

"We Have Never Allowed Such A Thing Here...":

Social Responses to Saskatchewan's Early Sex Trade, 1880 to 1920

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research

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By

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Abstract

Despite what the title suggests, Saskatchewan had a booming sex trade in its early years. The area attracted hundreds of women sex workers before Saskatchewan had even become a province in 1905. They were drawn to the area by the demands of bachelors who dominated Canada's prairie west.

According to Saskatchewan's moral reformers, however, the sex trade was a hindrance to the province's Christian potential. They called for its abolishment and headed white slavery campaigns that characterized prostitution as a form of slavery. Their approach stood in contrast with law enforcement's stance on the trade. The police took a tolerant approach, allowing its operation as long as sex workers and their clients remained circumspect. Law enforcement's approach reflected their own propensity to use the services of sex workers as well as community attitudes toward the trade. Some communities were more welcoming of sex workers, while others demanded that police suppress the trade. Saskatchewan's newspapers also reflected differing attitudes toward the trade. While Regina's *Leader* purveyed a no tolerance view of the sex trade, Saskatoon's *Phoenix* and *Star* held more tolerant views. Saskatchewan's newspapers reveal that as the province's population increased and notions of moral reform gained popularity, police were challenged to take a less tolerant approach. However, reformers' efforts to end the sex trade dwindled with the onset of the First World War and attitudes toward sex workers shifted drastically as responsibility for venereal disease was placed largely on women who sold sex.

Using government and police records, moral reform and public health documents, and media sources such as newspapers, as well as intersectional analysis of gender, race, class, and ethnicity, this examination of Saskatchewan's sex trade investigates the histories and social responses to the buying and selling of sex, revealing the complex and, at times, contradictory place of sex workers and the sex trade in Saskatchewan's early history.

Acknowledgments

I researched and wrote this thesis on Treaty 6 territory, where I have lived most of my life as a settler implicit in colonialism. I wrote "We Have Never Allowed Such A Thing Here..." while the Idle No More movement for indigenous sovereignty and resistance emerged, a movement that I have participated in as a settler-ally. This work was written, in part, to trouble dominant colonial histories, to draw attention to the sex trade's location within colonial culture, and to historicize and uncover colonialist practices in relation to the making and maintenance of Saskatchewan.

Dr. Pamela Downe has been a significant contributor to my growth as a scholar. This research is beholden to her teachings and instructions. Thank you for being an excellent teacher, Pam. And thank you for investing in me.

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For the sex workers, known and unknown, who laboured in the North-West Territories and
Saskatchewan from 1880 -1920

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INTRODUCTION:

THAT "NOT GUILTY" VERDICT

At 11:00 P.M. on 27 January 1910, much to the fury of the judge overseeing the proceedings, notorious brothel madame Babe Belanger was found not guilty of attempting to bribe an officer of the Royal North-West Mounted Police.¹ The evidence against Belanger included her letter to a constable offering one-hundred dollars a month in exchange for turning a blind-eye to her business. The all-male jury believed Belanger's claim that her letter was meant to be a joke, although it was clear that selling sex was how she made a living — she had three prior convictions of keeping a house of ill-fame.² The verdict provoked a storm of responses. While some argued for a no tolerance approach, the jury's ruling showed a surprising tolerance toward the sex trade.

Perhaps this lenient ruling was not as astounding as it seems. After all, Belanger's business served the kinds of men who made up her jury. In fact, men who sought to regulate prostitution were often clients of prostitutes.³ In 1883, Regina's Leader reported that the "red-coat of the Mounted Policeman is seen flashing in and out of [brothels] at all hours. As no arrests have been made the character of these visits may easily be surmised."⁴

These apparent contradictions and conflicts of interest were characteristic of the literal and figurative space that sex workers⁵ inhabited in Saskatchewan's early history. Such inconsistencies are apparent in social responses to Saskatchewan's sex trade and individual

¹ Saskatoon Phoenix, 28 January 1910.

² Ibid.

³ Phil Hubbard, *Cities and Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 46.

⁴ Regina Leader, 17 May 1883.

⁵ Throughout this thesis, I use terms such as sex work and the sex trade, both of which refer to a form of paid labour. I use the term "sex trade" to describe a collective community of workers who share a form of labour. The term also delineates a particular trade within a certain geographic context, that is the province of Saskatchewan. I also use the term sex worker, sex trade worker, and prostitute. In the context of this thesis, the terms refer to individuals who perform sexualized labour for money or other forms of compensation.

histories of those who bought and sold sex. These histories are documented by government and police records, moral reform and public health documents, and newspapers. This examination of Saskatchewan's sex trade investigates the histories of and social responses to the buying and selling of sex, revealing the complex and, at times, contradictory place of sex workers and the sex trade in Saskatchewan's early history.

The initial questions that led to this research arose during work experiences in core communities in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada and La Ceiba, Atlantida, Honduras. While working with non-governmental organizations that provided health services for diverse groups of people, some of which were sex workers, I began to consider how the sex trade developed within colonial contexts. I observed that much of the discourse surrounding the sex trade treated it as abject and as something that developed in a vacuum — separate from its surrounding communities and, by extension, society and culture.

I am implicated in histories of sex work and that knowledge has influenced my approach to the topic. My grandfather drove taxi in the 1960s in order to pay his tuition at the University of Saskatchewan and to keep his young family afloat. Some of his clientele were sex workers. He had an arrangement with them to wait to the end of their night and drive them back to their homes. He was paid well for the work. "They always tipped well," he said.⁶ A safe ride home was well worth the premium on the fare. My family's connection to the sex trade has made me consider how the flow of capital has the potential to implicate all of us in histories of sex work. Though certain discourses serve to create distance between sex workers and their surrounding communities, those boundaries are false. I write this as a woman whose family has technically "lived off of the avails"⁷ of sex work and as a person who recognizes that, by extension, the

⁶ Conversation with author, 1 March, 2011.

⁷ An offence detailed under Canada's Criminal Code, sections 238-239.

University of Saskatchewan is implicated in histories of sex work as it accepted my grandfather's tuition payments.

My approach has also been influenced by the works of other scholars. It was journalist and historian James Gray who first investigated the history of the sex trade in early western Canada. In *Red Lights on the Prairies*, Gray describes the urban landscape characteristic of Canada's prairies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries arguing that the sex trade owed its existence to the large bachelor population in the area and that social responses to the sex trade differed from one region to the next. Saskatchewan was shaped by the inclinations of men who drastically outnumbered women. In 1901, during a large population influx, men outnumbered women in the prairies 228,554 to 198,700.⁸ By 1911 there were 769,000 males but only 559,000 females. Regina had 13,616 men to 6,020 women and Saskatoon had 4,309 to 2,581.⁹ Men who settled in urban areas were usually single or husbands who left their families while they established themselves. Social institutions lagged behind population growth and, as a result, bars, brothels, and poolrooms were "almost the only recreational facilities available" to men.¹⁰ In Gray's interviews with male informants, he learned that buying sex and visiting brothels were common social activities. He writes, that "men visited brothels with the same casualness with which they went into a bar or poolroom, or even to church. It was not something done secretly, or with any semblance of a guilty feeling. It was done both singly and collectively as a matter of offhand choice over gambling or drinking."¹¹

Most scholarship investigating law enforcement in this era comments on the prevalence of police frequenting brothels, such as police historian Steve Hewitt's *Riding to the Rescue* and

⁸ James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), 9.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., xvii.

¹¹ Ibid.

historian William Baker's *The Mounted Police and Prairie Society*.¹² Police historian Stan Horrall investigates the early sex trade on the prairies from the perspective of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and reveals how the mounties changed their approach to policing the sex trade in order to accommodate shifting social attitudes.¹³

The sex trade became a subject of historical inquiry during the development of new social history in the 1960s and 1970s. In the context of western Canadian history, the sex trade has been explained as evidence of the so-called lawlessness characteristic of the early colonial settlement period in the wild west, which justified moral interventions and a strong police presence in the area. The histories have focused on the lives of mounties, judges, homesteaders, and labourers. If women or people of colour appeared in these stories, they usually played supporting roles. Though new western history sought to challenge male-dominated and un-inclusive interpretations by casting minoritized individuals and groups as actors in their own lives, women sex workers¹⁴ have not been afforded much, if any, personal agency.

These trends in interpretation have been influenced by beliefs about the nature of the sex trade and those involved in it, as well as a lack of sources coming from the perspectives of people involved in the sex trade. This lack of sources is a serious barrier to the accurate portrayal of sex work histories — one that sex workers are currently addressing by creating works that document their histories and experiences.¹⁵ This investigation is beholden to those works, though

¹² Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914 - 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); William Baker, *The Mounted Police and Prairie Society, 1873 - 1919* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre (CPRC), 1998).

¹³ S.W. Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," in Gregory P. Marchildon (Ed) *History of the Prairie West Series: Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939* (Regina: CPRC Press, 2009).

¹⁴ Through the process of this research, I did not find evidence of male sex workers. That does not mean, however, that there were no male sex workers. Rather, it is likely that there were male sex workers but little records of their presence remain.

¹⁵ For sources by sex workers see Nickie Roberts, *Whores in History: Prostitution in Western Society* (Grafton, Great Britain: HarperCollins, 1993); Annie Oakley, *Working Sex: Sex Workers Write about a Changing*

contemporary histories are not representative of sex work during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And, as I learned while I conducted this research, what can be known about Saskatchewan's early sex trade is largely based on evidence left behind by non-sex working individuals and institutions.

While searching for sources I contacted and visited archives, libraries, and museums across Saskatchewan in Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Regina.¹⁶ Much of the historiography indicated that the sex trade was located in urban areas. I hoped to locate sources that would allow me to dig deep into one particular sex workers' history. But the sources, especially any coming from the perspective of sex workers, were largely non-existent. What was available provided small windows into the lives and histories of sex workers, but did not give the whole picture. With this discovery, I reconsidered the direction of this research and planned to organize the work into chapters that would discuss urban community responses to the sex trade — a chapter for Saskatoon, a chapter for Regina and Moose Jaw, and a chapter for Prince Albert.

Industry (Berkley, CA: Seal, 2007); Michelle Tea and Laurenn McCubbin, *Rent Girl* (San Francisco: Last Gap, 2005); Amber Dawn, *How Poetry Saved My Life: A Hustler's Memoir* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013); Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, & Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *The Revolution Starts At Home: Confronting Intimate Violence Within Activist Communities* (Brooklyn: South End Press, 2011); Trina Ricketts, Susan Davis, Stacy Grayers, Candice Hansen, Jennifer Allan, and Chanel Martin, *History of Sex Work: Vancouver: Who We Were / Who We Are* (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 2011); and all issues of *\$pread Magazine*. Other sources that were heavily influenced and directed by sex workers include Susan Dewey and Patty Kelly, *Policing Pleasure: Sex Work, Policy, and the State in Global Perspective* (New York: New York University Press, 2011); Elizabeth Bernstein and Laurie Schaffner, *Regulating Sex: The Politics of Intimacy and Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005); Elizabeth Bernstein, *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Laura María Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2007); Deborah Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution As A Social Problem* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998); JaneMaree Maher, Sharon Pickering and Alison Gerard, *Sex Work: Labour, Mobility and Sexual Services* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013). And sources from John's perspective such as Chester Brown's *Paying For It: A Comic-Strip Memoir About Being a John* (Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2011) and Charles Bukowski's *The Pleasures of the Damned: Poems, 1951 - 1993* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

¹⁶ Time restrictions precluded me from in-depth review of town and city council minutes municipal police records.

But after months of reviewing police and attorneys' general records, I learned that the history of Saskatchewan's early sex trade was not an urban history.¹⁷

During eight months of research I found that there were certain groups and institutions that were concerned with the sex trade in Saskatchewan's early history. Sources such as government and police records, like the attorneys general files, public health, and RCMP records, moral reform documents such as that of Victoria McNaughton and the Women's Christian Temperance Union files, and local newspapers reveal how Saskatchewan's communities and institutions responded to the sex trade and how they perceived the sex trade in relation to and independently of themselves. I learned that while responses to the sex trade differed from one geographic location to the next, they were also part of broader territorial, provincial, national, and transnational movements and discourses.

There are few records of Saskatchewan's sex trade prior to Confederation when the Canadian government made prostitution a public order issue. The years 1880–1920 are particularly significant as they capture Saskatchewan's population boom, early urban development, the marked shifts from the sex trade as a relatively accepted economy to the popularization of reform and abolitionist movements and, finally, the trade's association with the venereal disease crisis. The years also encompass Saskatchewan's transition from being a part of the North-West Territories to becoming a province in 1905, as well as several economic booms and busts, which, no doubt, affected sex trade workers' financial decisions and living situations.

Women who sold sex came from varying backgrounds. Many of them were residents of the United States who came to Saskatchewan during the construction of the railroad.¹⁸ They frequently changed their names — a fact that made them difficult to track but also demonstrates

¹⁷ See "Chapter Two: Men in Blue, Men in Red, Men in Brothels" to learn more about the presence of Saskatchewan's sex trade in rural and urban areas.

¹⁸ Gray, *Red Lights*, 2.

the active role they played in defining their own lives.¹⁹ They chose interesting and diverse names for themselves; like Babe Belanger, who is discussed above, Knockout Duffy and Pussy Jake — who worked together in Moose Jaw's Empress Hotel. Little is known about Knockout and Pussy other than their chosen names and that they were both arrested by the mounted police for selling sex.²⁰

Saskatchewan's sex workers often worked in labouring camps and moved from one settlement project, such as new towns or cities, to other projects such as mining camps. They were drawn to the area for much the same reason men were — economic opportunities. Selling sex was often just one of multiple occupations they held.²¹ Some owned property and used it as a brothel, a tavern, boarding house, as well as their own home. If they were detained for any prostitution-related offences, their community was sometimes adversely affected. For example, when brothel madame Nellie Webb from Fort Edmonton was jailed for shooting a mountie in self-defence, her community panicked as she was the only midwife for miles and several women were expected to deliver at any moment.²²

Everyday realities for women in early Saskatchewan made it virtually impossible to survive without the financial support of men; but for some women, such support did not exist. A Saskatoon Baptist minister, Rev. R. E. Harkness, spoke of the issues women and girls faced in Saskatchewan's early economy:

Economic conditions are responsible for social evil. The outcome of high rent and high prices for all the necessities of life is all imaginable shame and disgrace and

¹⁹ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 136.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ In 1836, social worker Alexandre Parent-Duchâtelet published a survey of 'prostitutes' in France of which he learned had worked over 600 different occupations: couturières, seamstresses, breeches makers, coat makers, hairdressers, glove makers, lace makers, artificial flower makers, day labourers, dairymaids, workers in farms and vineyards, shop clerks, street peddlers, acrobats, gauze makers, fringe makers, furriers, hatters, helmet makers, shoemakers, bootmakers, brush makers, laundresses, ironers, jewellers, clockmakers, enamellers, burnishers and polishers, engravers, stage actresses and extras, music teachers, and servants.

²² Edmonton Bulletin, 3 November 1888.

evil. A young girl comes to the city for employment. She receives \$10.00 a week as wages. She can scarcely get a room for less than \$15.00 a month, or board for less than \$6.00 or \$7.00 a week. That condition means ruin for the girl.²³

In comparison, men made at least double what women made in the workforce, while women who sold sex could set their own rates and hours and make enough money to not only cover the bare essentials but keep some funds for savings. With limited work options and a demand for sexual services, a woman's choice to sell sex was logical. Though there were high demands for their work and they were usually consenting adults, they had to face interference by the state.

According to police records, the sex trade was present in both rural and urban spaces. Saskatchewan is widely known as a rural province. It is true that its rural population dominated its urban centres. In Saskatchewan's 1901 census, only 14,266 of the 91,279 residents lived in cities.²⁴ It was the booming rural population that was essential to the development of urban spaces.²⁵ Cities' economies relied heavily on servicing farmers, supplying them with grain-handling services, agricultural equipment and supplies, consumer goods, and banks that provided loans to cover farming expenses. Though the core of Saskatchewan's development and economy was agriculture, its cities held distinctly urban landscapes complete with industrial zones, residential areas, a bustling downtown, and economically and ethnically diverse citizenry. Train stations were the hub of urban activity and, consequently, most brothels were located close to the tracks. In rural areas, brothels were usually on the outskirts of town — a location that allowed sex workers to run their businesses without town council interference.²⁶

²³ Saskatoon Phoenix, 10 February 1913.

