, moral, intelligent, and industrious.”⁴⁴

The Doukhobors boarded westbound trains, heading towards the nearly half a million acres of land that had been set aside for them in three reserves, located near Yorkton, Swan River, and Saskatoon.⁴⁵ As they set about establishing themselves on the land selected for them, their approach to settlement aroused much public interest. This interest revolved around two main themes. The first was the Doukhobors’ fitness for prairie settlement. To be deemed valuable settlers the Doukhobors had to successfully establish themselves on the land and in the economy, proving that they were strong and diligent enough to cope. The second theme was the Doukhobors’ “fit” with Canadian sociocultural expectations. The Doukhobors’ communalism was flagged as a potential problem. Their unusual solutions to some of their settlement challenges also attracted public attention, and raised concern that the Doukhobors would prove too difficult to absorb into Canada’s culture.

Many independent farmers who started up homesteads in the Northwest did so before being joined by wives.⁴⁶ This was not the case for the Doukhobors, who, anxious to escape religious persecution, arrived on the prairie in 1899 *en masse* with women and children. About 150 men and 60 women were quickly dispatched to the settlement areas to set up preliminary accommodation, leaving children and their mothers at the Immigration Hall in Winnipeg in the interim.⁴⁷ The remaining able-bodied and available men and women immediately set out to find waged labour as farmhands, railway workers, domestics, and needleworkers.⁴⁸ Once rudimentary shelters were constructed on their land, the women and children staying in Winnipeg moved onto their homesteads and set about making improvements.⁴⁹

Critics of Clifford Sifton’s more inclusive immigration scheme feared that the Doukhobor “horde of paupers” would prove a financial liability rather than an asset. They assumed that the Doukhobors would either have to depend on charity for support, or else starve and freeze in their new prairie homes. Their evident productivity both on their land and in the workforce so soon after their arrival generated surprise and optimism: though they might need material support to start-up, they would not be dependent on charity for long.⁵⁰ While the

Doukhobors' general "industriousness" was worthy of remark, it was the Doukhobor women's labour that excited the most interest. They quickly earned a reputation for excellence in their handiwork and their housework alike,⁵¹ but it was their exceptional physical labour that received the most public attention. With most Doukhobor men away for weeks or months at a time hired out to other farmers or engaged in railway construction, Doukhobor women were left to manage the homesteads.⁵²

Their first order of business was to construct permanent homes. Despite limited tools, materials, and means, Doukhobor women built over ninety separate villages within the first year of their arrival on the prairie.⁵³ Without animal labour to spare, they were forced to haul construction materials themselves. Using simple two-wheeled carts, they transported large logs to their building sites. Where logs were unavailable, they constructed walls out of woven branches. Since they had no trowels they applied plaster to their walls with their bare hands. Their homes were judged to be of "first-rate" quality and "a marvel of ingenuity" given the limitations of their circumstances.⁵⁴ *Globe* correspondent Lally Bernard concluded that their construction work demonstrated their capacity as "'home makers' in the truest sense of the word."⁵⁵

With the men away at work, the Doukhobor women had to take care of the land as well as the home. They were eager to break the soil in order to ensure that their families would be fed through the winter. Unfortunately, each Doukhobor village, home to about a hundred people, only had one team of oxen or horses. These animals were required for transportation, and could not be spared for ploughing. Without animals to pull the ploughs, the Doukhobors would have a hard time preparing the land for planting, since there was only so much one woman could do with a spade and a hoe.⁵⁶ Some of the senior women remembered a tradition whereby young Russian women hitched themselves to ploughs to start the first furrows in a new field as a symbolic gesture to bless the land and ensure its fertility. The women suggested they draw from this tradition, working collectively to pull the plough to break the land more quickly and ensure their gardens got planted as soon as possible.⁵⁷

L. A. Sulerzhitsky, a Tolstoyan who accompanied the Doukhobors on their journey to Canada and diarized his observations and experiences, commented on the strange beauty of the "solemn" and "deeply moving" scene, as teams of women passed before him, their plows cutting into the soil. They seemed determined to succeed despite the physical strain, knowing that this effort was "necessary," each seeing it "as her duty." "Strong in spirit and in body," these women seemed "prepared to go around the earth's sphere in this harness" if need be.⁵⁸

"Lally Bernard" (*Globe* correspondent Mary Agnes FitzGibbon, who specialized in travelogues and human interest stories) framed this incident in the best possible light for her readers. The cooperative application of their "remarkable strength" allowed the women to complete the task without undue injury; their "innate dignity," "uncomplaining, untiring patience," as well as their "magnificent physique" gave them strength to overcome any obstacles they encountered.⁵⁹ Bernard admitted she was amused by Canadian women's "horrified expression" when they heard about the Doukhobor women's plow-pulling activity. Many who heard the story assumed that Doukhobor men must be "cruel" to use their women in this way, Bernard explained.⁶⁰ She assured her readers that this was not the Doukhobors' regular approach to field work. This was an exceptional event brought on by the exigencies of starting up on the prairies with no money, time, or tools to spare. The women "knew that the lives of their children and husbands depended on the effort they were willing to make" during their first year on the plains, and they chose to go the distance.⁶¹

A Russian newspaper, the *Juzhnoe Obozrenie*, reported in early 1900 that Canadians were “terribly upset” to see Doukhobor women harnessed to their ploughs. It took considerable effort for their advocates to explain that “if the Doukhobor women were pulling ploughs, it was of their own free will”; indeed, “nobody could make them do it against their will.” The *Juzhnoe Obozrenie* further explained that the ploughing had been done in the softest ground in order to plant potatoes, and that the women themselves considered this more efficient “than digging up the ground with a spade.”⁶²

Since the women who pulled the ploughs did not diarize their experiences, researchers are forced to infer their feelings about their work from other sources.⁶³ It is possible that some of the women resented their burden; however, immigration agents and sympathetic reporters who consulted the women were told that they did their work voluntarily, knowing that it was necessary for the health and welfare of their families and farms. The plough-pulling incident is commemorated with pride and respect amongst Doukhobors to this day. In story-telling, the incident is used to illustrate the Doukhobors’ legendary strength, perseverance, and ingenuity. It is highlighted in festival reviews of the Doukhobors’ history as an example of the community’s cooperative work ethic, and it is occasionally re-enacted.⁶⁴

Male Doukhobors used the women’s plough-pulling as proof of the group’s good-faith commitment to their Northwestern agricultural responsibilities in disputes with federal government authorities over the Doukhobors’ right to work their homesteads collectively in first decade of the 1900s.⁶⁵ To prove the efficacy of their communal approach, representatives of the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood pointed to the bushels of wheat and oats produced; the houses that had been built; the steam-powered mills, ploughs, threshers, and brick factories they had acquired; and the expensive flour mill they had installed. They pointed out that their land had “not only been tilled by the men, who are accustomed to it, but also by the women and the children, who worked till exhausted.” They reminded their readers that their wives had harnessed themselves to their ploughs, saying “we think that you did not forget it.” “If there exists no real liking for agriculture,” the petition asked, “what kind of women could you compel to put themselves before the plough?”⁶⁶

By August of 1899, the Doukhobors had acquired and broken in enough horses that they no longer need to harness womanpower to pull plows. Nonetheless, Doukhobor women continued to play a central role in fieldwork while their male counterparts were employed elsewhere.⁶⁷ Their faith-inspired belief in human equality meant that performing hard field labour did not necessarily constitute a transgression of gender roles or hierarchies within their community. Both their block settlement and their belief in communalism facilitated cooperation; their exceptional physical build (stockiness and muscularity) rendered them able to do hard physical labour. If there were any physical limitations associated with their sex, they were able to overcome them by pooling their labour both inside the home and outdoors.

While cooperation was crucial for the women’s successful management of large-scale construction and tillage projects under exceptional circumstances, it may well have had the biggest impact on their daily work. Farmers in Canada and the United States suspected that immigrant women worked harder than North American women at the turn of the century, and this seemed to be especially true of Doukhobor wives.⁶⁸ “Better to die at once than marry [a] Doukhobor man. Doukhobor women work just like slaves,” one reporter wrote, observing that the women continued to work in the fields well into the evening. “To a Canadian woman,” the reporter surmised, the Doukhobor woman’s lot in life “would surely be worse than death.”⁶⁹

With plow-pulling constituting a notable exception, the workload of a Doukhobor wife

may have been lighter than other Northwestern farm wives. In contrast to most homesteading farm wives, who had few if any neighbours in close range, Doukhobor wives lived in close proximity to friends and relatives, and could count on regular moral, material, and physical support.⁷⁰ Each of the Doukhobor homes was large enough to accommodate additions to the nuclear family – additional adults, or a second family unit. Though perhaps nostalgic for relatives left behind in Russia, Doukhobor women did not endure their hardships in isolation: their work and their leisure time were social as a matter of course. As a result, women living in Doukhobor communities may well have experienced less stress and anxiety in their homes than women living in isolation on their 160-acre farms. Doukhobor women may also have been at less risk for spousal abuse, since husbands and wives were subjected to the constant supervision of community members, and either spouse could request a divorce if the marriage proved unhappy. Visitors to Doukhobor villages remarked on the “tenderness” and “kindness” and “perfect harmony” that seemed to govern each “crowded household.”⁷¹