²⁴ Statistics Canada, "Population, urban and rural, by province and territory: Saskatchewan," retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/demo62i-eng.htm>, 19 April 2012; It was not until the early 1970s when the urban population counted higher than the rural.

²⁵ W. A. Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 148.

²⁶ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 145; Saskatchewan Archives Board, Royal North-West Mounted Police Criminal Investigations, 1908- 09, R-986, I.G.C., "Anonymous letter to Attorney General regarding Humboldt house of ill fame"; Gray, *Red Lights*, 97.

Some of the spaces where the sex trade was first established in Saskatchewan are areas where the buying and selling of sex continues. Saskatoon's 20th Street and surrounding avenues have functioned as a sexualized space where prostitution has thrived since the city's early establishment in the late nineteenth century. Investigations of the sex trade benefit from historicized approaches partly because historical research contextualizes the trade and explains the process in which it developed — not in a vacuum, but as part of 'settling' and 'development.' Urban Studies scholar Richard Symanski identifies the historical significance of sex trade locations in his socio-legal analysis of western prostitution, stating:

The specific locations of prostitution are determined by history and geopolitics:²⁷ where it began and where people came to accept it; where prostitutes helped blight a neighbourhood in establishing a niche where public opinion, financial interests and those who enforce laws have pushed prostitution or permitted it to remain.²⁸

Though specific areas have consistently been used for the buying and selling of sex, general social responses to the sex trade have shifted significantly. That is what this research is largely concerned with — how and why social responses to Saskatchewan's sex trade changed over time.

"Chapter One: A Precious Commodity, An Internal Enemy," explores moral reform and public health responses to Saskatchewan's sex trade in the context of burgeoning concerns over so-called white slavery and venereal disease.²⁹ During the early settlement era, people, largely of

²⁷ The theory that factors such as geography, economics, and demography influence the politics of state policy.

²⁸ Richard Symanski, *The Immoral Landscape* (Toronto: Buttersworths, 1981), 38.

²⁹ The umbrella term "venereal disease" was commonly used for much of the twentieth century and referred to sicknesses that were passed from one person to another during sexual contact. Sexual health educators have retired the terms and now commonly use "sexually transmitted infections" (STIs) and "sexually transmitted diseases" (STDs) to refer to sicknesses that can be passed between people during sexual contact. Some of these sicknesses can also be passed through activities that are not sexual, but involve fluid swapping, such as blood through sharing needles. People infected with or affected by STIs/STDs face social stigma and barriers to healthcare access. Much of the early language surrounding and treatment of STIs/STDs contributed to widespread misinformation about STIs/STDs, as well as the stigmatisation and, at times, the criminalisation of people infected with or affected by STIs/STDs. Though this thesis uses the dated term "venereal disease," as that was the term used in much of the primary sources, it is with an awareness of the stigma associated with the term. It is, in part, the aim

British descent, arrived in Saskatchewan with high expectations for the area's potential. They wanted the province to hold all the characteristics of a Protestant Anglo-Canadian society. But as more settlers arrived from varying ethnic, national, and class backgrounds, Anglo-Canadians became concerned with 'racial' and ethnic mixing. It was in this context that fears of white slavery, that is the sexual slavery of white women, emerged. Narratives of white slavery captured the attention of moral reformers across the western world. Saskatchewan's moral reformers launched aggressive campaigns to end the phenomenon. According to reformers, all prostitution was a form of coercion. They wanted to see the sex trade snuffed out and pushed for police to take a no tolerance approach to the trade. But with the onset of the First World War, concerns over white slavery diminished as Saskatchewan residents focused their attention on the war effort. Much like Saskatchewan's bachelor population, Canada's soldiers frequented brothels at home and abroad during time off. As cases of venereal disease spread through the Canadian Expeditionary Force, public health officials launched campaigns that pegged sex workers as the source of venereal disease. Popular views of prostitutes drastically shifted from victims in need of rescue to the embodiment of sexual danger.

"Chapter Two: Men in Blue, Men in Red, Men in Brothels," follows the police's response to Saskatchewan's sex trade. Initially, the North-West Mounted Police took a tolerant approach to the trade as they perceived it to be a "necessary evil"³⁰ on a prairie landscape dominated by men. In fact, their own constables frequented brothels regularly with little consequence. The mounted police's stance on prostitution set the precedent for other policing responses in the area as they were the first law enforcement presence in the territories and many municipal and provincial police worked as mounties before joining other forces. Their toleration of the trade

of this thesis to draw attention to the processes in which people infected with or affected by STIs/STDs became stigmatised in the context of the sex trade.

³⁰ Regina Leader, 17 May 1883.

starkly contrasted with the policies and expectations of their government, and the views of moral reformers. As social pressure mounted, Saskatchewan's police began to suppress the trade in individual cases when residents complained, reflecting attitudes and characteristics of particular communities. While Saskatoon and Moose Jaw residents were largely unconcerned with the trade, Regina had no tolerance for it and the city's police were expected to obliterate the trade wherever it manifested — a feat that proved to be impossible. Police received increased social pressure as concerns for 'white slavery' emerged. It became difficult for them to maintain a tolerant approach as reformers asserted that women involved in the trade were forced to prostitute themselves. But it would not be until the Great War when police would finally end their tolerant approach. As venereal disease began to spread, the sex trade was no longer perceived as a public order issue. Rather, the trade became an issue of public health.

"Chapter Three: Frankie White, Flossie Sherman, and Other "Unsavory Subjects,"" details the response of Saskatchewan's newspapers to the trade. The chapter reveals that Regina's *Leader* and Saskatoon's *Phoenix* and *Star* each had distinct approaches to the coverage of the province's sex trade, reflecting broader characteristics of the cities they represented. According to Regina's *Leader* the sex trade was an "unsavory subject"³¹ best kept out of sight. The Saskatoon *Phoenix* had a more practical view of the trade, perceiving it to be a fact of life in a male-dominated city. And the Saskatoon *Star* used stories of the trade to sell papers. As publicly accessible democratic tools, Saskatchewan's newspapers were a site where moral conflicts over the trade played out as concerned citizens wrote letters to editors, and papers published police scandals and messages from local clergy. The papers also reflect broader cultural shifts revealing the ways perspectives of the trade changed following the growth of white slave panic and the venereal disease crisis.

³¹ Regina *Leader*, May 10 1883.

Much of the popular understanding of Saskatchewan's colonial history relies on the notion that the area was settled by Protestant moral reformers. As James Gray sarcastically quipped in *Red Lights on the Prairies*, the Canadian prairie west was not, in fact, settled by "monks, eunuchs, and vestal virgins."³² As this thesis will demonstrate, the sex trade was an integral part of settler and colonial culture. And many regular homesteading, labouring, and law enforcing men bought sex from similarly average women whose main ambition was economic independence.

³² W. A. Waiser, preface to *Red Lights on the Prairies*, by James H. Gray (Toronto: Macmillan, 1995), ix.

CHAPTER ONE:

A PRECIOUS COMMODITY, AN INTERNAL ENEMY

On 12 April 1913, the Saskatoon Star published a letter from the director of the National Vigilance Society, announcing the danger of white slave traffic in Saskatchewan. "White slavery is here!," he warned. "We must demand that funds be appropriated so that the provincial government can wipe out the evil for all time."¹ The spectre of white slavery became an image used by moral reformers to depict commercial sex as a form of slavery where women were trafficked against their will. To reformers, white slavery posed a serious threat to the fabric of Anglo-European society as it targeted the future mothers of the imperial race. But following the First World War, when venereal disease became an increasingly serious issue, perspectives of women involved in the sex trade shifted drastically. Characterized as sources of venereal disease by reformers and public health officials, sex trade workers were no longer regarded as damsels in need of rescue but as internal enemies who sapped the strength of healthy men and, by extension, destroyed families. At the heart of reformers' concerns over Saskatchewan's sex trade, was the risk the trade posed to marriage and family — and it was that concern that guided their social responses to the trade.

According to Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, the twentieth century would be Canada's century and the settlement of the prairies would make that claim a reality. His statement reflected nation-wide excitement for a young country seemingly full of possibility. While other regions, such as British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec, were already widely populated and developed in a colonial sense, Saskatchewan was perceived as a blank slate with the potential of becoming an ideal and even utopian Anglo-Canadian society.

¹ Saskatoon Star, 12 April 1913.

Even in the 1860s, before Laurier made his declaration, Canadian expansionists called for the settlement of the prairies, predicting that the North-West Territories would be inhabited by millions of farmers who would be the pinnacle of Anglo-Canadian society.² New residents trickled in and some took to their local newspapers to announce the area's potential. On 17 June 1891, the teenaged author L.M. Montgomery called the region a "Western Eden" where "earnest toil will be ... abundantly rewarded."³ The North-West appeared to be a prime location for people who sought virgin territory unsullied by social and moral degradation. Aiming to create their own Eden, Ontario's Temperance Colonization Society purchased land and established a town site named Saskatoon with the hopes of making a vice-free, Protestant, Anglo-Canadian community far removed from the vice-ridden city of Toronto.⁴

In the early years of colonial settlement, people of British background made up the majority of newcomers to the prairies. Despite all the talk and ambition of expansionists in the late nineteenth century, Canada was losing residents rather than gaining them. The population did not begin to increase until 1901 when demand rose for Canadian resources, the United States ran out of homestead land, and the Canadian government launched an aggressive settlement campaign headed by Liberal Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton. Appointed as minister in 1896, Sifton committed to making the prairies a booming agricultural economy by recruiting experienced farmers to the region. And he succeeded. From 1891 to 1901, Saskatchewan's population grew from 41,522 to 97,279.⁵ By 1906, the population had grown to 257,763, over eighty per cent of which was rural. First Nations peoples became drastically outnumbered by

² W. A. Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 60.

³ *Prince Albert Times*, 17 June 1891, 4.

⁴ Don Kerr & Stan Hanson, *Saskatoon: The First Half-Century* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1982), 1-5.

⁵ Statistics Canada, "Population, urban and rural, by province and territory: Saskatchewan," retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/demo62i-eng.htm>, accessed 10 April 2013.

newcomers, making up only 6,358 or less than three per cent of the population in the 1906 census.

To Sifton, the most desired inhabitants of the region were not necessarily British. Rather, he encouraged people from continental Europe, particularly peasants, to make the prairies their home. These Europeans, who were regarded as "non-preferred"⁶ immigrants before Sifton's new immigration policy, became his ideal candidates — he believed them to be hardy and able to endure the difficulties that homesteading could bring.

It was an immigration policy that received tremendous criticism. As historian Howard Palmer has suggested, Clifford Sifton's policy created serious tensions in Anglo-Canadian western settler culture, whose response to the influx of non-Anglo immigrants was increasingly nativist and concerned with the protection and maintenance of the imperial race.⁷ James S. Woodsworth, a Methodist minister and moral reformer, articulated this response in his 1909 book *Strangers within Our Gates*, complaining that the immigration policy, while bringing "a large number of Britishers," also brought "immigrants from all parts of Europe." "We are taking our place, side by side with the United States as the Old World's dumping ground," Woodsworth wrote.⁸ Assimilation of non-Anglo immigrants into Anglo-European culture and customs became a major subject of discussion for Anglo-Canadians on the prairies. According to Woodsworth, the greatest challenge of Sifton's immigration policy was "to show how the incoming tides of

⁶ Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, 65.

⁷ Howard Palmer, *Patterns of Prejudice: A History of Nativism in Alberta* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1982), 22; like historian Brian Donovan and sociologist Mara Loveman, I use the term "race" to refer to a set of historically specific ideas about human difference and practices based on those ideas. In this context, 'race' does not represent natural or biological characteristics of people, but, rather, it is an ideological system that organizes people into groups based on perceived moral, cultural, and/or bodily distinctions. As Loveman suggests in her article "Is 'Race' Essential?" (*American Sociological Review* 64 (1999):894), race functions as "a principal of vision and division of the social world across time and place." In the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial culture, Anglo-Canadians perceived themselves to be a part of the 'imperial race.'

⁸ James S. Woodsworth, *Strangers within Our Gates, or Coming Canadians*, 1909; reprint (Toronto: University of Toronto 1972): 165-6.

immigrants of various nationalities and different degrees of civilization may be assimilated and made worthy citizens."⁹

Though Sifton's policy had been described as an 'open door' policy, he did make some limitations. In the language of the time, all British urbanites, Jews, Asians, Blacks, and Southern Europeans -- especially Italians -- were classified as "unwanted" and "weak" immigrants.¹⁰ Clifford Sifton assumed that such peoples would fail to homestead successfully and, as a result, would move to cities and take away jobs from Anglo-Canadians. Of British urbanites Sifton argued that "they are hopelessly incapable of going on farms and succeeding."¹¹ Of Jews he said, "Experience shows that the Jewish people do not become agriculturalists."¹² The Canadian government took a hard-line approach against Chinese immigrants, instating first a fifty dollars head tax in 1885, then one hundred dollars in 1900, and finally a five hundred dollars tax in 1903. Perhaps the harshest measure came against Black immigrants when Sifton's successor, Frank Oliver, spearheaded a government order in 1911 banning Black immigration for one year. Approved by Prime Minister Laurier and signed into law by the governor general, the law stated that the "Negro race ... is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada."¹³

During the immigration influx it became clear that the prairies were dominated by men. By 1911, the population was still mostly men. There were 769,000 men but only 559,000 women across the prairies.¹⁴ In their annual report the Department of the Interior explained the difference between male and female immigration rates, claiming that "Canada is a man's country" because "all new countries first attract men, as the labour required for early settlement

⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰ Waiser, Saskatchewan, 64.

¹¹ Quoted in D. J. Hall, "Clifford Sifton: Immigration and Settlement Policy, 1896 - 1905," in *The Settlement of the West*, ed. Howard Palmer (Calgary: University of Calgary, 1977), 76.

¹² Quoted in A. J. Arnold, "The Jewish Farm Settlement of Saskatchewan: From 'New Jerusalem' to Edenbridge," *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 4, no.1 (Spring 1980), 39.

¹³ R. B. Shepard, *Deemed Unsuitable* (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1996), 100.

¹⁴ Census, 1911.

calls for that of man rather than that of woman."¹⁵ That said, the department recognized that for the area to flourish, it would need women. In 1897 it encouraged bachelors, particularly homesteaders, to find wives as soon as they could financially manage and settle down: "a young unmarried man should make improvements in due course on his land, spend every six months fulfilling his conditions for residence, and go back to earn the necessary money for settling down."¹⁶ A society organized by a nuclear family model produced economic, political, and social advantages for the state, as historian Cecilia Danysk argues in her essay "A Bachelor's Paradise," "small units of production that could be handled by families, and could provide them with an adequate, if modest, living, ensured that the society created in the prairie west would be agrarian and family-oriented."¹⁷ Further, "individual farm ownership meant conservative values, and the predominance of families fostered social stability." Middle class, Protestant, white women were considered integral to creating social stability on the prairies. As English scholar Cecily Devereux notes, feminist groups, such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), claimed that the natural inclinations of women to clean and mother would extend not only upon their own families but upon the race as a whole.¹⁸

Social work¹⁹ and moral reform emerged in Canada during the height of concerns over successful assimilation of non-Anglo immigrants.²⁰ Early social workers performed much of the

¹⁵ Quoted in Cecilia Danysk, "A Bachelor's Paradise": Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880-1930," in *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement* eds. Catherine Cavanaugh & Jeremy Mouat (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 162.

¹⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Cecily Devereux, *Growing A Race: Nellie L. McClung and the Fiction of Eugenic Feminism* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 2005), 94.

¹⁹ Social work in Canada remained true to its Christian roots from its early years in 1890 up to 1939. Deeply influenced by the 'Social Gospel' movement, early Canadian social work promoted a Christian response to social problems such as 'prostitution' or 'white slavery' and, later, venereal disease. The Social Gospel, a popular movement in some areas of Europe and North America, flourished mainly in Protestant English Canada and was organized by Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist churches.

²⁰ Therese Jennissen and Colleen Lundy, *One Hundred Years of Social Work: A History of the Profession in English Canada, 1900 - 2000* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), xiii.

assimilation work that fostered a collective Canadian identity. And it was Anglo-Canadian women, usually Protestant and of the upper and middle classes, who performed social work. Their approach was deeply influenced by their own standards of proper womanhood and the belief that a woman's natural role in society was that of mother. To Saskatchewan's middle and upper classes, the nuclear family was the ideal model that was both sanctioned by god and the state. It held deep emotional meaning and signified a way of life, domesticity, and concepts of home. Social work aimed to encourage Protestant Christian values and nuclear family models in non-Anglo and lower class communities.

Many of Saskatchewan's Anglo-Canadian residents shared the state's vision for a family-focused, agrarian society. The trouble was that much of Saskatchewan's male population had created a large demand for prostitution and, thus, the area had a widespread and booming sex trade.²¹ According to moral reformers, Saskatchewan's true potential could not be reached if a sex trade was able to flourish in the province.²² Further, the trade posed a serious threat to the safety of incoming immigrant women who could be easily duped into prostitution.²³ As future mothers of the province, women were perceived as invaluable resources who needed to be protected. That concern was not limited to Saskatchewan alone, but the whole of Anglo-European society. One concerned moral reformer, George Kibbe Turner, asserted that: "The chastity of woman is at the foundation of Anglo-Saxon society. Our laws are based upon it, and the finest and most binding of our social relations. Nothing could be more menacing to a civilization than the sale of this commodity."²⁴ Women who immigrated to rural areas with their brothers, fathers, and husbands to homestead, were considered relatively safe from becoming

²¹ James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), xvii.

²² *The Leader*, 17 May 1883; 23 August 1883; 5 March 1890.

²³ *Saskatoon Star*, 12 April 1913.

²⁴ *McClure's*, April 1907: 582.

involved in the trade, as long as their male family members remained vigilant. But single women, urban women, or women not confined to the family farm, were perceived as at risk of becoming prostitutes, usually through some form of trickery.

British journalist W.T. Stead popularized the idea that white women were being sold into sexual slavery. In a series of articles published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Stead described the purchase of a young woman in London sold by her mother, supposedly for the purpose of prostitution in Paris.²⁵ The story captured the attention of citizens across the western world and concern for what was termed white slavery spread widely. Stead's series created the impression that all prostitution involved the sexual enslavement of young girls, particularly women of British descent.²⁶

Panic over white slavery spread internationally. It was, however, largely an imperial concern that developed in the context of imperial expansionism and reflected widespread anxieties over the safety of white women. Across Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, white slavery narratives became a popular genre, with works that came in the form of plays, films, books, pamphlets, and magazine articles. At least fifteen white slavery plays and six white slavery movies were produced in the early twentieth century. In 1913, over 30,000 people viewed the white slavery film *Traffic in Souls* during its opening week in New York City.²⁷ In the American context, historian Kevin Mumford writes that "the ideology of white slavery was in fact a staple of early-twentieth-century American culture."²⁸ And that was certainly the case for

²⁵ W. Chapkis, *Live Sex Acts: Women performing erotic labor* (New York: Routledge, 1997); M. T. Connelly, *The Responses to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1980).

²⁶ Devereux, *Growing A Race*, 100.

²⁷ Shelley Stamp, "'Oil upon the Flames of Vice:' The Battle over White Slave Films in New York City," *Film History* 9 (1997): 351-64.

²⁸ Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

Canada as well. Both the U.S. and Canada experienced similar social changes that created a culture where fears of white slavery could manifest and flourish.

White slavery narratives tended to have a particular formula. Some recounted a single story about the plight of one white slave while others contained several stories detailing the experiences of different women abducted and forced into prostitution.²⁹ The authors of such books came from an array of professional backgrounds such as physicians, religious leaders, missionaries, and moral crusaders, each of which tackled different aspects of the issue. Some authors wove tales that were explicitly fictional,³⁰ but most claimed to have a factual basis for their books.

Clifford Roe, a self-proclaimed leader in the fight against white slavery, together with detectives James Bell, W. M. Bowler, and Joseph L. Kinder compiled and edited the 1911 book *Horrors of the White Slave Trade: The Mighty Crusade to Protect the Purity of Our Homes*.

²⁹ For books that focus on a single white slave victim, see Virginia Brooks, *My Battles with Vice* (New York: Macauley, 1915), and *Little Lost Sister* (Chicago: Gazzolo and Ricksen, 1914); Guy Phelps, *Ethel Vale the White Slave* (Chicago: Christian Witness, 1910); and Clifford Roe, *The Girl Who Disappeared* (Naperville: World's Purity Federation, 1914). Books that include several white slavery stories include John Abbot, *The "White Slave" Traffic and Social Evil* (Milwaukee: Pollworth Press, 1910); Jane Addams, *A New Conscience and an Ancient Evil* (New York: Macmillan, 1912); Ernest Bell, *Fighting the Traffic of Young Girls* (Chicago: G.S. Ball, 1910); Theodore Bingham, *The Girl that Disappears: The Real Facts about the White Slave Trade* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1911); Herr Glessner Creel, *Prostitution for Profit: A Police Reporter's View of the White Slave Traffic* (St. Louis: National Rip-Saw Publishing, 1911); John Dillon, *From Dance Hall to White Slavery* (Chicago: C. C. Thompson, 1912); Elizabeth Goodnow, *The Market for Souls* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912); Leona Prall Groetzinger, *The City's Perils* (Chicago: s.n., 1912); Robert Harland, *The Vice Bondage of a Great City or the Wickedest City in the World* (Chicago: Young People's Civic League, 1912); Edward O. Janney, *The White Slave Traffic in America* (Baltimore: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1911); F.M. Lehman and N. K. Clarkson, *The White Slave Hell, or With Christ at Midnight in the Slums of Chicago* (Chicago: The Christian Witness Company, 1910); H. M. Lytle, *Tragedies of the White Slaves* (Chicago: C. C. Thompson, 1910); Charles Locke, *White Slavery in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Times Mirror, 1913); Robert Moorehead, *Fighting the Devil's Triple Demons* (Philadelphia: National Publishing Company, 1911); Samuel Paynter Wilson, *Chicago and Its Cess-Pools of Infamy* (1910); C.C. Quale, *Thrilling Stories of White Slavery* (Chicago: Hamming, 1912); Clifford Roe, *Panders and Their White Slaves* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910), and *Horrors of the White Slave Trade* (London: Stationers Hall, 1911); Madeline M. Southard, *The White Slave Traffic versus the American Home* (Louisville: Pentecostal Publishing, 1914); and Jean Turner Zimmermann, *Chicago's Black Traffic in White Girls* (Chicago: Chicago Rescue Mission, 1910), and *White or Yellow? A Story of America's Great White Slave Trade with Asia* (Chicago: Zimmermann, 1916).

³⁰ One such fictional account is Nellie McClung's *Painted Fires*, published in 1925, and tells a story of Helmi, a Swedish immigrant who moves to the Canadian prairies for a "better" life. Helmi is constantly at risk of sexual danger and white slave traffic, representing the possibility of lost potential for the future of Canada's imperial race. She is finally safe after she marries a local Anglo-Canadian farmer and no longer needs to work outside the home.

Described as "the official weapon" in the "great crusade" against white slavery, *Horrors of the White Slave Trade* promised a "truthful and chaste account of the hideous trade of buying and selling young girls for immoral purposes."³¹ The book also detailed "startling disclosures from traders," the "cruel inhuman treatment of white slaves," an "astounding confession of a panderer," and "graphic accounts of how white slaves [were] ensnared." But the most compelling feature was the account of Mildred Clark, a survivor of the white slave trade. After being seduced by a man, Mildred ran away with him to be married but found that he had no intention of marrying her and, instead, had sold her into sexual slavery. She was found and freed by police and returned home to her family farm. Despite her family's happiness that she had returned, Mildred was marked by her community and shunned by her local church. According to Roe, Mildred and other victims of white slavery would live the rest of their lives marked by their experience. He and his colleagues called for parents to protect and educate their daughters to mistrust certain men, especially of non-Anglo ethnic or racial backgrounds.

According to historian Brian Donovan, white slavery narratives represented an elaboration of two popular genres of Western literature: captivity narratives and seduction narratives.³² Settlers in both the U.S. and Canada penned stories about Indians on the frontier abducting white women. The stories provided justification for the acquisition of native land and, at times, violence against Aboriginals.³³ They also enabled white men to retain control over women by imploring them to remain close to home for their own safety. Similarly, seduction narratives placed women in disempowered and dangerous positions in which men preyed upon

³¹ University of Saskatchewan Special Collections, Adam Shortt Library of Canadiana, *Horrors of the White Slave Trade: The Mighty Crusade to Protect the Purity of Our Homes*, Clifford Roe, "Table of Contents", 1911.

³² Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887 - 1917* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 17.

³³ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (McGill - Queen's University Press, 1997).

them, had sex with them, and then betrayed them. Seduction narratives inspired the purity movement of the nineteenth century, which held that women's chastity could prevent their emotional manipulation and eventual downfall into unchaste lifestyles. Purity movement journals, such as the *Advocate of Moral Reform* and the *Friend of Virtue*, explored these concerns regularly. Moral reformers created and disseminated seduction narratives as part of their effort to raise public awareness of prostitution, the age of consent, and the dangers of unrestrained male sexuality. By the early twentieth century, the rudimentary elements of captivity and seduction narratives provided a foundation for white slavery stories. Donovan writes:

Borrowing the basic elements of captivity and seduction stories, white slavery narratives describe the plight of a 'white slave,' typically a white girl from the countryside who travels to the city in search of employment. Once in the city, she falls prey to a white slave procurer - often an immigrant from southern or eastern Europe - who offers to secure employment for her. In some stories, the victim is lured to the city on false promises of marriage. In others, she leaves the countryside to pursue employment in the city and falls into the trap of the white slave procurer, or 'white slaver,' soon after her arrival. The procurer forces the girl into a life of prostitution by physical coercion or trickery, and once inside the brothel doors she finds it impossible to escape.³⁴

Narratives of white slavery often employed a rural/urban dichotomy by characterizing rural space as safe for women and urban space as dangerous. The narratives also emphasized the dangers new non-Anglo immigrants posed to white women, particularly when the women were outside the confines of their family home.

To Saskatchewan's moral reformers *Horrors of the White Slave Trade* and other accounts of white slavery were applicable to their community regardless of where the cases actually occurred. They imagined that what had happened in Chicago, London, or New York City, could also be true in Regina or Saskatoon. Regina's *Leader* first carried an article about the problem of

³⁴ Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*, 18.

white slave traffic.³⁵ On 20 February 1909, *The Leader* published the article penned by a district attorney from the United States. Printed at the request of Canada's Moral and Social Reform Council, the piece alerted Reginans to the danger and encouraged them to agitate for tougher penalties against traffickers. By November that year, Regina's city police had found a case in which two Polish girls, aged fourteen and seventeen, were selling sex in a brothel on Broad Street, an area known for its sex trade. Regina's moral reformers saw the case as proof that white slavery existed in their own backyard.

In 1911, members of Saskatchewan's Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) attended the WCTU's national conference in Sherbrooke, Quebec. At the conference a speaker estimated that 1500 Canadian girls disappeared into the sex trade every year, most of them ending up in Chicago brothels.³⁶ The claims appear to be unfounded,³⁷ but they certainly captured the attention of the public. Saskatchewan's WCTU members returned from Sherbrooke convinced that white slavery was a real problem and added it to the list of their causes.

On 12 April 1913, the *Saskatoon Star* published a letter to the editor written by C. Cotching, the director of Canada's National Vigilance Society, a group that stood for "the protection of the sisters and daughters of Canada."³⁸ "It is a fact that there are now scattered throughout practically every section of Canada a vast number of men whose sole occupation consists of enticing, tricking or coercing young women and girls into immoral lives," Cotching warned. "Their methods have been so far developed and perfected that they seem to be able to ensnare almost any woman or girl whom they select for the purpose," he continued. "These

³⁵ *The Leader*, 20 February 1909.

³⁶ S.W., "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," in Gregory P. Marchildon (ed.) *History of the Prairie West Series: Immigration and Settlement, 1870 - 1939* (Regina: CPRC Press, 2009), 149.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Saskatoon Star*, 12 April 1913.

traffickers are generally shrewd, careful observers of human nature." They chose their targets by locating "girls who, while as yet honorable and virtuous, are inclined to be somewhat careless and those who, through lack of or distaste of parental restraint, undertake to select their own companions, amusements and occupations." Spaces such as the theatre, "the moving picture show," the cafe, the skating rink, and the dance hall had become recruiting grounds. Borrowing imagery that resonated with Saskatchewan's residents, Cotching wrote that the province's young women and girls were "a limitless and fertile field for the white slaver and his awful trade."³⁹

In order to prevent white slavery in Saskatchewan, the National Vigilance Society arranged for a woman to stand guard in Saskatoon's train station in order to keep an eye on women and girls traveling alone.⁴⁰ Cotching also implored parents to keep a strict watch over their daughters and to demand that police no longer tolerate the sex trade in their city.⁴¹ Earlier that year the Borden government had increased the penalty for procuring by changing the Criminal Code. Of the new law, Cotching wrote that Saskatchewan's residents must demand that the police "adequately enforce the present law" and that "the law be extended and strengthened that it will enable the provincial government to wipe out the evil of white slave traffic for all time."⁴²

Before concerns over white slavery had become widespread in Saskatchewan, police forces had taken a largely tolerant approach toward the sex trade. Police historian Stan Horrall calls the crusade against white slavery "the final nail in the coffin of the toleration of prostitution by the mounted police."⁴³ "The traffic in women for immoral purpose gave a new edge to the campaign against prostitution," Horrall notes. "It became difficult to argue for its tolerance when,

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 149.

as reformers asserted, many of the women were tricked, drugged or lured into becoming prostitutes against their will."⁴⁴ The view that some women freely chose to sell sex was no longer accepted.

Though much of Saskatchewan's public believed that white slavery was among them, the police were not so sure. At the 1913 annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police in Halifax, police expressed the view that the issue of white slavery had been exaggerated by the reformers.⁴⁵ They also believed that reports of thousands of Canadian girls being lured annually to the United States were misleading and unreliable.⁴⁶ Further, Saskatchewan's police found that there was simply no evidence that white slavery was as widespread as reformers claimed.⁴⁷ But reformers would not compromise. The sex trade had to be destroyed. They perceived the police's resistance to their claims as evidence of the force's penchant for siding with the province's male residents.⁴⁸

Images of male immorality dominated the Canadian prairies for much of its early years. The landscape was made up of a largely young and single male population, which was perceived as a hindrance to the area's Christian potential and, therefore, in need of control and discipline. One of the strongest examples of moral concern over western Canadian masculinity came in April, 1886, when Malcolm Cameron, a Member of Parliament, warned that men in western Canada were "reveling in the sensual enjoyments of a Western harem."⁴⁹ Prominent first wave feminist and active member of the WCTU, Nellie McClung, suggested that white slavery, like

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *The Leader*, 9 July 1913.

⁴⁷ *SAB*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

⁴⁸ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 150.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*, (Edmonton: Alberta University Press, 2008), 150.

alcohol, was an issue of male immorality and that white slave traffic, along with liquor traffic, served as evidence of "too much masculinity" in prairie culture.⁵⁰

Those concerned over white slavery took aim at men in order to combat the issue. They advocated for legal measures to punish men who seduced women, including legal practices that coerced men to marry women with whom they had sex with. They also compelled men to adopt similar norms of sexual behavior that were considered naturally characteristic of women, believing that such measures would instigate a cultural shift that would put an end to prostitution and white slavery.⁵¹ Governments in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain implemented seduction laws that provided legal consequences for men who seduced women. The laws permitted a woman to sue her seducer if her sexual consent was based on his so-called misrepresentation.