Coooperation had clear economic as well as social benefits. Child care, food preparation, gardening, and barn work could be pooled, freeing some of the women for labour in the fields or for waged labour outside of the community. Their competency on the land freed men to maximize waged-labour opportunities off of the land during their early settlement period: they could extend their paid employment while their female kin tended to the fields. Women’s management of the homesteads ensured that there would be food on their tables, clothes on their backs, and roofs overhead. Reducing the need to hire farm labour or purchase market goods meant that the men’s earned income could be saved up to purchase necessary tools and livestock for the villages. Pooling their labour and resources allowed Doukhobor men and women to accelerate their “progress” in the first year in Canada, and establish a solid foundation for growth.⁷²

As a result of this effort, the Doukhobors quickly transitioned from “peasantry” to “prosperity.”⁷³ Though their approach was criticized in the press for its backwardness, their productivity was marked as admirable. The *Moose Jaw Herald* reported in December 1899 that a school inspector who had spent much time investigating the Doukhobors was “favourably impressed” with their “industry and perseverance.” He explained that the women were almost completely responsible for “home duties...the men being away at employment that brings ready cash.” He acknowledged that they were “far behind in their ideas of the smaller proprieties of modern civilization,” but he was confident that with schooling, they would rapidly improve.⁷⁴ In a subsequent report, the *Moose Jaw Herald* supposed that the Doukhobors’ “record so far will compare most favourably with any class of immigrants, English-speaking or otherwise, that have settled in the west.” Any “impartial” observer could testify to their “frugality, cleanliness and high code of morality,” while their critics were surely malcontents “whose avowed business it is to find fault with the Government wherever possible.”⁷⁵

By the end of 1899, 7,300 Doukhobors were working 1,114 acres (ten percent of it broken by womenpower) on 2,336 homesteads using 336 horses, 205 cows, 180 oxen, 129 ploughs, and 150 wagons.⁷⁶ By 1903, the Doukhobors’ investment in livestock and machinery surpassed what the average prairie farmer could access on his own. This investment further accelerated their productivity, and they earned enough to repay their creditors within a few years of their settlement in Canada.⁷⁷ They also exceeded the three-year cultivation requirement on their homestead land, which was an impressive accomplishment when nearly half of all Northwestern homesteaders failed to meet the cultivation requirement or gave up trying.⁷⁸ The Doukhobors’ hard work and speedy loan repayments confirmed that “these are no paupers who

claim the right to enrol themselves as Canadians.”⁷⁹ Bernard estimated that no other class of settler “could show as good a record for industry and thrift as the Doukhobors.”⁸⁰

In reflecting on the Doukhobor women’s contribution to this overall record and responding to their critics, Bernard went so far as to suggest that their exceptional productivity and resourcefulness – as demonstrated in their housekeeping, needlework, home construction, *and* fieldwork – demonstrated that they were “especially adapted to act as pioneers of civilization in our far western country.”⁸¹ In so doing, Bernard suggested that strength, fortitude, and the willingness to do whatever necessary to succeed would lay a proper foundation for Northwestern society. Many critics of the Doukhobors in particular, and of the Liberal government’s immigration policy more generally, would beg to differ. The housekeeping and needlework were fine; the house construction and especially the plowing were not. Though in reality many Northwestern farm women had to perform “men’s work” (hard physical field labour) in the course of their homesteading duties, this was far from ideal. Turn-of-the-century white women – even farm women – were not supposed to do “men’s work,” much less the work of animals.

It is worth noting that men also performed animal labour in the first years of the Doukhobors’ settlement. When available, Doukhobor men hitched themselves to plows alongside or instead of women in 1899, a point that has not been remembered in repeated retelling of the event.⁸² A few years later, a small number of men took the place of horses in wagon pulling. In 1902, the *Prince Albert Advocate* reported a team of “ten Doukhobors – six men, and four women” with the women in the lead, “two abreast” hauling a wagon laden with thirty bushels of wheat. The women in particular “appeared to be quite at home and took no notice of the onlookers who lined the sidewalks.”⁸³ William McDonald of Kamsack wrote to the Secretary of the Department of the Interior to express his concern regarding the community of Doukhobors that refused to eat anything but bread and water, rejected leather boots in favour of shoes fashioned out of binder twine, and hitched themselves in teams of twenty-five or thirty men to haul loads of flour forty miles.⁸⁴ The Minister of the Interior was becoming concerned that the communities that were protesting the exploitation of animals would prove unable to “properly farm the land which they now occupy,” since their time and energy was consumed with transportation labour.⁸⁵

While the 1899 plough-pulling event reflected first-year necessity, the 1902 and subsequent events reflected radicalization of the beliefs of a small sector of the Doukhobor population: the “Sons of God,” or “Sons of Freedom,” who began to feel that exploitation of animal labour was a contravention of Doukhobors’ beliefs. This group set about liberating their farm animals in the summer of 1902, and embarked on a cross-prairie march in the fall. In contrast to women’s plow-pulling which the Doukhobors continue to recollect with pride, the men’s cart-pulling is not generally commemorated. Indeed in the fall of 1902, Deputy Minister of the Interior James Smart was assured that most Doukhobors “ridicule” the cart-pullers; as such, their numbers were not expected to grow.⁸⁶

In some respects the cart-pulling should have attracted more public attention (and opprobrium) because it reflected an explicit rejection of human/animal labour conventions rather than an exceptional practice emerging out of particular pioneering conditions. Yet images of Doukhobor men harnessed to carts have not supplanted images of Doukhobor women harnessed to plows. This might demonstrate that transgressing gender ideals in agricultural labour was more disturbing to turn-of-the-century Canadian audiences than evidence of religious extremism. Given the voluminous public discourse concerning the value of agricultural work and of Northwestern development to Canada’s national destiny, it might matter that the women were

pulling a *plow* rather than a wagon. While a wagon was not necessarily exclusively agricultural a plow was. The evidence does not explicitly suggest this, but it may be that women engaged in breaking or penetrating “virgin soil” in order to plant their seeds transgressed gender boundaries *symbolically* as much as physically. In this image, women seem to have overcome the need for men. Perhaps timing explains why the women’s plow-pulling attracted more attention than men’s cart-pulling: as the initial event, the women’s plow-pulling might have been more shocking. Male Doukhobor cart-pulling might have seemed anticlimactic a few years later. It may be that the cart-pulling was quickly eclipsed by a much racier image, far more useful to those wanting to illustrate the Doukhobors’ strangeness: the Freedomites’ first nude parade, conducted in 1903.

I suspect that part of the explanation for why the image of Doukhobor women pulling plows attracted so much attention at the time and since is because it showed the advantage of cooperative over individual effort. I suspect that a woman hoeing on her own, or even a field full of women working with their own hoes would not have made quite the same impression (indeed the women who were thus engaged alongside their sisters-in-harness are not usually included in the narrative or graphic descriptions of this event). Likewise, I suspect that an image of a single woman trying to drag a plow through prairie soil would have been summarily dismissed as silly and entirely anomalous, not to mention ineffective. A single woman working alone posed little threat; women demonstrating that they could overcome physical limitations and gender norms by pulling their weight *together* were another matter entirely.

The fact that the women successfully plowed over one hundred acres of unimproved land without men or animals by combining their effort was at the same time impressive and cause for concern. This violated three primary assumptions in nation-builders’ policies concerning Northwestern development: that it should be led by men; that it should be based on independent effort; and that white settlers’ cultures were “superior” to the Aboriginal peoples they supplanted and the racialized “others” who were barred from immigration. The work runs counter to contemporary gender ideals; the cooperation runs counter to contemporary liberalist ideals; and the transgressive behaviour violates racialized cultural expectations.

The cultural and agricultural development of the Northwest reflected the assumptions embedded in Canada’s “liberal order framework.”⁸⁷ Canada-as-nation was constructed on a liberal order consensus, whereby the “culture” of the new nation was defined politically and economically rather than “ethnically.” Though presumed “white” and “Christian,” Canada was designed, from the start, as a negotiation between Anglophones and Francophones, Catholics and Protestants. The liberal order cultural glue that bound these “separate solitudes” together privileged equality, liberty, and private property ownership for the “individual person.”⁸⁸ The paradox of this paradigm, in its nineteenth-century form, was that freedom, equality, and property rights were permitted to some, and not to others. Women, non-white newcomers, and indigenous peoples were, for the most part, denied civil rights in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.