In Saskatchewan, the harshest measures to prevent white slavery were directed toward racialized men. Men of colour who were found to be keeping brothels were punished more severely than other people involved in the sex trade.⁵² Saskatchewan's 1912 Act to Prevent the Employment of Female Labour in Certain Capacities, also known as "The White Women's Labour Law," barred East-Asian men from employing white women. The act was amended in 1913 so that it only applied to Chinese men, preventing them from employing white women or girls in any "restaurant, laundry, or other place of business or amusement owned, kept or managed by any Chinaman." Moral reformers, women's groups, and business leaders argued that

⁵⁰ Nellie McClung, *In Times Like These* (Toronto: McLeod and Allen, 1915): 24.

⁵¹ An 1858 study of two thousand sex workers in New York's House of Correction did not support the claim that seduction and 'male sexuality' forced women into prostitution. Medical doctor W.W. Sanger found that only fifteen per cent of the sex workers he interviewed listed seduction as the reason they sold sex.

⁵² James Gray, *Red Lights*, 80.

if white women worked for Chinese men, the men would force them into sexual slavery and drug addiction.⁵³

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reformers believed that Chinese men were particularly dangerous to white women. Nellie McClung's characterization of a Chinese man in her fictional work *Painted Fires* is an example of the Anglo-Canadian view of Chinese men during the period. McClung constructs the Chinese restaurant as a portal to danger for her protagonist Helmi. While buying opium for a friend, Helmi arrives at a restaurant with "a name on the door in gold and red - foreign looking letters with many sharp points."⁵⁴ When she enters, Helmi finds the room "strangely cold and dead" but filled with writhing serpents, an image that was regularly deployed in North American representations of so-called oriental danger.⁵⁵ Similarly, in Charles Shepherd's account of Chinese sex slaves, *The Ways of Ah Sin*, the author writes that the slaves were trapped "in the coils of the serpent."⁵⁶ McClung also uses snake-like imagery in her characterization of Sam, the man Helmi encounters in the restaurant: "His ghastly yellow hands had claw-like nails that seemed to twist around her hand as she took the box of opium." "You nice liddle girl," he says, " - you come see pretty things - old Sam show you - maybe."⁵⁷ But before Sam could trap her, the police arrived and Helmi escaped with her virtue intact.

On the surface these concerns over white slavery appear to be focused on preventing the sexual slavery of women and girls, but as the *Act to Prevent the Employment of Female Labour in Certain Capacities* indicates, efforts to end white slavery reflected Anglo-Canadian anxieties

⁵³ Constance Backhouse, "The White Women's Labor Laws: Anti-Chinese Racism in Early Twentieth-Century Canada," *Law and History Review* 14.2 (1996).

⁵⁴ Nellie McClung, *Painted Fires* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1925), 62.

⁵⁵ Devereux, *Growing A Race*, 102.

⁵⁶ Charles Shepherd, *The Ways of Ah Sin: A Composite Narrative of Things As They Are* (New York and Chicago: Revell, 1923).

⁵⁷ McClung, *Painted Fires*, 63.

involving racial and ethnic mixing. That race-based anxiety also is clearly apparent in the term white slavery, which signals a differentiation between sexual slavery of women and girls of colour versus white women. During a period when whiteness was so closely linked to concepts of civility, cleanliness, and purity, white slavery served to explain how white women could become involved in the sex trade. Anglo-Europeans understood white women to be naturally good and morally pure but white women's involvement in the sex trade seemingly contradicted that view. White slavery allowed that perspective of white women to remain intact by portraying those who were involved in the sex trade as victims who had not entered the trade by choice.

Saskatchewan's Anglo-Canadian residents were deeply invested in the maintenance of racial boundaries that served to perpetuate white privilege. Practices of racial maintenance differed for men and women. As anthropologist and historian Ann Stoler suggests:

elites were intent to mark the boundaries of a colonizing population, to prevent men from going native, to curb a proliferating mixed-race population that compromised their claims to superiority and thus the legitimacy of white rule. In colonial societies as in Europe, racial survival was often seen to be precariously predicated on a strict adherence to cultural - and specifically gendered - prescriptions.⁵⁸

For women, racial maintenance was also tied to their sexuality but was more focused on their ability to create and mother children. To Saskatchewan's Anglo-Canadians, it was important that white women produced white and not mixed race children.

In 1914, police arrested and charged Quong Wing, a Chinese restaurant owner in Moose Jaw, who was found to be in violation of the White Women's Labour Law as he had two white women in his employment.⁵⁹ Ten years later, Clun Yee, a Chinese businessman in Regina, applied to Regina's City Council for a special permit to employ white women. Women's groups,

⁵⁸ Ann Stoler and Frederic Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5.

⁵⁹ *Quong-Wing v. The King* [1914] 49 S.C.R. 440, 23 February 1914 SCC. <http://scc.lexum.org/decisia-scc-csc/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/9673/index.do>.

moral reformers, and business leaders agitated to prevent Clun Yee from receiving the permit, arguing that if women were employed by Clun Yee they would be at risk of becoming involved in the sex trade.⁶⁰ These racist beliefs continued for the majority of the twentieth century. The act remained in place in Saskatchewan until 1969.

Worldwide campaigns to stop white slave traffic experienced significant legislative successes. Several countries signed on to a Convention on the International Suppression of White Slave Traffic in 1910. The United States Congress passed the Mann Act, which prohibited the transport of females across state lines for immoral purposes. In Toronto, the city council appointed a commission to investigate the prevalence of vice and the problem of white slave traffic. Protestant churches established the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada to lobby governments to make changes to their vice laws. These lobbies led to changes in Canada's criminal code in 1913, which raised the age of consent, and prevented children from entering into the sex trade. But with the onset of the First World War, concerns over white slave traffic diminished. In fact, the war completely changed social perspectives of prostitution across the western world.

The Great War saw an increase in prostitution as large numbers of men, separated from their homes and families, sought the services of sex trade workers. Many women, particularly in occupied territories, performed sex work out of necessity as civilian conditions were desperate and they needed the money and security to protect themselves and their families.⁶¹ But, as mounted police records suggest, the sex trade was booming in Saskatchewan as well. From 1914

⁶⁰ Constance Backhouse, "White Female Help and Chinese-Canadian Employees: Race, Class, Gender and Law in the Case of Yee Clun, 1924," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 26 (1994): 34-40.

⁶¹ Tammy Proctor, *Female Intelligence* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 138.

to 1918, the mounted police made ninety-three sex trade-related arrests.⁶² Initially commanders of the armed forces encouraged, or at least turned a blind-eye to, soldiers' frequent use of sex workers' services. Sexual access to women was considered a reward for soldiers' sacrifice. Further, authorities hoped that by offering controlled outlets for heterosexual activity to enlisted men, they could curb homosexuality in the ranks.⁶³ But permissive and even condoning approaches to the trade stopped when the soldier population became affected by venereal disease (VD) and a public health crisis ensued. By 1924, William J. Battley of the Social Hygiene Association estimated that twenty-five per cent of Saskatchewan's population was infected with VD.⁶⁴

Saskatchewan's Public Health Act was a source of pride for the province's doctors, government, and public health officials. They had come a long way from the early territorial period when the mounted police were responsible for enforcing public health ordinances. When Saskatchewan became a province, public health was placed under the Department of Agriculture and Dr. Maurice Seymour became the province's Medical Officer of Health. By 1909, Saskatchewan's government created the Public Health Act and the Bureau of Public Health, catapulting the new province into a leading position for its public health initiative. The *Toronto Globe* noted that Saskatchewan's Public Health Act was "in advance of similar legislation in other parts of the Dominion."⁶⁵ But in the years during and following the First World War, the province struggled to keep up with cases of VD. By 1923, the Department of Public Health created the Venereal Disease Division to track statistics, educate the general public, and sanction treatment.

⁶² SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

⁶³ Brian Harrison, "Underneath the Victorians," *Victorian Studies* (1967), 257.

⁶⁴ *Saskatoon Phoenix*, 2 November 1924.

⁶⁵ *Toronto Globe*, 1909.

The Saskatchewan Government tracked and published the numbers of VD cases in the Bureau of Public Health Annual Reports. The first report, published in 1910, showed no cases of VD. It was not until 1913 when there were suddenly eighty cases of VD in the province, forty-seven of which were syphilis. The report listed twenty-nine cases of VD in Regina, forty-five in Saskatoon, three in Moose Jaw, two in Prince Albert, and one in Swift Current.⁶⁶ In 1914 the province saw fifty new cases.⁶⁷ Gonorrhoea was on the rise and twenty-two cases of VD were documented in "towns and villages"⁶⁸ and two in rural municipalities. Much to the fear of public health officials, VD was beginning to spread into rural areas. In 1916 nine Saskatchewan residents died from complications associated with VD,⁶⁹ and by 1917 VD had become such a serious issue that it was given its own category in the bureau's annual reports.

In 1918, Saskatchewan's public health officials created protocol for the treatment and prevention of VD:

Every person suffering from any of these diseases is required to report to a registered physician and undergo treatment. Every physician giving treatment is required to report the case to the Commissioner of Public Health on a prescribed card, giving the age, sex, colour and marital condition, but suppressing the name of the patient, to whom a number is assigned for reference purposes ... If a patient under treatment neglects to resort for the treatment prescribed for thirty days, the name and address of the patient shall be reported to the commissioner.⁷⁰

The protocol prevented people infected with VD from working as barbers, waiters, butchers, teachers, or any profession that required the handling of food. Non-compliance resulted in a fine from \$2 to \$25. The report also noted the prevalence of VD in the military. In 1915, an estimated 28.5 per cent of Canadian troops were infected.⁷¹

⁶⁶ SAB, Government Publications, PH.1, "Venereal Disease Report, 1913."

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Venereal Disease Report, 1914."

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., "Venereal Disease Report, 1916."

⁷⁰ SAB, Government Publications, PH.1, "Bureau of Public Health Report, 1918", pp.29-30.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Civilian health officials worried that returning soldiers would infect Canadian women, and public health officials launched campaigns to make women aware of the potential risks. In efforts to educate women, Saskatchewan's public health officials gave lectures and created pamphlets, many of which emphasized the risks that infected women posed to their own families:

You may think you do not need to know about them. You may think that only men need to know such things. But women can never really protect themselves or their children unless they are willing to face facts. In these times, no girl or woman can afford to shut her eyes to the truth about syphilis and gonorrhoea.⁷²

Officials also used the example of home in an attempt to appeal to women's interests: "Syphilis and gonorrhoea are not segregated to one group or town. They can strike anyone, anywhere. Heartache House - the home where one of these communicable diseases has struck - is just around the corner from all of us."⁷³ Other educational campaigns appealed to mothers of teenagers asking, "Are your children spreading VD?"⁷⁴

Canadian authorities sanctioned the health and sanitary inspection of sex workers even before widespread concerns of venereal disease had taken root. Under Canadian legislation, a woman could be identified as a "common prostitute" by law enforcement and then subjected to an internal examination.⁷⁵ If found suffering from venereal disease, she would be detained in a hospital that had a venereal ward. The definition of "common prostitute" was vague, and consequently the police had broad discretionary powers. When accosted by the police, a woman was expected to submit voluntarily to medical examination. If she refused, she could be brought to trial and it would be her responsibility to prove that she was a virtuous woman. Specific controls were placed on the female body in that sex workers, not their clients, were identified as

⁷² SAB, Government Publications, PH.1, Pamphlets Collection, "What Every Woman Should Know," n.d.

⁷³ Ibid., "Heartache House," n.d.

⁷⁴ Ibid., "Children and Venereal Disease," n.d.

⁷⁵ Canada. Criminal Code, 1892, 55-56 Vic., C. 29, ss. 238-239.

the primary vectors of disease. "The prostitute is the main root and source of Venereal Disease" declared Dr. D. H. Williams, Canada's Director of Venereal Disease Control.⁷⁶ Sex workers were a "community from which spreads Venereal Disease, suffering and death."⁷⁷ When the First World War broke out, Williams characterized "parlour prostitutes" as an internal enemy sapping the country's strength by infecting soldiers; he said "the business of commercialized prostitution must go! National Defence demands it!"⁷⁸

Several prominent figures contributed their thoughts on how best to combat the spread of VD. One such figure, Dr. J. G. Shearer of Toronto's Social Services, had become an authority on the subject. On 11 February 1918, the *Saskatoon Star* published an article by Shearer in which he called the sex trade "a major social evil" that contributed to "the slaughter of men, women, and children" through the spread of VD.⁷⁹ He demanded that "official toleration" of the sex trade end and argued that in order to defeat VD and prostitution, Canadians would need to make Christianity the centre of their society. Many believed that if Saskatchewan returned to its Christian roots, the VD crisis would end. Protestant churches pushed for a more central role in their communities. Melfort's Methodist Church organized a meeting with the town council, the board of trade, the local grain growers' organization, and school boards to discuss access to free public health clinics and the campaign against venereal disease.⁸⁰

Even federal organizations, such as the Canadian Military's Advisory Committee on Venereal Disease, believed that the church should play a role in combating VD. The committee proposed legislation to prevent the spread of VD through public education and social work,

⁷⁶ Quoted in Robert A. Campbell, *Sit Down and Drink Your Beer: Regulating Vancouver's Beer Parlours* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 90.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Saskatoon Star*, 11 February 1918.

⁸⁰ Nancy Christie & Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900 - 1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 111.

which would require the formation of a Social Hygiene Commission (SHC) made up of Protestant Christians drawn from organizations such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Salvation Army.⁸¹ The SHC's social work would focus on prevention measures, targeting women who were deemed at-risk of becoming prostitutes by providing housing for single women, supervising spaces for young people to encourage "normal activities" among local youth, and performing "protective work" for girls.⁸² Similarly, Saskatchewan's Social Hygiene Association (SHA) organized "prairie havenets" for "wayward" teenage girls.⁸³ In the Saskatoon Phoenix, Mrs. G. B. Cleveland of the province's WCTU urged the city to build more homes for "troubled" girls.⁸⁴

Despite public health initiatives and widespread education efforts, venereal disease continued to be a serious health issue in Saskatchewan and across Canada. Saskatchewan saw 138 new cases in 1917, 260 in 1918, 370 in 1919, and 231 in 1920.⁸⁵ The crisis continued into the inter-war period and the Second World War. With the sex trade pegged as the source of VD, women who sold sex were characterized as conduits of infection and vectors of disease. Public health officials developed campaigns that portrayed sex workers as dangerous women who lured innocent men into brothels and infected them. In just a few short years, social perspectives of sex workers drastically shifted from being considered damsels in danger and in desperate need of rescue, to the epitome and embodiment of sexual danger.

Images of sex workers as sexually dangerous were most apparent in educational campaigns that came in the form of posters. One Canadian poster distributed in the First World

⁸¹ SAB, V. McNaughton Papers, A.1, 39, Major J. G. Fitzgerald and Captain Gordon Bates to Mrs. Violet McNaughton, 5 March 1919.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ SAB, Pamphlet Collection, Social Hygiene Association of Saskatchewan, G 232.1, "The Pioneer Movement: The Social Hygiene Association of Saskatchewan," n.d.

⁸⁴ Saskatoon Phoenix, 25 March 1919.

⁸⁵ SAB, Government Publications, PH.1, "Venereal Disease Report, 1917"; Ibid., "Venereal Disease Report, 1918"; Ibid., "Venereal Disease Report, 1919."; Ibid., "Venereal Disease Report, 1920."

War showed a soldier with a bottle of liquor in one hand and a sex worker in the other.⁸⁶ The couple walked together toward a large and looming skull. "He 'picked up' more than a girl... V.D. causes insanity, blindness, sterility, and heart disease," the poster warned. "Remember these facts. Avoid promiscuous sexual intercourse and you will avoid V.D.," it informed. "V.D. often spreads to innocent victims - wives and children. Don't run risks which others will pay for!" A similar advertisement displayed an otherwise attractive woman with a skull for a face.⁸⁷ "Careful, you can't tell who has it!," it advised. "Don't be deceived by outward appearances - highly contagious V.D. often doesn't show outwardly. "Innocent looks" and medical "certificates" may be booby traps that cover up V.D. mines." Educational poster campaigns characterized sex trade workers as grim reapers, femme fatales, and the personification of venereal disease itself, just to name a few metaphors. One American advertisement from the Second World War stated simply, "Prostitution spreads syphilis and gonorrhoea."⁸⁸ It was a characterization that would change social perspectives of sex workers for the rest of the twentieth century.