The liberal order framework was imposed in the Northwest on the landscape itself as well as on the people who occupied it. The Dominion Lands Survey resolutely divided land into neat parcels that could be assigned to individual farmers and their families. This pragmatic approach to land assignment “resonates,” in Canadian rural historian Catherine Wilson’s words, “with constructed meaning.”⁸⁹ Individual land ownership was thought to be a mark of personal empowerment, maturity, and progress. It suggested stability and commitment to the land, both

literally and figuratively. Property and propriety were linked in nineteenth-century Canadian thinking: private property ownership connoted economic, social, and political “respectability,” and qualified a person for enfranchisement.⁹⁰

The Northwestern development project was predicated on the assumption that farms would be worked in severalty, a point which was made abundantly clear in the Department of Indian Affairs’ efforts to break down the “tribal system” favoured by indigenous Plains peoples.⁹¹ Sharing their resources on a communal basis prevented Plains Aboriginal peoples from “civilization” and “progress,” since they supposedly lacked motive to accrue wealth or “improve” once all of their basic needs were made.⁹² Nomadism (practical for a people who depended on the hunt) was antithetical to social stability according to Canadian nation-builders; living hand-to-mouth supposedly left families vulnerable to starvation, while paradoxically leaving them with too much spare time and energy to invest in mischief and rebellion. Distributing labour responsibilities throughout the community within a “tribal system” seemed to force women to work as “beasts of burden” alongside men to ensure that the whole community was fed, housed, and clothed. Government officials responsible for Indian Affairs and Canada’s Interior believed only through the hard and constant work of agricultural labour could a man hope to advance properly, and relieve his wife of her bestiality. As a farm wife, her labours would ease, since she could retreat to the comfort of her husband’s hearth while trusting in his capacity to provide.⁹³

In the severalty model newly imposed on the Northwest, the success of a man and his family (if he had one) depended entirely on his ability to maximize his labour and material resources, sacrificing comfort and taking on considerable risk in order to survive.⁹⁴ As Sarah Carter makes clear in *Lost Harvests*, the federal government’s strategies and policies concerning Northwestern resettlement and development were *not* based on scientific study confirming that individualism was the best way to maximize agricultural efficacy on the prairies. Rather, the individualist model reflected nation-builders’ *assumption* that individualism was the preferable way to proceed. The primacy of the individual in the Northwest reflected Euro-Canadians’ *cultural* expectations rather than *agricultural* realities.

“Self-support” produced “self-respect,” Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney pointed out in 1890, reflecting his peers’ assumption that individualism was preferable to communalism.⁹⁵ In contrast, the communal system was presumed to produce laziness on the part of weaker members of the group, and worry on the part of the stronger (who would presumably see the fruits of their labours swallowed up by their unproductive and hungry peers).⁹⁶ Shifting Aboriginal peoples into an individualist model of production would alleviate the tension that sharing supposedly produced in their communities, while relieving white settlers’ anxiety concerning competition with farmers who benefitted from shared resources and government support.⁹⁷

In the early 1870s, the federal government negotiated treaties with indigenous inhabitants, and surveyed a grid pattern onto the Northwestern land, marking out quarter sections designed for individual tenure following the example set by the American Public Lands Survey System. Where native hunters and their communities had roamed, white farmers and their families would now settle; where there had been “wilderness” there would now be “order,” inflected on the land and its population alike.

Homesteading in the Northwest was generally supposed to be arranged on individualistic lines, with a male farmer at the helm supported by his wife and their children, but sluggish migration of “desirable” newcomers had made Canadian immigration authorities open to

compromise on the issue of severalty. Exceptions were made to accommodate groups of white Christian farmers such as the Mennonites who had much to offer in terms of agricultural experience, but whose culture precluded individualistic farming. By an 1872 Order-in-Council the Mennonites were given permission to “obtain contiguous lots of land, so as to enable them to form their own communities.”⁹⁸ The Mennonites had a positive reputation: they were productive farmers who posed no major threat to the overall Northwestern settlement project.⁹⁹ It was on the basis of their good example that the government of Canada agreed to extend similar terms to the Doukhobors, who were compared both culturally and agriculturally to the Mennonites.¹⁰⁰ The Mennonites had proved themselves a “prosperous” and “valuable class of citizens” in the Northwest, and the same could be expected of the Doukhobors.¹⁰¹

According to Doukhobor theology, individual property ownership promoted hierarchical power relationships based on relative material wealth. This in turn promoted greed, jealousy, and ultimately violence to defend one’s property against those who would seek to steal it. In light of this conviction, the Doukhobors petitioned for the right to take up homesteads as collectives rather than as individuals when negotiating the terms of their immigration. When Peter Kropotkin, a Russian socio-anarchist connected to the British Tolstoyans, contacted James Mavor, a professor of political economy at the University of Toronto and one of Canada’s foremost social scientists, to discuss the possibility of the Doukhobors’ immigration to Canada in 1898, he explained that the Doukhobors would manage well on even “modest land,” but required “land in a block; they cannot live on isolated farms.”¹⁰² In forwarding this request to James Smart, Deputy to the Minister of the Interior, Mavor explained on 8 September 1898 that the Doukhobors wanted “land in a block or reserve, similar to the Mennonite Reserve.”¹⁰³

In anticipation of the Doukhobor migration, the federal government amended the Dominion Lands Act in 1898 to clarify exceptional terms for “associations of settlers who desire to engage in co-operative farming.” Under this amendment, cooperative farmers were permitted to construct a “hamlet or village” on their conjoined land rather than having to build a house on each grant. They were also permitted to meet their cultivation requirement by working the same proportion of shared land as independent farmers had to do work on their individual grants.

Sharing labour and resources rendered Doukhobor farms productive and self-sufficient.¹⁰⁴ One of the major objections to the Doukhobors’ settlement in Canada was the concern that the Doukhobors would become an economic burden. That the Doukhobors’ communalism provided them an economic advantage should have been a stroke in their favour. However, the Doukhobors’ exceptional self-sufficiency was viewed as problematic in some circles.¹⁰⁵ There was no question that they could farm: it was their methods that were called into question. It seemed *unfair* somehow that the Doukhobors could progress so quickly by pooling their labour and assets.¹⁰⁶ While most nineteenth-century Northwestern farmers benefitted, on occasion, from neighbourly cooperation for large-scale building and harvesting projects, these were usually *ad hoc* arrangements made in the spirit of reciprocal helpfulness prior to farm union movements of the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, the Doukhobors embraced cooperation at the end of the nineteenth century as a faith-inspired way of life. As such, they could depend on one another for regular and ongoing support, which reduced their overheads and accelerated their progress. Self-sufficient communal farming gave the Doukhobors a competitive advantage over other farmers who were “compelled” to settle individually on the grain market; at the same time, it deprived local merchants of the opportunity to profit from sales of supplies to the community.¹⁰⁸ As such, the economic benefit of having them as neighbours was low.¹⁰⁹ Bloc

settlement also prevented the Doukhobors from integrating socially and culturally into Canadian society.¹¹⁰

Establishing themselves in villages was consistent with the Doukhobors' newly adopted communal organization. Pooling labour and resources had an ideological purpose as an expression of their anti-materialist religious convictions. It was also practical: working collectively, the Doukhobors could reduce individual overhead and quickly establish themselves in new locations – an important strategy for a group accustomed to fleeing from persecution, or subjected to repeated forced exile. In Canada, communal settlement allowed the Doukhobors to develop their agricultural land rapidly and to benefit from sharing the remuneration for waged labour off of the land. In fact, Superintendent of Immigration Frank Pedley reported in December of 1899 that the Doukhobors were “in a prosperous condition” given their tenure of less than one year in Canada, and they had already repaid about eighty percent of the value of the Government's loan to them.¹¹¹ Their “excellent” progress received similar accolades the following year: they had homes, some work animals, “are working hard and adapting themselves to the west country.”¹¹² Their homes were well constructed and well kept, and curious investigators were made to feel quite welcome.¹¹³

From a Canadian perspective, this evidence of agricultural success was a boon but it came at a cost: living in insulated communities, not needing to transact business or interact socially with their neighbours, meant that the Doukhobors' cultural adjustment was likely to be slow. As Robert Russell Smith of Devils Lake pointed out in his letter to the Minister of the Interior: “as long as the Doukhobors are allowed to live in villages they will not be Canadianized.”¹¹⁴ In response, Deputy Minister of the Interior James Smart explained the Doukhobors' rights as per the Hamlet Clause. He admitted that the Doukhobors' communalism was “a very unsatisfactory thing” but explained that it could not easily be reversed “once established.” He noted optimistically that the Mennonites (on whose precedent the Doukhobors' communal settlement had been allowed) were beginning to separate themselves from their communes into a more individualistic pattern, and he expected a similar adjustment from the Doukhobors.¹¹⁵ Smart had made an effort to make such a transition easier for the Doukhobors by ensuring that the Doukhobors had access to enough “vacant” land near their land reserves to encourage “young men” to become neighbours on their own farms instead of workers in the communal system.¹¹⁶

Other sympathetic voices commended the Doukhobors for their initial agricultural accomplishment, and even credited their communal approach for their rapid success, yet eagerly anticipated their shift to individualism. William McCreary, Liberal MP for Selkirk, Manitoba, understood the Doukhobors' desire to settle in communities, given their immigration to a foreign land and need to “depend upon one another for assistance and support.”¹¹⁷ He deemed it a “healthy sign,” however, that many Doukhobors were applying for individual homesteads and “were desirous of settling among the English-speaking people.”¹¹⁸ Even Lally Bernard, who usually described the Doukhobors in glowing terms, concluded “all the theories of men and angels could not alter that great law of nature that makes the power of individuality assume its proper place in the ordering of the whole.”¹¹⁹ In other words, the Doukhobors' ultimate conversion to the communal approach was natural, inevitable, and imminent. “Communism was not adapted to the practical working of everyday life,” she explained. It worked well enough in exceptional circumstances, but would not serve once “ordinary conditions” had been established.¹²⁰

In the meantime, communism served Doukhobor communities well. Critics of the communal system were concerned that weaker members took advantage of stronger members. Though this was certainly a risk, social pressure and moral suasion could act as powerful motivators for members of communal groups such as the Doukhobors, who celebrated “toil and peaceful life” as a central precept of their ethnoreligious identity. As Lally Bernard explained to *Globe* readers, “everyone took it for granted that work was expected of them, and consequently they worked.”¹²¹ Conversely, everyone took it for granted that they had a right to access the resources they needed.¹²² Government officials were surprised to see that when a Doukhobor woman needed flour, she simply took what she needed from the community’s stores without proof or penalty.¹²³ Group members could take pride in, and be valued for, the contributions they made to the community’s welfare; in turn, they shared equally in the rewards of their combined labour.¹²⁴ Elderly Doukhobors whose bodies were too tired for hard labour supervised the work of younger generations, and taught skills as well as spiritual lessons.¹²⁵ Bernard observed that as a result, there was “no sign of [Doukhobor] old people being regarded as useless members of the household.”¹²⁶ Likewise, the essential contribution Doukhobor women made to community welfare both inside the home and outside of it as part of a cooperative labour system meant that they accrued “significant degree of meaning, status, and power,” as their work was both valued and celebrated within the community. Doukhobor and Mennonite women working within a collective context did not share the concerns of other “farm wives,” whose labour received little public recognition, much less value in public discourse. Nor did they share the concerns of “the suffragist [or] the ‘ideal woman’” at the turn of the century.¹²⁷

The Doukhobor women’s plough-pulling took place at a time when Canadian women were already questioning their subordination vis-à-vis their male counterparts. The “new woman” – one who was better educated, interested in the professions, migrating to the city, and exercising a modicum of newfound independence – threatened to unseat nineteenth-century gender hierarchy. At the same time, maternal feminists were responding to perceived social decay by advocating for moral reform, and presenting themselves (the “mothers” of the nation) as the people best qualified to cleanse and heal both within their homes and in the public sphere. As these women carefully advocated for improved rights on the basis of their maternal respectability, arguing that they could be smart and strong while remaining feminine, the image of Doukhobor women taking the place of horses in the field was not helpful; if anything, it supported opponents to the women’s rights movement, who feared the women’s equality would lead to their unnatural masculinization. The Doukhobor women’s exhibition of strength and ingenuity was not useful to the would-be female lawyers and physicians, nor was it useful to social reformers who based their advocacy on the idea that they could prepare supper and tuck the children into bed before attending their temperance society meetings.¹²⁸

Within their own communities, Doukhobor women had many of the rights and freedoms other Canadian women sought in the broader public sphere socially, economically, and politically. Doukhobors believe that the “spirit of God” resides as a “spark” or “*iskra*” in the heart of each person. As such, class, race, and sex are (in theory, if not in practice) of no consequence, since everyone is animated by the spirit of God from within. This belief in the equality of all humanity is the foundation for their rejection of materialism (which sets up false hierarchies and provokes jealousies) and their pacifism. The Doukhobors had been led by a female, Lukeria Kalmakova, in the late nineteenth century, whose leadership term and sagacity were remembered by community members with fondness and respect. Women were permitted – indeed expected – to speak at meetings. They played a key role in family governance, performed

essential labour contributing to the Doukhobor economy, and protected the vitality of Doukhobor collective memory by leading hymns and prayers and correcting any recitation errors. At the turn of the century, white middle-class social reformers revelled in new-found opportunities to speak in public and lead WCTU meetings and Sunday schools.¹²⁹ Such opportunities were not novel to the Doukhobor women who came to Canada in 1899.

Canada discriminated against women in its allocation of homestead land: while single men could apply for homesteads, single women could not.¹³⁰ The individualism and independence nation-builders idealized in their discourse concerning Northwestern development and agrarian achievement were clearly gendered as masculine.¹³¹ Independence was not expected of respectable women, who were presumably to remain under the protection of their male superiors.¹³² Indeed, the ability to provide for and protect one's wife without exploiting her for field labour was constructed as a marker of white masculine achievement; conversely, having to depend on her to work as a "beast of burden" reflected poorly on a husband's masculinity as well as his race.¹³³

This gendered policy was based on the assumption that single men could manage the hard field labour required while single women could not.¹³⁴ This assumption reflects gendered cultural biases and not the reality of farm life. Sandra Rollings-Magnussun points out, for example, that single American women who were allowed to claim homesteads independently proved "no less capable than men at the task";¹³⁵ Sarah Carter cites examples of women succeeding on farms in the United States, Great Britain, and also in Canada.¹³⁶

Managing a homestead without the support of a spouse and offspring was tough for either gender, and many men who tried it found it extraordinarily challenging, if not totally impossible. Attending to field and farmhouse at the same time was often more than a single human body could manage. As this became clear after a season or two of struggle, many homesteading bachelors quickly sought wives who could manage the domestic side of farm work and relieve their loneliness. Widowers' speedy remarriage to replace wives who had succumbed to illness and exhaustion also suggests the value male homesteaders put on female support on the farm.¹³⁷ Indeed, married homesteaders tended to do better than single men or single women because they had two people working in common cause, and the success or failure of a homesteading operation often hinged on the heavy and constant labour performed by homesteaders' wives.¹³⁸ Having the option to rely on one's wife to help in the field or to generate extra income to meet financial need could make the difference between success and failure on a prairie farm, particularly in the tenuous start-up years.¹³⁹

Yet farm women's labour was often "invisible" and devalued, especially as farming expanded from subsistence to business.¹⁴⁰ In a market economy model, the saleable product and the direct labour applied to produce it appears to have "value." In contrast, work that indirectly supports production does not appear to have "value" and indeed can become "invisible."¹⁴¹ While the male farmer's successful planting and harvest appears evident in standard econometrics, the female farmer's labour – every bit as essential to the overall productivity of a farm unit – has often been undervalued and "invisible" to historical actors (and until recently, to historians as well).¹⁴² Using a market standard to evaluate labour value on a family farm creates the false impression that there are two labour streams (male and female) instead of one intertwined and interdependent whole.¹⁴³

Women's farm work often centered around maintaining the home and sustaining the family, while men managed the field and its produce. Though both indoor and outdoor work were essential to a smooth farm operation, it was the outdoor work that defined "farming" as

vocation and occupation alike. The assumption that “farming” was outdoor work and that indoor work was a “wife’s” duty is implied in the Doukhobors’ immigration records. Passenger lists documenting Doukhobor arrivals in 1899 vary in the level of detail provided; in fact, one passenger list is missing altogether. In less detailed lists, all Doukhobors (men, women, and children) are categorized as having “agriculture” as their occupation. Where more detail is provided, the occupation listing is “farmer” for men, “wife” or “spinster” for women, and “child” for the underaged. By comparison, no men are labelled as “bachelors.” Though wives, spinsters, and children were engaged in farm labour alongside their male counterparts, the women’s marital status eclipsed their farm labour as the most important description of their occupation.¹⁴⁴

The products of “men’s work” – larger-scale crop or livestock sales – were the bread and butter of the homesteader’s vocation. Even if men’s work appeared to generate the most income, products of women’s work – dairy, preserves, and textiles, for example – could make a valuable contribution to the home economy, whether they were sold outside the home or consumed within it.¹⁴⁵ Yet whatever earnings she made were cast as “pin money,” supplementing the family income on the side, rather than an integral component of the overall farm economy.

The separate sphere ideology that delineated between remunerated labour in the public sphere (largely the domain of men) and domestic labour inside of the home (largely the domain of women) at the turn of the century did not cut as neatly in the context of farm production where necessity (brought on by start-up, weather, harvest, market, illness, death) often demanded a *continuum* between male-female and outside-inside tasks. Farm tasks might have been gendered, but there were significant overlaps and opportunities for relief labour, with men and boys pitching in on domestic work and women and girls pitching in on field work. Though it was more likely for women and girls to step into the men’s boots than it was for men and boys to take up washing, cooking, or infant care,¹⁴⁶ regular opportunities to cross the threshold between household and workplace meant that gender delineation was perhaps less pronounced for rural than for urban families.

That said, crossing the boundaries that supposedly separated gendered work to chop wood (women) or to watch the baby (men) was often defined as “helping out.” Framing these transgressive activities as “helping” emphasized the temporary and exceptional nature of the shift.¹⁴⁷ One suspects that men could perform domestic “women’s work” without compromising their manhood if they were “protecting” and “providing” for their wives under exceptional circumstances. Meanwhile, women who more regularly performed “men’s work” to supplement husbands’ or fathers’ labour could remain feminine by emphasizing contribution to family, as opposed to vocational preference, contribution to the economy, or expression of physical fortitude. As Nellie McClung pointed out, so long as women performed such labour exceptionally and for other peoples’ benefit, “no person objects.” “Working for someone else is very sweet and womanly,” she explained. Performing “men’s work” on occasion was fine so long as “she is not doing these things for herself and has no legal claim on the result of her labour.”¹⁴⁸

Thus many farm women found themselves in a paradoxical situation. Late nineteenth-century nation-builders who idealized the agrarian way of life held farm wives up as models of industry and contentment, even if the reality of her situation demanded overwork and produced correspondent physical deterioration.¹⁴⁹ Though they might have felt like “another domestic beast of burden” on equal footing with a farmer’s “horse and oxen,”¹⁵⁰ their valuable contributions in the field as powerful animals conflicted with turn-of-the-century discourses of

female dependency. It even contradicted emerging feminist discourses on the prairies, which tended to advocate for women's rights on the basis of their feminine or "maternal" qualities.¹⁵¹

The heavy labour that Doukhobor women were performing was not necessarily unusual: other Northwestern farm women were also having to pitch in with house construction or field work under exceptional circumstances.¹⁵² Yet women performing exceptional "male" labour on isolated farms did not attract the same attention – they were not as *visible* – as a team of highly scrutinized immigrant women breaking prairie soil. While the image of women harnessed to the plough might have "horrified" audiences concerned for the women's welfare and for the broader implications of this transgression (both of gender role expectations, and of the expectation for individualism), Doukhobor women likely enjoyed more rights and privileges, and a lighter workload overall, than the average farm-wife struggling alone with her husband and children.