During Saskatchewan's settlement period, white slave narratives became an important way of explaining white women's involvement in the sex trade. As non-Anglo groups immigrated to Saskatchewan, Anglo-Canadians began to be concerned over racial and ethnic mixing and the maintenance of their own prestige. It was in this context that concern over white slavery emerged and reformers organized to separate Anglo-European women from certain, often racialized, men. But during the First World War, as concerns over venereal disease took precedent over fears of white slavery, social perspectives of women involved in the sex trade

⁸⁶ Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Government Posters Collections "He 'picked up' more than a girl," retrieved from http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/history/achievements/02-vd_lacc127777k-v8.jpg, 15 May 2013.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "Careful, you can't tell who has it!," retrieved from http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/history/achievements/02-vd_lacc127798k-v8.jpg, 15 May 2013.

⁸⁸ University of Minnesota Libraries, Social Welfare History Archives, Venereal Disease Posters Collection, "Prostitution spreads syphilis and gonorrhoea," retrieved from http://www.slate.com/slideshows/double_x/early-std-prevention-ads.html#slide_10, 15 May 2013.

shifted. Victims of white slavery who were regarded as in need of protection from sexual danger were constructed as the sexual danger to be wary of.

CHAPTER TWO:

MEN IN BLUE, MEN IN RED, MEN IN BROTHELS

On 24 October 1888, Nellie Webb, a Fort Edmonton brothel owner, shot a North-West Mounted Police constable in self-defense. Constable Cairney, who had been one of three constables who frequented her brothel that day, had threatened to kill Nellie and burn her brothel down when she refused him service.¹ The case caused a strong reaction in Fort Edmonton. What were enforcers of the law doing at a brothel? Frank Oliver, the editor of the Edmonton Bulletin, described the incident as "one of the most disgraceful affairs that has ever happened in Edmonton, and through a set of men that are supposed to protect the citizens and their property."² It was not the first time that police had frequented a brothel in the North-West Territories. In 1883, Nicholas Flood Davin of the Regina Leader reported that the "red-coat of the mounted policeman" could be seen "flashing in and out" of brothels "at all hours."³

It was common for police to frequent brothels in the North-West Territories and, later, in Saskatchewan. Their propensity to use the services of sex workers influenced their early approach to the sex trade — an approach that deemed the trade "a necessary evil."⁴ In fact, Saskatchewan's early sex trade was largely dependent on bonds and, at times, solidarities forged between police and sex workers. Such arrangements held mutual benefits as police could maintain some level of control over the trade while sex workers could continue their business. The police's stance on prostitution contrasted with the laws they enforced, the policy of their government, and the expectations of many Saskatchewan residents. Saskatchewan was supposed to be a place where the best features of Anglo-Canadian society could take root and flourish.

¹ Edmonton Bulletin, 27 October 1888; 3 November 1888.

² Ibid., 3 November 1888.

³ Regina Leader, 17 May 1883.

⁴ Ibid.

Some Saskatchewan residents perceived the province's sex trade as a hindrance to the area's potential. As the moral reform movement became more popular, and the venereal disease crisis ensued, public pressure mounted and the police were forced to take a less tolerant approach to the trade.

On 28 January 1910, Saskatoon's Phoenix published a full page advertisement proclaiming Saskatchewan's potential. "A Greater Saskatchewan Movement is sweeping the province," it announced.⁵ "The movement was inspired by the remarkable fertility of the soil and the possibilities it contained." "Each year," the Phoenix declared, "[the province] sees many substantial buildings erected, and an influx of the best settlers from other countries and from Eastern Canada." The advertisement reflected the excitement that Saskatchewan's residents felt. The province was meant for greatness and the mounted police were beholden to that expectation. Thirty-seven years before, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had created the North-West Mounted Police, a force he believed represented the ideal tool for ensuring the orderly development of western Canada.⁶

The administration of colonial law in the North-West Territories developed in proportion to settlement processes in the area. From 1873 to 1917, The (Royal) North-West Mounted police (RNWMP) acted as the principal government-instituted law enforcement in what is now Saskatchewan.⁷ The Saskatchewan Provincial Police (SPP) became the official provincial law enforcement in 1917 to 1928. The mounted police, Saskatchewan Provincial Police, and municipal police forces were each involved with the policing of prostitution. In the early years,

⁵ Saskatoon Phoenix, 28 January 1910.

⁶ Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914 - 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): 14.

⁷ They became known as the Royal North-West Mounted Police in 1904 following service in the Boer War when King Edward VII rewarded the force with the title. In 1920, a period that falls outside of this investigation, the name became what it is now, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, when the force's jurisdiction expanded across Canada.

when the mounted police were the only policing presence in the area, they had freedom to enforce the law in the ways they saw fit. As a result, the mounties set precedent for the treatment of and response to Saskatchewan's sex trade. The SPP and municipal forces followed the RNWMP's lead in regards to managing the sex trade - a policy that came easily as many of SPP and city police officers worked as mounties before joining other forces.

John A. Macdonald's vision for the mounted police was that of a disciplined force that represented the epitome of Anglo-Canadian society. Recruits were expected to persevere through military-style discipline, low wages, and poor working conditions. In 1910, nearly forty years after the force was established, constables could expect to be paid a meager sixty cents a day — a wage below what an unskilled labourer was commonly paid. It was low compensation for the demands of the job. Mounties were nearly always on call, especially if they worked in small towns and rural areas. They were responsible for taking care of matters when a violent crime or accident took place. But the majority of their time was spent patrolling and doing paperwork, rather banal tasks. And after work they often had to live, eat, and sleep in cramped quarters with their colleagues.⁸ The men who made long careers out of enforcing the law did not do it for the money. Instead, they found compensation in the authority they received and garnered fulfillment from the belief that what they were doing was important to their nation-state.

Macdonald's vision for the mounted police has permeated Canada's public consciousness, shaping the nation's collective memory of the force. But the Canadian public's expectations for the mounted police has not always meshed with reality, and the force's involvement in the sex trade is a good example of that. Still, Canadians have held tight to Macdonald's vision — a fact that historian Keith Walden acknowledges:

⁸ Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 32.

When English Canadians looked at the Mounted Police they collectively ignored certain aspects of the force, downplayed others, and emphasized those qualities and characteristics that to them seemed important. They thought they were describing a self-evident reality, but they were not. Instead they described what they wanted to see.⁹

To the public, the mounted police was an Anglo-Canadian force that brought order through the enforcement of Canadian law. The dominant public perception legitimized the power and responsibility that the Canadian government gave to the force. As police historian Steve Hewitt argues, Canadian public perceptions held that:

the force, undeniably quite powerful, did not abuse that power. Instead the heroic Mounties dispensed frontier law in a very public fashion from the backs of their horses as they policed the western frontier of Canada. These horsemen maintained a degree of professionalism and neutrality that won them the support of citizens on the Prairies and, in the process, offered a contrast with the imagined anarchy in the American West.¹⁰

The members' legitimacy as authority figures came from both their ethnicity and gender. The state chose men who epitomized their ideal citizenry. These were, as Hewitt writes, "white men in the sense of what whiteness meant in the first half of the twentieth century; that is, they were almost exclusively of Anglo-Celtic heritage."¹¹ Regardless of how their early years are remembered, many of the constables were part of the male bachelor culture that created the demand for the sex trade.

Canada's colonial prairie-west was a bachelor's landscape and had a reputation as such. Promised free or cheap land and economic independence, large waves of migrants began to homestead in the late nineteenth century. Homesteader Felix Troughton came to the Canadian prairies as a young single man and recorded his experience in his memoir *A Bachelor's*

⁹ Keith Walden, *Visions of Order: The Canadian Mounties in Symbol and Myth* (Ottawa: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1978): 18.

¹⁰ Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 9; Also, see Table 2.1 for the national origins of the Mounties.

Table 2.1 National origins of Mounties, 1914

Origin	Total	Percent of total
United Kingdom	490	79
Canada	76	12
Other British possessions	24	4
United States	10	2
Foreign Countries	17	3
Total	617	100

Source: Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914 - 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006): 31.

Paradise.¹² Unlike the title suggests, Troughton's characterization of the prairie west is hardly that of a paradise. Instead, Troughton details his experiences in a lonely and largely womanless land. Alone in his "unswept and dusty house," he wakes every morning in a bed "that has perhaps not been made for weeks." He "prepares a hasty and ill-cooked breakfast," eating from "unwashed dishes" surrounded by "a million flies" who "feed in undisturbed peacefulness." "What the bachelor requires in his home" Troughton confesses, "is a broad-shouldered, stirring wife, who will keep the house in order, as well as the husband who owns it."

But that wife would only become harder to find as waves of mass immigration in the early twentieth century caused serious ratio disparities between male and female residents.¹³ Not that a higher female population would have made a difference for some men. Such an assumption is not only heteronormative,¹⁴ but also denies the fact that for some men, marriage was not an option. Until the 1970s, except under special circumstances, the mounted police accepted only single men, requiring them to serve several years in the force before getting

¹² Felix Troughton, *A Bachelor's Paradise or Life on the Canadian Prairies 45 years ago*, (London: Arthur A. Stockwell, 1930).

¹³ As discussed in the previous chapter, the immigration wave of 1901 resulted in 228,554 males to 198,700 females. By 1911, there were 769,000 males to 559,000 females on the Prairies. The disparity was most prevalent in urban areas like Regina where 13,616 men and only 6,020 women lived. In Saskatoon, there were 4,309 men to 2,581 women.

¹⁴ Heteronormativity relies on the assumption that heterosexuality, that is, female-male attraction, coupling, and romantic love, is natural while all other forms of attraction, sexual expression, and coupling are abnormal and even dangerous or to be feared. Heteronormativity was enforced in the mounted police. In Lethbridge, Alberta, the barracks washroom cubicle doors were removed specifically to prevent 'homosexual acts.' And in the 1880s a mountie was discovered performing oral sex on another male in his barracks. Though the incident occurred prior to the criminalization of male-on-male sex acts, the officer was dismissed. See William Beahan and Stan Horrall, *Red Coats on the Prairies: The North West Mounted Police, 1886 - 1900* (Regina: Centax Books, 1998), 255; Steven Maynard, "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 23 (1989): 159-69; "'Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890 - 1935," *Canadian Historical Review* 78, no.2 (1997): 191 - 235; Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867- 1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Jack Fossum, *Mancatcher: An Immigrant's Story of Logging, Policing, and Pioneering in the Canadian West* (Comox, BC: Lindsay Press, 1990); and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890 - 1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

married.¹⁵ Some men dealt with this restriction either by marrying in secret, leaving the force to marry, or buying sex and companionship at their local brothel.

In the male-dominated frontier settlements prostitution was openly tolerated.¹⁶ Police historian Stan Horrall notes that for most men in the area, no stigma was attached to visiting a brothel. "Men did so openly in broad daylight, rather than furtively in the dark of night."¹⁷ And "the rank and file of the force were themselves some of the prostitutes' best customers."¹⁸ Social institutions lagged behind population growth and, as a result, bars, brothels, and poolrooms were "almost the only recreational facilities available" to men.¹⁹ The sex trade served a purpose in the nineteenth century prairie west. The mounties "saw a positive benefit in allowing it to exist" as it "provided an outlet for those men who were unable to control themselves, and made them less likely to prey upon the respectable women in society."²⁰

Such beliefs about men, their so-called sexual aggression and thus their need for sexual outlets, were deeply entrenched in burgeoning views of masculinity.²¹ It was an era of transition for men in which expectations for gender representation were shifting from manliness to

¹⁵ Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 123.

¹⁶ S.W., "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," in Gregory P. Marchildon (Ed) *History of the Prairie West Series: Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939* (Regina: CPRC Press, 2009). 132.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

²¹ In R. W. Connell's influential work *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Connell argues that the term "masculinity" is derived from European individuality which evolved through the expansion of capitalist economies and colonial empires. According to historian Gail Bederman in her work *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880 - 1970* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995), during the turn of the twentieth century popular views of masculinity emerged and challenged prior Victorian notions of manliness. While manliness emphasized self-restraint and morality, masculinity encouraged aggressive and overtly sexual male behaviours. Gender and men's studies scholars now recognize that there is not one masculinity but multiple and the term masculinities concerns the position of men in a gender order. As Connell notes, "There is abundant evidence that boys differ widely, masculinities are multiple, and that masculinities change in history." Early concepts of manliness and masculinity actually define certain forms of western, middle class, hegemonic masculinities that changed over time. But for the purpose of this research, this thesis will treat the manliness and masculinity as they were understood during the period of study — that is, as two terms that described popular concepts of maleness at the time.

masculinity. Manliness was born in Victorian culture and emphasized honour, self-control, and order.²² It also required deep dedication to the state and, as historians J.A. Mangan and James Walvin argue, demanded "physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude, with additional connotations of military and patriotic virtues," all of which were integral to John A. Macdonald's vision for the mounted police.²³ By the late nineteenth century masculinity, which stresses overt heterosexuality, physicality, size, and violence, began to displace manliness.

The shift from manliness to masculinity resulted in a number of social changes. Concepts of the ideal male physique changed. In the 1850s, lean and wiry bodies were preferred. Fifty years later, however, large and muscular bodies were desired.²⁴ Secondly, the shift created a chasm between men of different generations as older men tended to identify with manliness and younger men with masculinity. And thirdly, it also caused class anxiety as working class men exhibited more masculine features than their middle class counterparts.²⁵ Within the force, manliness remained more prevalent among higher authoritative figures, while masculinity was primarily cultivated in the lower ranks, particularly the ones required to use brute force as part of the job. The divide within the force also served as a divide between buyers and non-buyers of sex. While the rank and file of the RNWMP made up some of sex workers' best customers, commissioned officers were expected to identify with the upper and middle classes and to act like respectable gentlemen.²⁶ Although the RNWMP was made up of men from varying class

²² Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880 - 1970* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995), 11-13, 19.

²³ J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, "Introduction," in J.A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1987), 1.

²⁴ Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts and the Imperative of Empire* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 3, 135-6.

²⁵ Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 35.

²⁶ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 133.

backgrounds and identities, their loyalty to the state and the camaraderie fostered within their ranks, functioned as uniting forces.

The culture of the rank and file celebrated a kind of masculinity and male camaraderie that created strong friendships and community ties. For these and other working class men, the workplace was an important place where male camaraderie could be fostered.²⁷ According to historian Craig Heron, it was the workplace where boys became men and where men were first able to practice bachelorhood.²⁸ Though bachelorhood suggests a time of singleness, it was actually often a period when men were in deepest relation with one another. And it was during bachelorhood when men most commonly went to brothels, often with their colleagues and friends.²⁹

There had been reports of mounted police frequenting brothels as early as 1875.³⁰ Buying sex was not considered a disciplinary offence, as long the police were circumspect. And they usually were — only in cases like Constable Cairney's did the higher ranking officers interfere. After a night in Fort Edmonton's tavern, Cairney arrived drunk at Nellie Webb's brothel. When Webb refused him service, he began kicking down her door, and threatened that if she did not let him in, he would burn the place down. In an attempt to protect herself and the other women working in her brothel, Webb grabbed her .38 revolver and warned Cairney she would use it if he did not calm down. He began breaking down the door and Webb shot through a broken board hitting him in the thigh. Cairney was dismissed after he spent several weeks recovering from his injuries in Fort Saskatchewan's barracks' hospital.³¹ Buying sex from racialized women was also

²⁷ Greg Marquis, "Working Men in Uniform: The Early Twentieth-Century Toronto Police," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 20, no. 40 (1987): 270.