Their hard work and resourcefulness proved that they were good agriculturalists. Whether they were a good cultural fit or not was another question entirely. In his famous definition of the "Immigrants Canada Wants," former Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton reflected that a "quality" immigrant was "a stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children."¹⁵³ Sifton did not call for a "gentle" wife, or a "dependent" wife, or a wife who modeled the frail femininity that was fashionable at the end of the nineteenth century. A "stout" woman, who had a solid and strong body suitable for hard work and child bearing, and an honourable and loyal character, was projected as the ideal counterpart to a "stalwart" husband. Sifton was not speaking specifically about this Doukhobors in his commentary, but he might as well have been; indeed, he remained their champion despite their increasing unpopularity.

Sifton's sentiments notwithstanding, public outcry over the Doukhobors' approach to farming makes it clear: exemplary productivity was not enough for many Canadians, anxious about the kind of national identity the country might create at the dawn of the twentieth century. For them, it was not only the ends that mattered; in some respects, the means were more significant. One suspects that a farmer who failed in the "right" way was deemed more valuable than the farmers who succeeded in the "wrong" – in fact, the evidence suggests that the Doukhobors' success, predicated as it was on their communal approach to asset and labour management, was more threatening than the failure of farmers who could not manage on their own. From the public's perspective, cultural affinity was more valuable than agricultural success.

The image of Doukhobor women harnessed to their plows attracts attention because it challenges assumptions and conventions pertaining to male/female and human/animal physical and labour divides. Separate spheres ideology insisted that respectable women eschew "men's work," much less equine and bovine labour. It also challenges the ideal of individualism implicit in Canada's agricultural approaches and, more particularly, its homesteading policies. The wedlocked male-female team was promoted as the ideal unit of farm production. Working together, this group of women could succeed where single men or women, or even the marriage male-female pair, would surely fail. Finally, it challenges racial assumptions concerning the "cultural sophistication" of whiteness. These women were racially "white," but their physical prowess, rejection of frailty, performance of fieldwork, and cooperative approach set them apart from the turn-of-the-century domestic and feminine ideal. In short, this image demonstrates the less-than-delicate balance between the real labour demands of agriculture and the cultural ideal to which newcomers were expected to conform. This activity might have made the difference between success and failure, feast and famine, yet it is not generally celebrated as a victory over

challenge, or a model of progress outside of the Doukhobor community. These women were moving forward *agriculturally*; *culturally*, it was backwards all the same.

ENDNOTES

¹ Present-day Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba.

² Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1869-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995).

³ "Doukhobors at St. John," *Globe*, 24 January 1899, 1-2; "Yorkton Enterprise" *Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 May 1899, 1; "The Immigration Question Discussed at Length," *Globe*, 8 July 1899, 25; *Globe*, 15 December 1899, 6.

³ Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1869-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995) Francis et al, *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* (Toronto:

³ "Doukhobors at St. John," *Globe*, 24 January 1899, 1-2; "Yorkton Enterprise" *Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 May 1899, 1; "The Immigration Question Discussed at Length," *Globe*, 8 July 1899, 25; *Globe*, 15 December 1899, 6.

⁴ See, for example, R. Douglas Francis et al, *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation* (Toronto: Nelson Education, 2012), 84 and John Herd Thompson, *Forging the Prairie West* Toronto: Oxford University Press). *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 22 June 1899, 1.

⁵ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970): 177.

⁶ R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, eds., *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007) xi n. 7.

⁷ Catherine Wilson, *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land, and Liberalism in Upper Canada 1799-1871* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009): 7.

⁸ Formerly Rupert's Land, purchased from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869. Doug Owrarn, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 3, 5, 219; Berger, *Sense of Power*, 4, 52, 126, 177; Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, 49; Jean R. Burnet with Howard Palmer, *"Coming Canadians": An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988): 25.

⁹ Adam Shortt, as cited in Carl Berger, ed. *Imperialism and Nationalism, 1884-1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought* (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969) 80. See also Owrarn, *Promise of Eden*, 3. Sarah Carter reminds us to pay attention to the connections between colonialism, nation-building, and immigration (see "'Disastrous for the Woman and for the Reputation of Canada': Debating Women as Farmers in Western Canada 1900 – 1930" [paper for Agricultural History Conference, Banff AB, June 2013] 10, for example).

¹⁰ Berger, *Sense of Power*, 150; Owrarn, *Promise of Eden*, 4-5.

¹¹ Most of the immigrants Canada did receive in the late nineteenth century were British. While British immigrants were preferred for cultural reasons, they did not gravitate to the prairies or experience much success as farmers once there. Between 1867 and 1890, British immigrants represented about sixty per cent of total arrivals; by 1911, this number fell slightly to fifty-five per cent. Only eighteen per cent of these newcomers homesteaded between 1897 and 1913. In comparison, thirty-three per cent of American immigrants and twenty-nine per cent of immigrants from Continental Europe took up farming upon arrival. Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998): 113, 120-123.

¹² If Canadian, American, British, or French immigrants could not be found, "Northerners" were preferred. "Northerners" were perceived as stronger and heartier than other races, and Canada was perceived as a "Northern" country that, because of the harshness of its climate and geography, demanded fortitude of would-be settlers. Interestingly enough, though Russia and Canada have similar climates, Russian immigrants were categorized as Eastern Europeans rather than Northern ones. Berger, *Sense of Power*, 53, 62-63, 128-131, 149; W. L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,

1961), 86-89; David Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision of the Prairie West" in *The Prairie West as Promised Land*, 92.

¹³ In 1873, the newly created Ministry of the Interior took responsibility for administering federal resources, land, immigration, and Aboriginal affairs.

¹⁴ As cited in Brown and Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 55-56.

¹⁵ Since whiteness was a large part of the Canadian ideal, racialized peoples, no matter their merit or effort, would have difficulty fitting in. Their racialization would ultimately prevent them from passing as "Canadians." They were admitted into the country when their labour as absolutely required, but their welcome – such as it was – was temporary.

¹⁶ Brown and Cook, in *A Nation Transformed*, suggest that welcoming the Doukhobors was the "most striking example" of Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton's "willingness to open Canada's doors to a variety of immigrant groups" (63).

¹⁷ W. I. Ford of Swan River, letter to the editor of the *Tribune*, sent from McCreary to Smart, 6 Feb 1899 ("Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC])

¹⁸ "Projet Important" *Manitoba, Le (Le Metis)*, 25 January 1899, 2.

¹⁹ Geo. Whalley to the Editor of the *Enterprise*, *Yorkton Enterprise*, 17 May 1900.

²⁰ "For Newcomers," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 6 April 1899, 8.

²¹ "Where is the Benefit?" *Macleod Gazette*, 12 October 1900, 4.

²² "Immigration" *Edmonton Bulletin*, Friday, 3 May 1901, 4; "Immigration Discussed," *The Globe*, 13 April 1901, 24; "Parliament," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 April 1901, 2.

²³ Hall, "Clifford Sifton's Vision," 92; "Immigration" *Edmonton Bulletin*, Friday, 3 May 1901, 4.

²⁴ "Our Social Future," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 25 May 1899, 4.

²⁵ "The Doukhobors," *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 26 January 1899, 4; "The Immigration Question Discussed at Length," *Globe*, 8 July 1899, 25; "Immigration Estimates...The Doukhobors," *Globe*, 27 July 1899, 4; "The Doukhobors," *Montreal Gazette*, 16 December 1899, 24; "Laving up Trouble for the Country," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 2 February 1899, 2; Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History" [*Canadian Historical Review* 81 no. 4 (2000)], 645.

²⁶ "The Immigration Question Discussed at Length," *Globe*, 8 July 1899, 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ As cited in "Western Settlers" *Globe*, 28 June 1899, 6.

²⁹ As cited in "Second Shipload of Doukhobors" and "Notes" *Globe*, 21 February 1899, 8.

³⁰ For a discussion of the settler/citizen/subject paradigm, see Ashleigh Androsoff, "Spirit Wrestling: The 'Doukhorbor Problem' in Twentieth-Century Canada," book manuscript under revision.

³¹ "Outbreak of Fanaticism," *Globe*, 18 October 1902, 16; Grant, Geo. W. "Saskatoon of Today," *Phoenix*, 21 November 1902, 1, 8; Helen D. Atwater, "The Doukhoborts or Spirit-Wrestlers" *The Independent* 52 (10 May 1900), 1123; C. I. S. "A Day Among the Doukhobors," *Canadian Magazine* 26 (January 1906), 283; Katherine Louise Smith, "The Doukhobors of Canada - A Community of Siberian Exiles Which is Being Brought to Great Financial Prosperity by a Russian Captain of Industry," *Craftsman* 12 (April 1907), 64.

³² "Spirit Wrestlers" *Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 September 1898, 2.

³³ "The Doukhoborts," *Globe*, 17 October 1898, 6; "The Doukhoborts," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 27 October 1898, 7; "At the Capital: Immigration of the Doukhoborts to Canada," *Globe*, 30 November 1898, 7; "Spirit Wrestlers" *Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 September 1898, 2.

³⁴ "At the Capital: Immigration of the Doukhoborts to Canada: Seven Thousand Coming" *Globe*, 30 November 1898, 7; "The Doukhoborts," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 27 October 1898, 7.

³⁵ "The Doukhoborts," *Globe*, 17 October 1898, 6.

³⁶ "Doukhobors at St. John," *Globe*, 24 January 1899, 1-2; L. A. Sulerzhitsky, *To America with the Doukhobors*, Michael Kalmakoff, trans. (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 1982), 40; "Clean Bill of Health," *Globe* (23 January 1899), 1, and "The Doukhobors," *Globe* (28 January

1899), 1. See also “Clean Bill of Health,” *Globe*, 23 January 1899, 1; “The Doukhobors,” *Globe*, 28 January 1899, 1; “Doukhobors Welcomed: By Montreal Ladies on their Way to the Northwest,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 May 1899, 5; as cited in Joseph Elkinton, *The Doukhobors: Their History in Russia, Their Migration to Canada* (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1903), 190; John Philip Stoochnoff, *Doukhobors as they Are* ([Penticton, B.C.: n.p.], 1961), 67; and Simma Holt, *Terror in the Name of God: The Story of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), 25-26.

³⁷ “Doukhobors at St. John,” *Globe*, 24 January 1899, 1-2; “The Doukhobors,” *Qu’Appelle Progress*, 26 January 1899, 4.

³⁸ As cited in Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 190. Also cited in Stoochnoff, *Doukhobors as They Are*, 67, and Holt, *Terror in the Name of God*, 25-6.

³⁹ Sulerzhitsky, *To America with the Doukhobors*, 40; “Doukhobors,” *St. John Daily Sun*, 24 January 1899, 1; “Doukhobors go West,” *Globe*, 28 January 1899, 22; Captain G. C. Evans, as cited in Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 205-206; “Doukhobors at Work,” *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 9 February 1899, 1.

⁴⁰ “Clean Bill of Health: The Doukhobors on the Lake Huron Leave Halifax for St. John,” *Globe* (23 January 1899), 1, and “The Doukhobors,” *Globe* (28 January 1899), 1. See also “Clean Bill of Health,” *Globe*, 23 January 1899, 1; “The Doukhobors,” *Globe*, 28 January 1899, 1; “Doukhobors Welcomed: By Montreal Ladies on their Way to the Northwest,” *Montreal Gazette*, 11 May 1899, 5; as cited in Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 190; Stoochnoff, *Doukhobors as they Are*, 67; and Simma Holt, *Terror in the Name of God: The Story of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), 25-26.

⁴¹ “Coming Our Way: Tide of European Emigration Turns to Canada,” *Globe*, 16 May 1899, 1-2.

⁴² “Doukhobors at St. John,” *Globe*, 24 January 1899, 1-2; “The Doukhobors,” *Qu’Appelle Progress*, 26 January 1899, 4.

⁴³ “Doukhobors,” *St. John Daily Sun*, 24 January 1899, 1.

⁴⁴ “Doukhobors All Right,” *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 16 February 1899, 2

⁴⁵ In the Northwest Territory, Districts of Saskatchewan and Assiniboia, called the Saskatchewan Reserve, the North Reserve, the South Reserve, and the Good Spirit Lake Annex (Holt, *Terror in the Name of God*, 24; Koozma Tarasoff, “Doukhobor Survival Through the Centuries” (*Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 27 no. 3 [1995], 10.

⁴⁶ Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, “Canada’s Most Wanted: Pioneer Women on the Western Prairies” (*CRSA/RCSA*, 37 no. 2 [2001]), 228.

⁴⁷ “Does this Look Like Ruin?” *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 17 February 1899, 1; Speers, General Colonization Agent to Frank Pedley, 26 Aug 1899 (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).

⁴⁸ On 28 July 1899, McCreary informed Deputy Minister of the Interior James Smart that “every single man and woman that will go out, are now at work. About 100 to 150 are working with Mennonite farmers at \$20 per month and others at Railway work.” See also E W Hubbell to Smart, 17 April 1899, (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).. This was consistent with Sifton’s vision that agricultural settlers would seek to supplement their incomes by hiring out. It was this belief that led Sifton to favour agricultural settlers over industrial workers in his immigration policies (Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic*, 112, 118).

⁴⁹ J. S. Crerar to W. F. McCreary 20 August 1899 (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).

⁵⁰ “Does this Look Like Ruin?” *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 17 February 1899, 1; “Pauper Immigration,” *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 18 May 1899, 4; “Who Is Eligible,” *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 1 December 1899, 4; “Count Tolstoi is dead; Was Peasant’s Friend,” *Globe*, 21 November 1910, 4; “Doukhobors Costly Citizens” *Macleod Gazette*, 7 November 1902, 4; Victor O. Buyniak, “Documents of Western History - Doukhobor Immigration: The Potato Dilemma” (*Saskatchewan History*, 38 no. 2 [1985], 72; [1991] “By June 1899 communities were beginning to form, and Doukhobors began to move out of their barracks in order to build villages. The first year – a difficult one – was made somewhat more tolerable by donations: English Quakers provided \$1,4000; the Tolstoyan community in Purleigh, England sent

\$5,000; and Tolstoy himself gave \$17,000. The Doukhobors put together \$16,500 out of their own pockets. The Canadian government contributed another \$35,000, which normally was paid as a bonus to shipping agents. In a matter of months these funds were exhausted, and the settlers still had not made even the most elementary purchases of livestock, agricultural machinery, or building materials” (Jeremy Adelman, "Early Doukhobor Experience on the Canadian Prairies," [Journal of Canadian Studies 25 no. 4 (1991), 115.

⁵¹ Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 102-103. Lally Bernard, "With The Doukhobors," *Globe*, 9 September 1899, 5-6; Lally Bernard, "Doukhobor Men and Women: A Visit to the Homes of the New Settlers in the Northwest," *Globe*, 30 September 1899, 5; Lally Bernard, "Work for Doukhobors: National Council of Women to Find Employment for Them, the Means of Enabling the Doukhobor Immigrants to Assist Themselves During Winter Months," *Globe*, 22 November 1899, 5; Lally Bernard, "Story of the Doukhoborts: How and Why they Came to Settle in Canada," *Globe*, 6 July 1901, 14; Lally Bernard, "Doukhobor Men and Women: A Visit to the Homes of the New Settlers in the Northwest," *Globe*, 30 September 1899, 5. Also "Women's Art Exhibition" *Globe*, 13 October 1903, 5 and "Doukhobor Embroidery" *Globe*, 3 September 1906, 5; "With the Doukhobors," *Globe*, 4 November 1899, 10.

⁵² This was the case for other newcomers as well. Jaroslav Petryshyn discusses this phenomenon with respect to Ukrainian settlers at the turn of the century in *Peasants in the Promised Land: Canada and the Ukrainians, 1891-1914* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1985): 76, 115. Lally Bernard, "With the Doukhobors," *Globe*, 9 September 1899, 5-6. Adelman, "Early Doukhobor Experience on the Canadian Prairies," 116.

⁵³ Carl Tracie, interview by Jim Hamm, transcript 85-97 (tapes 13-14), Jim Hamm Fonds, University of British Columbia Library; Maude, *A Peculiar People*, 180-81; Lally Bernard, "With the Doukhobors," *Globe*, 9 September 1899, 5-6; Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 217. Lally Bernard, "Work for Doukhobors," *Globe*, 22 November 1899, 5. Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 99.

⁵⁴ Ibid.; "Women for Settlers," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 5 October 1899, 4.

⁵⁵ Lally Bernard, "Work for Doukhobors," *Globe*, 22 November 1899, 5.

⁵⁶ Lally Bernard. "Doukhobor Men and Women: A Visit to the Homes of the New Settlers in the Northwest" *Globe*, 30 September 1899, 5; "Women for Settlers," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 5 October 1899, 4

⁵⁷ Eli A. Popoff, *Stories from Doukhobor History* (Grand Forks, B.C.: Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ, 1992), 136.

⁵⁸ Sulerzhitsky, *To America with the Doukhobors*, 153-154.

⁵⁹ Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 216; Lally Bernard, "With the Doukhobors," *Globe*, 9 September 1899, 5-6.

⁶⁰ Lally Bernard, "Progress of Doukhobors...Doukhobors Spreading their Money Freely," *Globe*, 24 November 1900, 5, 9, Elkinton, *The Doukhobors*, 101; "Yorkton Enterprise," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 15 May 1899, 1; *Le Manitoba*, 24 May 1899, 3; *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 22 June 1899, 1. See also Lally Bernard, "Doukhobor Men and Women," *Globe*, 30 September 1899, 5.