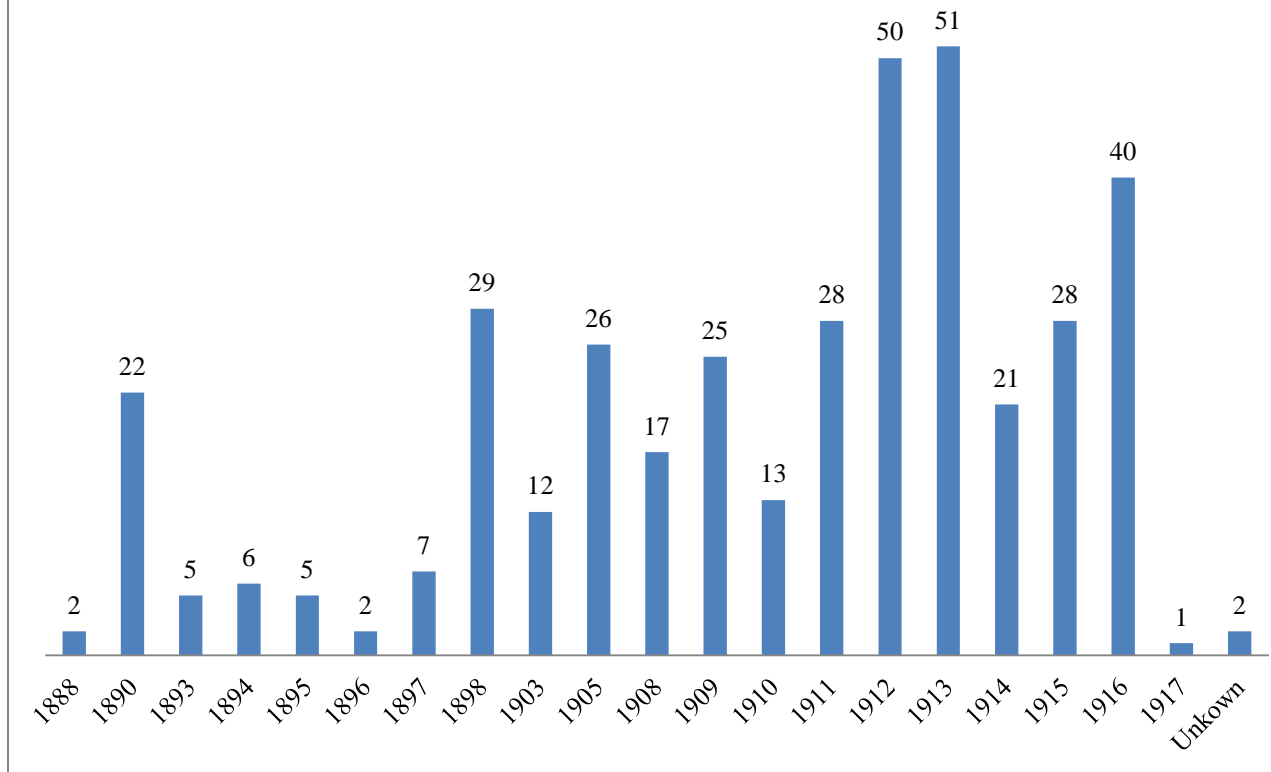
²⁸ Craig Heron, "The Boys and Their Booze: Masculinities and Public Drinking in Working-class Hamilton, 1890-1946," *The Canadian Historical Review* 86.3 (2005): 5.

²⁹ James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), xvii.

³⁰ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 129.

³¹ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 November 1888.

Table 2.2: Mounted Police Charges of Sex Trade-Related Offences by Year



Source: SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920."³²

³² These numbers and the numbers shown in Table 2.3 and 2.4 were calculated from hand-written indexes and crime registers recorded on microfilm. The records capture the years from 1875 - 1920, though the first prostitution-related case was recorded in 1888 and the last in 1917. The records end in 1917 as the mounties were superseded by the Saskatchewan Provincial Police. The documents were prepared by the mounted police stationed in bases across the North-West Territories, and then the province. The police who created the documents made them for the review and records of the office of the commissioner. There are no officially published numbers of arrests or charges during the period of study. As I reviewed the documents, I searched for prostitution-related charges - most of which fell under Canada's criminal code sections 238-239 relating to vagrancy. These charges usually labeled one involved in the trade as a "keeper," "inmate," "frequenter," or one who "lived off the avails." At times they were also labeled "undesirables" or "common prostitutes." I also searched for "trafficking" offences, as I knew that was a major concern at the time. It's important to remember that the vast majority of sex workers were permitted to perform their work without any penalty. And, therefore, the numbers above, which are absolute, do not account for the total number of sex workers in the area.

deemed noteworthy. In 1880, Sergeant S. J. Clarke acknowledged in his journal that a constable stationed in Fort Macleod had purchased sex from an Aboriginal woman for three dollars.³³

Until the early 1890s, the police allowed the sex trade to flourish without much interference. Their main concern was that the trade should not become too unruly. Up to that point, the mounted police registered few charges against women who sold sex. A major change occurred in 1890, however, when the police registered twenty-two sex trade related offences.³⁴ The last decades of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a large cultural shift as Protestant moral reformers sought to make the area into a vice-free Anglo-Canadian society. Police began to receive demands for higher standards within their ranks and stricter enforcement of vagrancy laws.³⁵ With incoming middle class families, patience for working class bachelors and their vices began to wear thin.³⁶ Working class bachelors were made the focus of public interventions by temperance advocates and moral reformers who agitated for the control of gambling, prostitution, and liquor. According to reformers, liquor was the source of society's woes and other social issues, including prostitution, would be cured by its eradication. By the end of the nineteenth century the Canadian government had lost patience with bachelors. The Department of the Interior reported in 1897 that bachelorhood would and should be temporary and that a bachelor's goal should be to "settle down" with a wife and have a family.³⁷

Regina's mayor requested that Lawrence W. Herchmer, the commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police, discipline his constables and take a more active role in combating the sex

³³ Gray, *Red Lights*, 4.

³⁴ Gray, *Red Lights*, 4.

³⁵ *The Leader*, 10 May 1883, 17 May 1883, 26 July 1883, 23 August 1883, 30 September 1890, 21 October 1890; Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 134.

³⁶ Cecilia Danysk, "'A Bachelor's Paradise': Homesteaders, Hired Hands, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1880-1930" in Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Moult (Eds) *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996): 169.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

trade in Regina.³⁸ Herchmer started to take disciplinary steps in order to make it clear that buying sex and even consorting with sex workers was no longer acceptable behaviour for a member of the NWMP. In January 1891 Constable G.T. Emigh received fourteen days hard labour for walking the streets of Macleod with a sex worker after being repeatedly warned not to do so.³⁹ Law enforcement also began to perform periodic raids in response to complaints. Regina's mayor asked the mounted police to close the brothel of Josephine Turner, a black woman who owned a popular establishment on Lore Street.⁴⁰ The police closed Josephine's business and raided other brothels in Regina, but they knew it was only a matter of time before more sex workers arrived to replace the ones who left.⁴¹ The demand for sex work was so high that the police could not remove it completely. They continued to take a tolerant approach that was based on their belief that society could not outlaw sex work.⁴²

The mounted police's approach to the trade was distinct from government policy which outlined a no tolerance approach. The Canadian government made its stance clear following Confederation when it adopted Britain's⁴³ sex trade law as part of Canada's Criminal Code, effectively making the sale of sex a public order issue. From that point on, selling sex became an indictable offence. The law did not make prostitution illegal per se, but it did make certain actions associated with prostitution illegal, which in effect made it impossible to sell or buy sex legally. According to the Criminal Code, it was illegal to operate, to frequent, or to be an inmate

³⁸ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 135.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ The Leader, 30 September 1890, 21 October 1890.

⁴² Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 154.

⁴³ Based on the British Vagrancy Act of 1824 (c. 83) which targeted "persons committing certain offences to be deemed rogues and vagabonds." The Act criminalized prostitution, fortune telling, homelessness, poverty, distribution of "obscene materials," public nakedness, exposure of deformities to "obtain alms," thievery, and resisting arrest.

of a house of ill-fame. A conviction could result in a prison sentence up to one year.⁴⁴ But that legislation went largely unused.

Police usually treated sex trade-related offences as misdemeanors that fell under sections 238-239 relating to vagrancy.⁴⁵ These provisions defined a vagrant as one who:

- (a) being a common prostitute wanders in the fields, public streets or highways and does not give a satisfactory account of herself;
- (b) is a keeper or inmate of a bawdy house or house of ill-fame;
- (c) is in the habit of frequenting such houses;
- (d) supports himself by the avails of prostitution.

If convicted, a sex worker could receive a fine of up to \$50, imprisonment for up to six months, or both. Generally, sex trade workers were willing to plead guilty with the understanding that they would be fined without further penalty.⁴⁶ And that was the unspoken arrangement they had with the police. The police benefitted from the arrangement because they could maintain close watch of the trade by performing periodic raids of brothels and they were also able to foster bonds with sex workers who shared important information about criminalized activities.⁴⁷ Due to the clandestine nature of the sex trade, it was almost impossible to collect enough evidence for a conviction without a guilty plea. It was in the best interest of the police to treat sex trade-related offences as misdemeanors and to fine sex workers rather than send them to jail. To sex workers, the fine was perceived as more of a licensing fee than an actual penalty for performing illegal labour. Harsher penalties, such as jail time, were reserved for repeat offenders, or people who tended to operate disruptive establishments that made them the subject of complaints by their broader community.

⁴⁴ Canada. Criminal Code, 1892, 55-56 Vic., C. 29, ss. 228-229.

⁴⁵ Canada. Criminal Code, 1892, 55-56 Vic., C. 29, ss. 238-239.

⁴⁶ Gray, *Red Lights*, 83.

⁴⁷ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 131.

Policing and government responses to the sex trade also were influenced by practical factors like budgetary and financial concerns. National, territorial, and, later, provincial finances dictated the kinds of criminalized activities that were pursued actively by law enforcement. With a small operating budget, Saskatchewan's law enforcement had to be strategic in their allocation of funds and efforts. In the minds of most law enforcers, the sex trade functioned as a "grey" moral and criminal behaviour that fell low on their list of priorities in comparison to such offences as theft, fraud, and violent crimes.

Regardless of where the sex trade registered in the concerns of the police, moral reformers considered the trade to be a serious issue that justified more intervention than most police were willing to provide. They wanted the police to abolish the trade through an all-out crusade. Some police forces attempted to appease moral reformers but found that the no tolerance method was unsuccessful and a waste of time and scarce financial resources. In 1907 chiefs of police met for the annual meeting of the International Association of Chiefs of Police where they discussed approaches to policing the sex trade.⁴⁸ They explored the option of official acceptance or legalization, but most chiefs believed that such a policy would conflict with law enforcement's role as maintainers of public decency. They also discussed the moral reform or "suppression by crusade" option.⁴⁹ The chiefs agreed that it was an unrealistic approach that would cause the trade to go further underground. Instead, they agreed that the best approach was to supervise the trade and suppress individual cases when the public complained.

Saskatchewan's law enforcement used the third approach, which was still tolerant and did not stretch the force beyond its means. In order to keep a close eye on the trade, police

⁴⁸ D.C. Dilworth (.ed), *The Blue and the Brass* (Gaithersburg, MD: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1976), 135.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

encouraged its segregation into certain red light areas and periodically raided brothels.⁵⁰ From 1898 to 1910, the mounted police made just over a hundred arrests for sex trade-related offences.⁵¹ It seemed that unruly behaviour in brothels came in waves. Police could go for a couple of years and make only a handful of arrests but arrests increased during good harvest years.⁵² With an economy so dependent on agriculture, Saskatchewan's sex trade boomed when the crops were plentiful. During good years, sex trade workers could expect an increase of farmers frequenting their brothel, as well as businessmen who were finally getting paid by the farmers they serviced. Everyone was in a celebratory mood and things could get out of hand.⁵³ During bountiful years, police increased raids and appointed more constables to rural areas in order to keep the trade under control.

Moral reformers continued to be unhappy with the police's response to the trade. It became difficult for the police to argue for a tolerant approach when, as reformers asserted, most of the women in the trade were selling sex against their will. Reformers agitated to make amendments to Canada's age of sexual consent law and sex trade law. Both laws were revised just prior to the First World War in order to stiffen penalties for buying sex from minors.

The police tried and failed to find evidence of widespread trafficking in Saskatchewan. During the height of white slave panic, the mounted police made the most arrests ever for sex trade-related offences with twenty-eight arrests in 1911, fifty in 1912, and fifty-one in 1913.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Gray, *Red Lights*, 80, 103 - 106.

⁵¹ Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.; see Table 2.2.

⁵² SAB, Justices of the Peace, 1905 -1908, R - 986, I.3, "Jurisdiction of Justices of the Peace in regards to prostitution."

⁵³ SAB, Opinions and Judgments, 1906 -1914, R - 986. I.15, "Request for increase police presence following a good harvest."

⁵⁴ SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm. See Table 2.2.

Table 2.3: Sex Trade-Related Offences, Saskatchewan 1875- 1920

Offence	Number of Offences Before 1905	1905 - 1914	1915 - 1920
Frequenting House of Ill Fame	11	9	11
Inmate of Bawdy House or House of Ill Fame	43	102	13
Keeping Bawdy House or House of Ill Fame	34	76	41
Common Prostitute	4	21	23
Living Off the Avails	-	1	-
Trafficking of Women for the Purpose of Prostitution	-	3	3
Total	92	212	91

Source: SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920."

Table 2.4: Urban and Rural Cases Relating to Saskatchewan's Sex Trade, 1875 - 1920

City/Town	Number of Cases Before 1905	1905 -1914	1915 -1920
Rural Cases in Total:	174		
Example of Rural Numbers:			
	Town		
Humboldt		16	5
Watrous	-	7	1
Shaunavon	-	1	11
Rosetown	-	3	5
Maple Creek	-	14	1
Hudson Bay	-	6	-
Outlook	-	9	1
Urban Cases in Total:			
	City		
Saskatoon	4	37	11
Regina	35	9	14
Prince Albert	-	29	5
Moose Jaw	6	11	6
Total Number of Cases			395

Source: SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920."

But the majority of those charged with sex trade-related offences were not victims of trafficking, but inmates or keepers of brothels who sold sex willingly.⁵⁵ Some who were charged for prostitution, conducted their business on the street; they were, however, still willing participants of the trade. Despite tremendous social concern over white slave traffic, the mounted police's records indicate only five cases of trafficking.

In an attempt to combat white slave traffic, the police kept a particularly close eye on men who owned and operated brothels. According to the typical white slave narrative, it was men who seduced and tricked women into selling sex. Fred Hughes, a farmer from the Estevan area, had roused the suspicion of moral reformers and the police. Hughes was charged on three separate occasions for keeping a house of ill fame.⁵⁶ His first conviction on 12 December 1911 did not stop him from continuing to run a brothel on his farm in the years that followed. He received a second charge on 27 July 1912 and a third on 7 August 1914, upon which he was placed under arrest, convicted as a vagrant and sentenced to serve a total of seven months in Regina's Common Gaol (four months for keeping and three months for selling liquor without a license). But Hughes served only three of those seven months. On 4 December 1914, Constables P.J. Collison and F.R. Folkes ran into Hughes and his wife at the Regina train station. Mrs. Hughes informed the constables that her husband had been released earlier than expected. The officers were incredulous, but their disbelief was suspended as Fred made his way to them, shook their hands, and informed them that he was heading home to Estevan in a few short minutes. Troubled by the encounter, Constable Collison penned a letter to Charles Mahony, Saskatchewan's Chief of Provincial Police, informing the chief of the situation and advising that

⁵⁵ See Table 2.3.

⁵⁶ SAB, Opinions and Judgments, 1906 - 1914, R - 986, I.15, "Re: Fred Hughes: A Letter from Constable P.J. Collison to Chief Mahony of Saskatchewan's Provincial Police."

an investigation be held to determine who was responsible for the early release. It appeared that Hughes had a friend or two in the force.