⁶¹ Lally Bernard, "Doukhobor Men and Women," *Globe*, 30 September 1899, 5.

⁶² *Juzhnoe Obozrenie* of 25 January [6 February 1900] (No 1048) entitled 'Russians in Canada V' as cited in Woodworth, John, comp., trans., and annotated. *Russian Roots and Canadian Wings: Russian Archival Documents on the Doukhobor Emigration to Canada*, with a foreword by Vladimir Tolstoy. (Toronto: Penumbra Press, 1999) 147.

⁶³ Many of the Doukhobors who immigrated at the turn of the century were illiterate, eschewing the written word in favour of an oral culture for pragmatic and spiritual reasons; "The Doukhobors," *Qu'Appelle Progress*, 26 January, 1899, 4; "Here they Are," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 26 January 1899, 1; George Woodcock and Ivan Avakumovic, *The Doukhobors* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977) 13; Nicholas B. Breyfogle, "Building Doukhoborria: Religious Culture, Social Identity and Russian Colonization in Transcaucasia, 1845-1895" (*Canadian Ethnic Studies* 27 no. 3 [1995], 28.

⁶⁴ Carl J. Tracie, "Toil and Peaceful Life": *Doukhobor Village Settlement in Saskatchewan, 1899-1918* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1996), 61. Images of the original event

were reproduced in Koozma J. Tarasoff, *A Pictorial History of the Doukhobors* (Saskatoon, Sask.: Modern Press, 1969), 78, and Koozma J. Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava: The Doukhobors* (Grand Forks, BC: Mir Publication Society, 1982), 53. Popoff relates the story in "Turning the Sod by Woman Power," *Stories from Doukhobor History*, 135-7. In 1955 eighteen women from Verigin, Sask., re-enacted this event in traditional costume. "Doukhobors Take Part in Pion-Era Festival," *Inquirer* 2, no. 8 (19 September 1955), 21-2. An image of this re-enactment is featured in Tarasoff, *A Pictorial History*, 241. The event was portrayed in Anne J. Plotnikoff, "Historical Pageant: The Story of the Doukhobors" (Grand Forks, B.C.: Iskra Publications, 1987), 27, a play performed in 1987. Women's plow-pulling was made into a contest in the annual Doukhobor Sports Day sponsored by the Doukhobor Cultural Association (a photo of the 1975 contest can be found in Tarasoff, *Plakun Trava*, 188). The event is also depicted in "*Doukhoborets Tot*," an image designed by John Kalmakov to commemorate the Burning of Arms centenary in 1995.

⁶⁵ Working their homesteads collectively meant that some homesteads were fully improved while others were left alone. The unimproved land appeared to some of the Doukhobors' neighbours to be "available." Non-Doukhobors who wanted access to Northwestern land began petitioned the Ministry of the Interior to release the unworked land from the Doukhobor reserves and open it for general settlement. This logic was also applied in an effort to reduce the size of Indian Reserves in the Northwest; it was also used as a justification for forcing Aboriginal peoples into individual land tenure (Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990) 193, 199.

⁶⁶ Since their productivity was beyond reproach, the Doukhobors concluded that the government had been persuaded to harass them by "merchants" and "ranchers" who resented their communal lifestyle and economic structure and sought to "destroy it." (Petition to the Minister of the Interior and all People in Canada from the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood of the Doukhobors in Canada, 28 January 1907 as cited in "Make an Appeal for Christian Charity: Doukhobors Refuse to Take Oath, Point to Teaching of Christ," *Daily Phoenix* (Saskatoon), 14 March 1907, 1.

⁶⁷ "Doukhobor Progress," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 July 1901, 3.

⁶⁸ Mary Neth, "Gender and the Family Labor System: Defining Work in the Rural Midwest" (*Journal of Social History* [Spring 1994]): 563.

⁶⁹ C.I.S., "A Day Among the Doukhobors," *Canadian Magazine* 26 (January 1906): 282-4.

⁷⁰ Rollings-Magnusson discusses the challenges isolation posed in "Canada's Most Wanted," 225 and 235. See also Kathryn McPherson, "Was the 'Frontier' Good for Women?: Historical Approaches to Women and Agricultural Settlement in the Prairie West, 1870-1925" (*Atlantis* 25 no. 1 [Fall/Winter 2000]), 77.

⁷¹ Bernard, "Story of the Doukhoborts," *Globe*, 6 July 1901, 14; Bernard "Doukhobor Schools: Question of Educating our New Western Settlers," *Globe*, 12 January 1901, 12; Bernard, "Doukhobors at Home: Pleasant Experiences amid the New Western Settlers," *Globe*, 8 December 1900, 9, 13.

⁷² Adelman, "Early Doukhobor Experience on the Canadian Prairies," 116.

⁷³ "At the Capital: Doukhobor Settlers Making Good Progress," *Globe*, 2 December 1899, 12.

⁷⁴ "Who Is Eligible," *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 1 December 1899, 4.

⁷⁵ "Britain Now Knows What Canada Means by Preferential Trade," *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 22 December 1899, 5.

⁷⁶ "At the Capital: Doukhobor Settlers Making Good Progress," *Globe*, 2 December 1899, 12; Tracie, "*Toil and Peaceful Life*," 94.

⁷⁷ The Immigration Commissioner counted 4 grist mills, 3 sawmills, 8 steam threshers, and 2 steam ploughs in 1904, at a time when few homesteaders operated mammoth steam engines to pull gang-ploughs. In August 1903, the Doukhobors bought 4 more steam threshers and 500 horses (300 in a single day)" (Adelman, "Early Doukhobor Experiences on the Canadian Prairies," 119). "Doukhobor Progress," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 26 July 1901, 3; "Britain Now Knows What Canada Means by Preferential Trade," *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 22 December 1899, 5.

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- ⁷⁸ Rollings-Magnusson, "Canada's Most Wanted," 225.
- ⁷⁹ Lally Bernard, "With the Doukhobors," *Globe*, 9 September 1899, 5-6. See also "The Doukhobors: Mrs. FitzGibbon Sets Right Some Wrong Impressions," *Montreal Gazette*, 16 December 1899, 25; "Women for Settlers," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 5 October 1899, 4; Maude, *A Peculiar People*, 182.
- ⁸⁰ Lally Bernard. "With the Doukhobors" *Globe*, 9 September 1899, 5-6.
- ⁸¹ Lally Bernard, "Work for Doukhobors," *Globe*, 22 November 1899, 5.
- ⁸² *Juzhnoe Obozrenie* of 25 January [6 February 1900] (No 1048) entitled 'Russians in Canada V', as cited in Woodworth, *Russian Roots and Canadian Wings*, 147.
- ⁸³ As cited in "The Doukhobors," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 31 October 1902, 6.
- ⁸⁴ Wm. McDonald, Kamsack, 27 July 1902, to Secretary Department Interior, (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ⁸⁵ ? [Smith?] Commissioner to Pedley, 11 July 1902 and Deftal to Smart, 7 November 1902 (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ⁸⁶ Deftal to Smart, 7 November 1902, (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ⁸⁷ McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework."
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 624-626.
- ⁸⁹ Wilson, *Tenants in Time*, 5.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5, 25.
- ⁹¹ Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 16-17.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 198.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 16-19, 146-148, 193-194, 198.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ⁹⁵ As cited in Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 196.
- ⁹⁶ As cited in Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 197.
- ⁹⁷ *Saskatchewan Herald*, 20 August 1887, as cited in Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 197.
- ⁹⁸ As cited in William Janzen, *Limits on Liberty: The Experience of Mennonite, Hutterite, and Doukhobor Communities in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 20.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ¹⁰⁰ Peter Kropotkin, writing on the Doukhobors' behalf, indicated that the Doukhobors would do well even on "modest land" but required "land in a block; they cannot live on isolated farms." Prince Kropotkin to James Mavor, 31 August 1898, James Mavor Papers, University of Toronto Library.
- ¹⁰¹ *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 18 November 1898, 4; "At the Capital: Immigration of the Doukhoborts to Canada," *Globe*, 30 November 1898, 7; "Spirit Wrestlers" *Edmonton Bulletin*, 22 September 1898, 2; "The Doukhoborts: Spirit-wrestlers Who Are Coming to Canada," *Globe*, 17 October 1898, 6; "The Doukhobors," *Calgary Weekly Herald*, 27 October 1898, 7; "The Doukhobors," *The Qu'Appelle Progress*, 26 January 1899, 4. See also James M. Richtik, "The Policy Framework for Settling the Canadian West, 1870-1880" (*Agricultural History* 49 no. 4 [October 1975]), 626.
- ¹⁰² Prince Kropotkin to James Mavor, 31 August 1898, James Mavor Papers, University of Toronto Library. Adelman, "Early Doukhobor Experience on the Canadian Prairies," 113.
- ¹⁰³ James Mavor to James A. Smart, 8 September 1898, James Mavor Papers, University of Toronto Library.
- ¹⁰⁴ Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 35.
- ¹⁰⁵ As was the self-sufficiency of other communally-organized groups, such as the Hutterites. Kelley and Trebilcock, *The Making of the Canadian Mosaic*, 126; John C. Lehr, and Yossi Katz, "Crown, Corporation and Church: The Role of Institutions in the Stability of Pioneer Settlements in the Canadian West, 1870-1914" (*Journal of Historical Geography* 21 no. 4 [1995]), 420; Janzen, *Limits on Liberty*, 35. Ultimately western Canadian farmers would come to embrace the cooperative movement in order to survive the new economic order of the twentieth century (Brown and Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 144; Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 111.