Saskatchewan's sex trade was equally present in both rural and urban spaces with 174 confirmed charges in rural areas and 178 in urban areas.⁵⁷ Though it is evident that the sex trade was widespread, the numbers do not give a complete picture of the prevalence of sex work as many sex workers and johns were left to conduct their business without police interference. The numbers also indicate that attitudes toward the trade varied from one community to the next.⁵⁸ Moose Jaw took a permissive approach to the trade and, as a result, few charges were laid despite its strong presence in the community. Moose Jaw's tolerance of the sex trade can, in part, be attributed to the solidarities forged between local sex workers and the community's Chief of Police, Walter Johnson. Serving as chief from 1905 to 1922, Johnson is remembered by some as a corrupt character who was willing to accept financial compensation for turning a blind-eye to criminalized activities such as prostitution and gambling. When he set his sights on becoming Moose Jaw's mayor, he began receiving financial donations from local women who sold sex:

...He used to park his vehicle in front of the Police Station with one of the windows rolled down a bit. Every Friday afternoon, weather permitting, the Ladies of the Night would stroll by and, somehow, they would drop a few envelopes into Chief Johnson's vehicle through the window, containing their political contributions to his cause.⁵⁹

In contrast, residents of communities such as Humboldt, Saskatchewan rallied together to combat the presence of the sex trade.

In 1907 Stella West opened a brothel in Humboldt. Her business was so popular that she had to hire three more women to meet demands. In February 1908, residents of the town

⁵⁷ See table 2.4.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Bill Fennell, e-mail message to author, 20 July 2012.

complained to the attorney general about Stella's brothel. A man, who only identified himself as a father, wrote to the attorney general stating:

Night after night our young men (in dozens) spend their money and strength and manliness with the harlots. Day by day our sons and daughters see the wretched creatures in the full glow of their shame and iniquity. Hourly our fathers and mothers tremble for the virtue of their still innocent children. Can you help us?⁶⁰

Some had looked to their religious officials but were not satisfied by the response. Town councillors "regard[ed] the matter as beyond them" since the house was outside the town's limits. Business owners were afraid to offend the johns who frequented the brothel. "And even I," the anonymous father wrote, "when complaining withhold my name in fear of the revenge of the young evil minded beasts who go there." That letter was followed by a petition signed by sixteen residents of the town who threatened that, if the department did not take immediate steps to remove the brothel and the women who worked there, they would take the law into their own hands.⁶¹

The threat had clearly worried the attorney general. Days later he arranged for a raid on West's house.⁶² Stella was charged with keeping a house of ill-fame and made to pay a fine of twenty dollars.⁶³ The court demanded she sell her home and leave Humboldt but she refused and went back to business. The community stopped complaining and the police refrained from taking any further action against West and her employees.⁶⁴

It was common for sex workers like Stella to go back to selling sex after a charge. The mounted police registered several repeat offenders. In 1898 Eva Mosher was arrested twice in Macleod and again in Regina. Violet Harh also was arrested twice in Macleod. And Daisy

⁶⁰ SAB, Royal North-West Mounted Police Criminal Investigations, 1908-09, R - 986, I.G.C., "Anonymous letter to Attorney General regarding Humboldt house of ill fame."

⁶¹ Ibid., "Petition from Humboldt residents regarding Stella West's brothel."

⁶² Ibid., "House of ill fame in Humboldt"; "RE: House of ill fame in Humboldt, RNWMP Commissioner."

⁶³ Ibid., "Crime Report: Stella West and Bessie Sharp."

⁶⁴ Ibid., "Crime Report: House of ill fame in Humboldt."

Walker was arrested in Macleod and Regina in 1910.⁶⁵ It bothered some Saskatchewan residents that known sex workers could pick up their businesses right where they left off following an arrest. One man was so upset by the presence of a known sex worker in his town, he wrote a letter to the attorney general asking if he could perform a citizen's arrest on the woman.⁶⁶ Though he admitted that the woman was circumspect when she was about town, her presence still "annoyed him." The attorney general encouraged the man to allow his local police magistrate to arrest the woman if and when the opportunity arose.⁶⁷

Municipal police forces usually worked independently from the mounted police. Saskatoon's Police Department was established in 1903 with its first Chief of Police Robert Dunning who had worked as a mountie prior to his appointment as Chief. Dunning's approach to law enforcement was similar to Moose Jaw's Chief Johnson. He was not above accepting bribes and services with the agreement of turning a blind-eye to certain illegal activities.⁶⁸ For some sex workers who were unable or unwilling to bargain with Dunning, he targeted their workplaces specifically for raids. When moral reformers complained that the Saskatoon police were not pushing hard enough to rid the city of the trade, Dunning usually organized raids of brothels owned by women who had not paid him off.

Dunning worked in competition with the mounted police rather than with them — an approach that did not work to his advantage. By 1913, The attorney general and RNWMP became suspicious of Dunning and his force. The Saskatoon Phoenix and Saskatoon Star ran editorials calling for investigations of the city police.⁶⁹ The investigation took years to complete.

⁶⁵ SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

⁶⁶ SAB, Opinions and Judgements, 1906 - 1914, R - 986, I.15, "Attorney General re: movement of prostitutes."

⁶⁷ Ibid., "Attorney General Correspondence re: brothel."

⁶⁸ Saskatoon Phoenix and Saskatoon Star, February, March, and April, 1915.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

According to James Gray, the mounted police hired a Saskatoon woman for their investigation of the city's police. When Dunning discovered that the woman was working undercover for the RNWMP, he arrested her as a prostitute and sent her to jail for six months.⁷⁰ When the investigation was completed, Dunning was found guilty of "undue oppression of certain women."⁷¹ In contrast, Regina, a city known for its intolerant approach to the sex trade, had its police work together with the mounted police to suppress the sex trade. On 14 February 1911, Regina's chief of police organized raids throughout Germantown with the local mounted police, which targeted only brothels owned by black Reginans.⁷²

In Prince Albert, policing remained largely the responsibility of the mounted police as Prince Albert's force was small. In December 1885, Prince Albert's Town Council hired its first constable William Dilworth who collaborated with the NWMP. The first chief of police was appointed fifteen years later, but the force maintained a strong reliance on the mounted police until the 1960s. Unlike other areas of Saskatchewan, the RNWMP did not make its first sex trade-related arrest in Prince Albert until 5 August 1905 when they raided one brothel and arrested two johns and five workers.⁷³ The force in Prince Albert was more concerned with suppressing Métis uprisings than with the sex trade. When they did receive complaints about brothels, mounted police in Prince Albert performed large raids to appease concerned citizens.⁷⁴ On 4 July 1912, they raided and charged Vivian Morris and her workers Mary O'Mallen, Rose Armstrong, Pearl Smith, Ferne Walling, Maria Russell, and Rita Giramp. Vivian was the focus of a second raid later that year on 23 November and six other women were charged as inmates

⁷⁰ Gray, *Red Lights*, 109.

⁷¹ Saskatoon *Phoenix* and Saskatoon *Star*, February, March, and April, 1915.

⁷² Gray, *Red Lights*, 82.

⁷³ *SAB*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

of her brothel. A similar raid occurred on 7 February 1913 with one woman charged as a keeper and four women charged as inmates.

Large-scale raids were practiced most frequently in urban areas. In rural areas, two or three women usually worked together or one woman worked alone and, when arrested, they often received compounded charges. For example, when Kate Kaufman was arrested in Tisdale, Saskatchewan on 23 January 1916, she was not only labeled a prostitute but also undesirable to her community. Though, after Kaufman's arrest, law enforcement could not find any evidence against her.⁷⁵ Similarly, on 6 June 1911, Julia Wolf was arrested in Prairie Creek for simply being a suspected prostitute.⁷⁶ At times, the easiest way to get an undesirable or otherwise troublesome woman to leave town was to accuse her of being a prostitute.

The mounted police's tolerant approach to the sex trade had one important exception. Police were not tolerant of Aboriginal women's involvement in the sex trade, particularly in rural or reserve communities.⁷⁷ Though evidence suggests that First Nations women made up one of the smallest numbers of people involved in the sex trade, law enforcement and government officials treated cases of prostitution involving Aboriginal women as grounds for further colonial interventions in the lives of First Nations peoples.⁷⁸ The justification for the police's treatment of Aboriginal involvement in the trade came from blatant racism — the false perception that cases of prostitution in First Nations communities were evidence of the so-called moral inferiority of

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 130.

⁷⁸ Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1918*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 148-190.

Aboriginals.⁷⁹ And the belief that Aboriginal women involved in the sex trade had not chosen to sell sex and had been sold into it by their family members.

Matters became worse when The Toronto Mail published a letter on 2 July 1886 detailing the purchase and sale, or trafficking, of Aboriginal girls by white men.⁸⁰ According to Reverend H.T. Bourne, a missionary stationed on the Piikani Reserve near Macleod, Aboriginal mothers and fathers were selling their daughters to white men. Bourne said he had witnessed “over twenty cases of bargain and sale of young Indian girls to white men within three years” and claimed that the girls were often forced into prostitution or re-sold.

That was the context in which the mounted police raided the home of R. Coyote on 9 June 1890.⁸¹ They charged Coyote for “keeping a wigwam for immoral purposes.” Owl Woman, The Woman That Kills, Close To the River, and two other women were arrested in the raid along with two johns who were charged with “Frequenting a wigwam in which were Indian women for the purpose of prostitution.” After their cases were heard in Macleod, they were given the option of paying a fine or spending time in jail. The police did not find any cases of forced prostitution in the raid. And they would continue to find little evidence of the trafficking of Aboriginal women. Of the five cases of trafficking or forced prostitution in the mounted police's records, three were concerned with Indian women, all in 1905.⁸²

Mounties made fewer sex trade-related arrests following the white slave panic. In 1913, the police made fifty-one arrests but that number dropped significantly in 1914 when they made

⁷⁹ See Sarah Carter's chapter “The 1886 “Traffic in Indian Girls” Panic and the Foundation of the Federal Approach to Aboriginal Marriage and Divorce,” in *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1918*, (University of Alberta Press, 2008), 148-190.

⁸⁰ The Toronto Mail, 2 July 1886.

⁸¹ SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, “Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920.” Microfilm.

⁸² Ibid.

twenty-one.⁸³ The drop can be attributed to the onset of the First World War. Not only were moral reformers less concerned over white slavery, but police forces were depleted as members traveled abroad to participate in the war effort. But as concerns over venereal disease became paramount, the numbers of arrests increased from twenty-eight in 1915 to forty in 1916.⁸⁴ Years before the venereal disease crisis, Commissioner Herchmer had been concerned about the risk venereal disease posed to the force. He thought it was unreasonable that men should be off duty sick and receive medical attention at government expense because of "their own indiscretions."⁸⁵ As a result, he sanctioned a regulation that authorized deductions from the pay of constables who did become infected.⁸⁶ The deductions covered the cost of their hospitalization. Unfortunately the policy did not prevent men from actually contracting venereal disease. Members of the force were, no doubt, among the 28.5 per cent of Canadian troops infected.

Following the First World War, the mounted police's role in Canadian society expanded and they became an intelligence service in addition to their established role as a police force. This new role reflected the changes the First World War brought to Canadian society. Suspicion of non-Anglos increased during the inter-war period and the RCMP were given the responsibility of monitoring groups deemed suspicious by the Canadian government. Consequently, they were no longer focused on the policing of the sex trade and their records of the trade dropped off following 1917.

Saskatchewan's law enforcement's approach to the sex trade contrasted with the views and expectations of moral reformers and the policy and laws of their government. The police took a tolerant approach, allowing the trade to operate as long as sex workers and their clients,

⁸³ See Table 2.2.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," 133.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

some of which were members of the force, remained circumspect. Law enforcement's approach reflected community attitudes toward the trade as some communities were more welcoming of sex workers while others demanded that police suppress the trade. But as prostitutes became the scapegoat for the venereal disease crisis, the sex trade became a site of public health and social work interventions. Law enforcement's role in policing the sex trade shifted. They could no longer argue for a tolerant approach when sex workers supposedly threatened the public health of the province. Municipal and rural police collaborated with public health officials by arresting women suspected of prostitution in order to assess whether the women were infected with venereal disease. Regardless of whether or not they were infected, they were considered a hazard to public health.

CHAPTER THREE:

FRANKIE WHITE, FLOSSIE SHERMAN, AND OTHER "UNSAVOURY SUBJECTS"

For Regina's *Leader*, the sex trade was an "unsavoury subject"¹ best kept out of the view of its readers. The *Saskatoon Phoenix* treated prostitution as a common part of life in a city where the desires of young, single, working class bachelors created a demand. The *Saskatoon Star*, on the other hand, saw the prevalence of sex work in its city as something to capitalise on. Saskatchewan's newspapers were the most vocal and publicly accessible sites of social response to the province's sex trade, providing some of the only narratives and, perhaps, the most complete histories of women sex workers in the province during this period of study. But the narratives are woven together through the view of the press and lacking the perspective and experience of Saskatchewan's sex workers in their own words. What does become clear, though, through the analysis of newspapers is the ways they shaped and dominated conversations and representations of the sex trade. These representations of Saskatchewan's sex trade say more about what it meant to be someone who owned, worked at, or read a newspaper from 1880-1920 than what it meant to be a sex worker in the same period. The province's newspapers reveal the early development of Saskatchewan's cities, particular characteristics of those cities and their residents, and how those cities perceived themselves independently of and in relation to the sex trade.

Nearly thirty years before Saskatchewan became a province the area already had its first newspaper. Patrick Gammie Laurie founded the *Saskatchewan Herald* in 1878 after arranging for a printing press to be delivered to Battleford by ox cart, a seventy-two-day trek from Winnipeg. When the railway arrived, newspapers shot up wherever they had an audience. An important marker of colonial development, the creation of local newspapers signaled the up-and-

¹ The *Leader*, 10 May 1883.

coming status of the area. By the time Saskatchewan became a province in 1905 it already had fifty-two newspapers in print.

Newspapers have been cast as indispensable tools of democracy in Western colonial culture, providing a location for community engagement and a platform for discussion. In historian Alexis de Tocqueville's nineteenth century observation of early newspapers in North America, he found that the press provided a forum for debate that facilitated the strengthening of bonds among community members.² In the context of colonial Saskatchewan, newspapers were a tool that helped form the state. They delineated particular imagined communities and established collective identities for Anglo-European and other white residents.

As a democratic tool, the newspaper coverage was expected and often assumed to be, through the perspective of its Anglo-European audience, largely objective. The newspaper appeared merely to report on an event instead of performing as a central actor. But in viewing history through the lens of a particular newspaper and taking into account the role of that newspaper's owner, reporters, and other workers, it is clear that newspapers were not simply mirrors that reflected the communities they represented. Rather, they shaped and influenced their communities, conveying social mores, encouraging and discouraging particular activities and economies, and enforcing certain ideas of gender, race, class, and sexuality.³

During this period of study, women's public presence and capital power increased and newspapers began to appeal to their new female readers through features such as home product advertising and women's pages. Though papers acknowledged women readers, they also differentiated between men and women, segregating women's interests from men's by restricting

² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (London: G. Dearborn & Co., 1838).

³ Katherine H. Adams, Michael L. Keene, and Melanie McKay, *Controlling Representations: Depictions of Women in a Mainstream Newspaper, 1900 - 1950* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 2009); Dan Bivona and Roger B. Henkle, *The Imagination of Class: Masculinity and the Victorian Urban Poor* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006).

women's activities and concerns to a separate sheet or half-sheet of the paper. As English scholars Katherine Adams, Michael Keene, and Melanie McKay note in *Controlling Representations: Depictions of Women in a Mainstream Newspaper, 1900 - 1950*, "by granting women a discursive presence but isolating that presence from 'real news,' papers reinforced women's absence from the activities reported elsewhere in the paper, the activities that constituted the sphere of significant public endeavor - politics, law, commerce - that is, the sphere of men."⁴ Newspapers created powerful channels for the inscription of cultural codes for women — what they should look like and how they should behave. From 1880 to 1920, the socially-approved model of womanhood in Saskatchewan was the middle class woman who exercised piety, purity, and domesticity. The newspaper functioned as a site where the upper and middle classes could differentiate between good middle class women and bad sex working women.