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- ¹⁰⁶ H. A. Livingston. "The New Babel on the Plains" *The Globe*, 2 July 1904, 67.
- ¹⁰⁷ Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 111. This would change in the early years of the twentieth century, with, for example, the founding of the Territorial Grain Growers' Association in 1901. Canadian farmers would soon advocate for limited cooperative activity to ensure market and asset protection. The Doukhobors were later commended by their neighbours for constructing grain elevators and opening them for general use, and for participating in the Saskatchewan Farmers' Union, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and the Canadian Wheat Board, "Heritage Village Acquires Doukhobor Elevator," *Kamsack Times*, 29 March 2001; Magocsi, *Canada's Peoples*, 432.
- ¹⁰⁸ H. A. Livingston. "The New Babel on the Plains" *The Globe*, 2 July 1904, 67.
- ¹⁰⁹ "The Doukhobors: Misgivings Regarding them being Fulfilled - the Country would be better without them," *Macleod Gazette*, 19 September 1902, 1. Zubek, John P. and Patricia Anne Solberg. *Doukhobors at War*. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1952), 89; "Outbreak of Fanaticism: Story of the Doukhobor Abandonment of Stock," *Globe*, 18 October 1902, 16.
- ¹¹⁰ "Immigration Policy: Mr. Alfred Owen on Galicians and Doukhobors," *Globe*, 8 September 1900, 6. "Chez nous et autour de nous," *Le Manitoba*, 24 May 1899, 3. "Les Doukhobors," *Le Manitoba*, 18 January 1899, 2.
- ¹¹¹ "Britain Now Knows What Canada Means by Preferential Trade," *Moose Jaw Herald Times*, 22 December 1899, 5.
- ¹¹² "Telegraphic," *Edmonton Bulletin*, 10 August 1900, 1; "Immigration Policy: Mr. Alfred Owen on Galicians and Doukhobors" *The Globe*, 8 September 1900, 6.
- ¹¹³ Lally Bernard, "Doukhobor Schools: Question of Educating our New Western Settlers," *Globe*, 12 January 1901, 12; "Immigration Discussed: The Doukhobors, Are They and Galicians Good Settlers?" *Globe*, 13 April 1901, 18.
- ¹¹⁴ Robert Russel Smith, Devil's Lake to Minister of Interior, 19 November 1902 (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ¹¹⁵ Smart to Robt. Russel Smith, Devils Lake, 25 November 1902; Several months later, he assured an agent working on the Doukhobors' behalf that the "having the land *en bloc* is not of any great moment as no doubt they will soon be scattered all over the country (Smart to Archer, 23 March 1900) (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ¹¹⁶ Smart to McCreary, 14 July 1899 (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ¹¹⁷ "Immigration Discussed: The Doukhobors, Are They and Galicians Good Settlers?" *Globe*, 13 April 1901, 18.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Lally Bernard, "Doukhobors at Home: A Trip through their Settlements in the Northwest" *Globe*, 7 October 1899, 8.
- ¹²⁰ Ibid.
- ¹²¹ Bernard "Doukhobor Schools: Question of Educating our New Western Settlers," *Globe*, 12 January 1901, 12; H. A. Livingston. "The New Babel on the Plains" *The Globe*, 2 July 1904, 67.
- ¹²² "The Doukhobors" *Macleod Gazette*, 6 September 1901, 3.
- ¹²³ Smart to Archer, 23 March 1900, (Doukhobors Permitted to Emigrate Canada, Land Reserved for Them pt 1 [1898-1938], LAC).
- ¹²⁴ This was the ideal and some communities achieved it, at least temporarily. The Doukhobor communal system did not always operate so smoothly, and some Doukhobors who lived in British Columbia's communal system during Peter Petrovich Verigin's leadership term recall that some families seemed to be more equal than others.
- ¹²⁵ Bernard, "Doukhobors at Home: Pleasant Experiences amid the New Western Settlers" *Globe*, 8 December 1900, 9, 13.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Royden K. Loewen, “‘The Children, the Cows, My Dear Man and My Sister’: The Transplanted Lives of Mennonite Farm Women, 1874-1900” (*Canadian Historical Review* 73 no. 3 [1992]): 350.

¹²⁸ Loewen has suggested a similar issue for Mennonite women, who “would find their role models in neither the suffragist nor the ‘ideal woman’” (“‘The Children, the Cows, My Dear Man and My Sister’,” 350).

¹²⁹ See for example Linda Ambrose, “‘What Are the Good of Those Meetings Anyway?’: Early Popularity of the Ontario Women’s Institutes” (*Ontario History*, 87 no. 1 [Spring 1995]) 4 and Lucille Marr, “Sunday School Teaching: A Women’s Enterprise” (*Histoire Social – Social History*, 26 no 52 [November 1993]).

¹³⁰ Initially, single women were not explicitly excluded; eventually, they were. See Sandra Rollings-Magnusson, “Spinsters Need Not Apply: Six Single Women Who Attempted to Homestead in Saskatchewan Between 1872 and 1914,” *Prairie Forum* 34 no. 2 (Fall 2009): 357-380; Sarah Carter, “‘Daughters of British Blood’ or ‘Hordes of Men of Alien Race: The Homesteads-for-Women Campaign in Western Canada,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 29 no. 4 (Fall 2009): 267-286.

¹³¹ Catherine Cavanaugh, “‘No Place for a Woman’: Engendering Western Canadian Settlement,” (*Western Historical Quarterly* 28 no. 4 [Winter 1997]): 497.

¹³² Carter, “Disastrous for the Woman and for the Reputation of Canada,” 5.

¹³³ Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 18-19; See Carter, “Disastrous for the Woman and for the Reputation of Canada,” 16.

¹³⁴ *Nor’West Former*, editorial 5 September 1912: “some women might be capable of managing farms of their own but ‘the average woman is lacking in the physical strength and natural independence and resource so necessary in a homesteading undertaking’” See Carter, “Disastrous for the Woman and for the Reputation of Canada,” 10, 12, 16.

¹³⁵ Rollings-Magnusson, “Spinsters Need Not Apply,” 362.

¹³⁶ Carter, “Disastrous for the Woman and for the Reputation of Canada,” 13: “Architects of the West knew that women were capable of the hard work and deprivation required of homesteaders, but it was useful to insist that they were not, just as the skills of Aboriginal farmers were deprecated.” Indeed, one need not look far to find non-white women performing back-breaking physical field labour (most enslaved field gangs working in the plantation Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were composed of women of African descent [Roberts, “Sunup to Sundown,” 165, 176, 194-195]).

¹³⁷ Nellie McClung, *In Times Like These*, 114.

¹³⁸ “Homesteaders” were, by definition, men, as women were not permitted to take up homesteads except under special circumstances. Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 115. Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 39-40, 58-59, 75-79, 96, 99; Rollings-Magnusson, “Spinsters Need Not Apply,” 362.

¹³⁹ Rollings-Magnusson, “Canada’s Most Wanted,” 225-227, 230, 235.

¹⁴⁰ See for example Mary Neth, “Gender and the Family Labor System: Defining Work in the Rural Midwest” (*Journal of Social History* [Spring 1994]), 564; Joan C. Williams, “Domesticity as the Dangerous Supplement of Liberalism” (*Journal of Women’s History* 2 no. 3 [Winter 1991]), 73.

¹⁴¹ Richard W. Rathge, “Women’s Contribution to the Family Farm” (*Great Plains Quarterly* 9 [Winter 1989]): 37.

¹⁴² Rollings-Magnusson, “Canada’s Most Wanted,” 226.

¹⁴³ Rathge, “Women’s Contribution to the Family Farm,” 36.

¹⁴⁴ See for example <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/e/e143/e003555700.jpg>

¹⁴⁵ Rollings-Magnusson, “Canada’s Most Wanted,” 231.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 227; Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 114.

¹⁴⁷ Neth, “Gender and the Family Labor System,” 565.

¹⁴⁸ McClung (1916) as cited in Carter, “Homesteads for Women.”

¹⁴⁹ Linda J. Borish, “‘Another Domestic Beast of Burden’: New England Farm Women’s Work and Well-Being in the nineteenth century” (*Journal of American Culture*) 83-84.

¹⁵⁰ “Farmers’ Wives,” *Massachusetts Plowman* (1845) as cited in Borish, “Another Domestic Beast of Burden,” 83.

¹⁵¹ McPherson, “Was the ‘Frontier’ Good for Women,” 83.

¹⁵² Rollings-Magnusson, “Canada’s Most Wanted,” 230.

¹⁵³ This article was published nearly twenty years after his administration, commenting on Canada’s post-WWI immigration scheme; even so, it so aptly reflects his turn-of-the-century immigration policies that it reads like a defense of them. This quote is so widely accepted as summative of his administration that it is often cited without noting its later genesis. Sir Clifford Sifton, “The Immigrants Canada Wants,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, 1 April 1922, 16, 32-4.