At the end of the nineteenth century, certain journalistic and reporting traditions developed within Anglo-European culture, which shaped the treatment of the sex trade in the press. It was during this period that, "New Journalism," or what has come to be known as literary journalism, emerged. British journalists such as W.T. Stead, Henry Mayhew, and Andrew Mearns and American journalists Jack London and Jacob Riis reported stories about the sex trade and what they termed "white slave traffic," which both shocked and titillated their largely upper and middle class audiences. The era also saw the invention of tabloids - the keen observers of scandals, popular culture, organized crime, spectator sports, new immigration, and debates about sexual morality.

Saskatchewan's Anglo-European settlers would have had a strong belief in the importance of newspapers. By 1850, as literacy increased, women and men had begun reading

⁴ Adams, Keene, and McKay, *Controlling Representations*, 8.

daily newspapers across the western world. By then, the newspaper was an integral part of colonial culture. The subject matter of Saskatchewan's urban newspapers differed from its rural and agricultural papers. Special interest papers such as the *Western Producer* catered to a largely rural and farming readership. City newspapers covered the widest span of topics from agriculture to national and international politics to home-making practices to local news and community events. Urban-dwelling residents, together with rural communities that surrounded cities, made up the majority of city newspapers' readership. It was also common for readers across the prairies and across Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and parts of Europe, to read Saskatchewan's newspapers. The papers were careful to mould a flattering image of their city as the world was their audience.

One newspaper that was particularly concerned about projecting a favourable image of its community was *The Leader*. Founded by Regina lawyer-turned-journalist Nicholas Flood Davin in 1883, *The Leader* started printing weekly newspapers out of a tiny wooden shack before the would-be city had streets, electricity or plumbing. Just the year before Davin started the paper, the *Manitoba Free Press* described Regina as a town where tents and houses went up without much order.⁵ According to the *Free Press*'s correspondent, Regina's establishment in 1882 resulted in a sudden building boom: "Six weeks ago the town was established on the open prairie. Today it contains 8 hotels, 12 stores, 2 blacksmith shops, 2 liverys, 2 laundries, 3 billiard rooms, 2 bakeries, 1 drug store, 1 jewelry, 2 doctors, 6 lawyers, 4 lumber yards and a population of 800-900."⁶ Among Regina's earliest businesses, though rarely acknowledged in its newspaper, were its brothels.

⁵ *University of Saskatchewan Special Collections*, Adam Shortt Library of Canadiana, Earl G. Drake, Regina, the Queen City (Toronto: McClelland & Steward, 1955), 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Nicholas Flood Davin believed prostitution should not be tolerated. But rather than acknowledge the reality of its presence, he used his paper to portray a sex trade-free Regina. He was not the only one who preferred to turn a blind-eye to Regina's sex trade. Historian Earl Drake notes that when a new minister acknowledged the presence of immorality in Regina, many citizens were annoyed. One man responded to the minister, arguing that "Regina is one of the most moral, religious and law-abiding towns in the Dominion."⁷

The Winnipeg Sun admonished Davin and his fellow Reginans, noting that sex workers were some of Regina's earliest inhabitants.⁸ Davin admitted that was true but held that The Leader was above typical tabloid-style reportage that profited from such stories. In a letter in his own newspaper on 10 May 1883, he responded to the Winnipeg Sun's accusations:

Your correspondent wrote that not a word has appeared in The Leader about a house of ill-fame. He is wrong on that head.⁹ But I have not made the matter a prominent subject of discussion because I hope to have The Leader go into families. The less families read of that unsavory subject the better. I never saw any good follow the discussion of it except to the newspapers. Any prurient subject tends to swell their circulation.¹⁰

Davin placed the responsibility of ridding sex workers from Regina on the town's North-West Mounted Police. According to his letter, he had confronted the police and threatened to launch a campaign against them if they did not comply with his views:

I spoke to Major Walsh and told him if painted prostitutes were allowed to walk the streets I should have to attack the Mounted Police. I told him he must rid Regina [sic] so great a curse. He went, as he told me, and warned these persons but they defied him. My opinion as a lawyer, whatever it may be worth, is that he had the power to get rid of the nuisance. The streets, however, have not been disfigured by the presences of these persons since.¹¹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ The Leader, 10 May 1883.

⁹ It appears that the Winnipeg Sun was correct in its assertion that The Leader did not publish any stories of Regina's sex trade. After carefully reviewing The Leader's records I could not find any reports of the subject up to the exchange between the Winnipeg Sun and Davin in May 1883.

¹⁰ The Leader, 10 May 1883.

¹¹ Ibid.

But Davin had it wrong. After reading his letter, concerned citizens wrote letters to the paper informing Davin that Regina's streets were not clear of sex workers. A week after he published his letter, he launched an attack against the mounted police.

On Thursday 17 May 1883, Davin published a half-page diatribe against the mounted police entitled, "WHERE ARE THE POLICE! [sic]" in which he protested the presence of multiple houses "of bad repute" on the north side of Regina.¹² According to Davin, the brothels had as prominent a position in Regina's north end as the Church of England did in the south. Clients of the brothel's workers had no issue with frequenting the brothel in broad daylight any day of the week. And, as Davin noted, the mounted police made up some of the sex workers' best clients: "Indeed the protectors of the peace are breakers of the peace - the red coat of the mounted policeman is seen flashing in and out from the dens at all hours."¹³ In an attempt to argue that the mounties had the power to combat the presence of the "women who were scandalizing" the "young city," Davin presented multiple legal sources, such as the Vagrancy Act.

But the mounted police held a different view of Regina's sex trade. After consulting his colleagues, Major James Walsh, a high-ranking officer who was stationed in Fort Qu'Appelle, concluded that shutting down Regina's sex trade was not a priority for the mounted police.¹⁴ According to Davin, Major Walsh was one of several authority figures who refused to combat the trade: "We have been told that a person in a position of considerable authority said he did not intend to have the police involved with these centres of moral and physical wretchedness as he thought they were a necessary evil."¹⁵ Davin charged that the unnamed figure should either

¹² Ibid., 17 May 1883.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

change his opinion on the matter or resign, "the sooner the better."¹⁶ To Davin, Regina's sex trade flourished because the mounted police were not enforcing the law and, therefore, not doing their job.

The Leader used one case in particular as evidence of the mounted police's incompetence. When a bank clerk named Stanton, who had been involved with a sex worker, misplaced some of his bank's money, the mounted police allowed the sex worker to visit Stanton while he was in their custody: "While [Stanton] was held in jail, with the connivance of the Mounted Police, the wretched woman who was responsible for Stanton's plight was brought to his cell and left alone with him. She then spent the rest of the night in the barracks."¹⁷ Clearly Davin believed it was the woman's fault the money was missing. But he also turned his attention to the mounted police, demanding that "such misconduct" among the police "must cease."¹⁸

Davin's campaign against the mounties continued. In The Leader's 23 August 1883 issue he alleged that a mounted police inspector was allied with a local brothel keeper. By this time, the mounted police had had enough of Davin's reports and they searched for an opportunity to silence him or at least embarrass him. They found him drinking whisky on a train between Winnipeg and Regina.¹⁹ He was summoned to court, fined fifty dollars, and publicly humiliated. Davin believed he was targeted unfairly by the police and argued that the charge against him was a charge against morality and a win for prostitutes. According to The Leader, the day Davin was fined, "a prostitute rode triumphantly up and down Broad Street."²⁰ If that was not enough, a

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 26 July 1883.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), 73 - 74.

²⁰ The Leader, 23 August 1883.

brothel keeper by the name of Burns celebrated Davin's defeat in "heroic triumph" stating, "We have downed Davin at last!"²¹

Public pressure eventually instigated a small shift in the mounted police's response to the sex trade in Regina. In 1888 they arrested two "keepers of disorderly houses" and one "frequent." ²² The *Leader* functioned as Regina's moral watchdog, sounding the alert when a new brothel opened. Its 15 January 1889 issue warned that: "in the west end of the Town and in one of the most prominent streets there is a house of ill-fame."²³ The paper reminded the police of Regina's stance on the sex trade: "We have never allowed such a thing here in Regina." It even informed the mounties of which laws they could use to remove the brothel, stating: "The vagrant act is in force." In July 1889 the Mayor of Regina asked the mounted police to close a house of ill fame on Lore Street.²⁴ The brothel belonged to Josephine Turner, a black woman. Turner's status as both a brothel owner and a person of colour made her a target in the eyes of Regina's elite. The police quickly closed it. In late September 1890 the mounted police closed another brothel but by mid-October more sex workers had arrived on the train to replace the ones who had been removed:

On Monday a number of citizens waited on the Mayor who requested the Sergeant at the town station to arrest them, which he immediately did, also arresting the occupant of the building in which they were found. The whole party was taken to the Barracks and afterwards brought back to town and released on promising to leave town.²⁵

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Saskatchewan Archives Board* (SAB), Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

²³ *The Leader*, 15 January 1889.

²⁴ S.W. Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," in Gregory P. Marchildon (Ed) *History of the Prairie West Series: Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939* (Regina: CPRC Press, 2009), 135.

²⁵ *The Leader*, 30 September 1890; 21 October 1890.

Some were so frustrated by the constant influx of sex workers that they believed the only answer was to burn down the house that had functioned as the brothel.²⁶

From 1889 to 1897, the mounted police registered thirty-five sex trade-related charges.²⁷ It seemed that when they shut down one brothel, another one popped up in its place as demand for sex work remained high. In 1892 Regina's religious community led a campaign to drive sex workers out of Regina and combat other social vice.²⁸ The *Leader* completely ignored the campaign, remaining true to Davin's assertion that the trade was an unsavoury subject best kept out of the view of his readers. The efforts did, however, manage some success in city council and, as a result, council instituted its own city police force to help combat prostitution and public drunkenness. But the city police force remained a small operation for nearly twenty years. Without a jail and without many workers, the force relied heavily on the assistance of the mounted police.

The *Leader's* records indicate a largely vice-free Regina, an image that pleased many of its residents who saw Regina as destined to be the epitome of Anglo-Canadian Protestant society. But the mounted police's registries show that the city was filled with women from varying cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds who opted to sell sex. They worked alone, like Miss Turkey Legs, an Aboriginal woman who was arrested on a charge of prostitution on 5 March 1893; in pairs, such as Georgia Lee, a Chinese woman who ran a brothel with Alice Lorningham, charged on 12 September 1893; or together in larger groups like that consisting of Ida Miller, Nellie Murphy, Patrice Bonsou, and Nellie Sutherland who were arrested as inmates of a house

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *SAB*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

²⁸ Gray, *Red Lights*, 71.

of ill fame on 29 November 1895.²⁹ During a time when their surrounding Protestant Anglo-Canadian community was so concerned with avoiding racial and ethnic mixing, these women worked closely together. And despite the vocal protest of certain citizens and those at *The Leader*, there was clearly a strong demand for sex work in early Regina.

It was not until 28 January 1897 when *The Leader* made its next report that acknowledged the existence of the sex trade in Regina. The paper broke its usual silence on the subject because a popular brothel had burned down and two sex workers had died in the fire. "Two human lives suddenly snuffed out in a fiery furnace," announced the paper - hinting judgment of where the dead women could be spending their afterlife.³⁰ The brothel, named "The Northern Light," had been located close to Regina's mill, servicing much of the workers in the area. According to *The Leader*, in the early morning hours of Saturday 23 January Gertie Underwood, Kitty Meredith, and Alma Scott slept while a fire started in their brothel. Gertie had worked in Regina for nine years. Offering a more sympathetic and human view than that of earlier reports of Regina's sex workers, *The Leader* noted that Gertie had actually come from a "highly respectable" family in England and that she had been married. And that "possibly if the facts and circumstances of her downfall were known pity rather than contumely would be felt for her."³¹ Less was known about Kitty and Alma, though the paper stated that Kitty had been working in Regina for a few months and Alma had just arrived in Regina from Winnipeg two days before the fire. According to *The Leader*, Gertie: "never endeavored to conceal the nature of her trade, but in public she ever maintained respectable demeanor, and insisted that those who

²⁹ *SAB*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

³⁰ *The Leader*, 28 January 1897.

³¹ *Ibid.*

were occupants of her house should do likewise."³² Her brothel was known as a relatively "respectable" house, The Leader noted, "free from the orgies which usually are carried on within such places."³³

The Leader reported that Gertie was the first to wake from the fire. She rushed upstairs to warn Kitty and Alma but fell through the floor before she could reach both of them. She somehow made it out of the house into the freezing winter and walked barefoot to her neighbour's house. When the mounted police arrived at the house at 7 AM, Alma and Kitty were already dead. Gertie was placed under the care of the Salvation Army. According to the women in charge of her care, Gertie had asked for Kitty and Alma, wondering why they had not come to visit her. Reverend J. A. Carmichael of Knox Presbyterian Church performed the service for Kitty and Alma's funeral.³⁴ Interpreting the fire as a sign of god's judgement, Carmichael shamed Reginans for allowing a houses of ill fame to exist in their town. He also directed criticism toward The Leader, arguing that by keeping silent on the issue, the paper was complicit in the prevalence of social vice. Those in charge of Gertie's care believed it best not to tell her that her friends had died. Instead, they focused on efforts to "induce the wayward woman to forsake her evil life."³⁵ But Gertie would not get a chance to change her ways like her caretakers had hoped. Three weeks after the fire, she died from her injuries.

In the year that followed the fire, The Leader did not make any mention of the sex trade. The paper did not break its silence until 28 April 1898 when it published a letter to the editor that discussed Regina's sex trade. Written anonymously and largely in code, a concerned citizen

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

argued that it was time for authorities to stop tolerating the presence of "a certain place" on Broad Street:

I am aware it is a very difficult matter to justify proceeding but I know that an ordinary amount of investigation would reveal a condition of affairs that many would be surprised. Might it not be better to take steps to have the bad moral influences emanating from the place referred to removed. That such a place which had, and no doubt is having a bad effect on the youths of our town, should be allowed to exist so long is a disgrace.³⁶

For the next decade, Broad Street would continue to be a location where the sex trade flourished. But Reginans began to view the business going on in the area much differently than the years before. On 20 February 1909, *The Leader* carried an article by a prominent United States district attorney discussing the problem of white slave traffic.³⁷ The exposé was printed at the request of the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada, which wished to alert Canadians to the danger of white slavery and to encourage them to agitate for tougher penalties against those responsible. As if on cue, Regina had its own case of so-called white slavery on 14 November 1909.³⁸ On Broad Street, a brothel owner was found with two Polish girls aged fourteen and seventeen. He was sentenced to four years in the penitentiary at hard labour. To many Reginans, the case of the two Polish girls confirmed that white slavery was real and that it was in their city. They no longer denied the presence of the sex trade.

The years that followed were characterized by race-based panic in which Anglo-Canadian Reginans implored their police to end the sex trade once and for all. Moral reformers advocated for the separation of racialized groups. Racial mixing had been a characteristic of the sex trade and reformers believed that certain women were at risk of becoming prostitutes when in contact with non-Anglo-European men. Reformers, who were often passionate

³⁶The *Leader*, 28 April 1898.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 20 February 1909.

³⁸The *Leader*, 14 November 1909.

assimilationists, believed people of colour needed social interventions, especially those involved in the sex trade.

Two years after Regina's white slavery case, the police had not found any other instances of forced or underage prostitution. But Regina's moral reformers still demanded action. Police kept a close watch on brothels owned by black men and other people of colour. The typical white slave narrative held that it was men who usually coerced women into the sex trade and men of colour were doubly suspect. City Chief of Police, Theodore Zeats, planned a large-scale raid of black-owned businesses in Regina's Germantown. In the context of Saskatchewan, the image of the vice-ridden neighbourhood was perhaps most prevalent in Regina's Germantown, named after the neighbourhood's Kaiser Hotel. Described as a "backwater town by the tracks,"³⁹ Germantown held the largest variety of class, ethnic, and racial mixing and contact in the city. On 14 February 1911, Zeats raided black-owned brothels and gambling houses, arresting business owners and sex workers.⁴⁰ But those arrested recognized that they had been targeted by police not only for the nature of their businesses but also for their skin colour. They appeared in court the next day, pleading guilty, which was a standard approach defendants took in such cases.⁴¹ Sex workers often pled guilty and were given an option of jail time or paying a fine. They often had the financial means to pay the fine and, thus, were able to avoid jail time. But these black Reginans were sentenced jail time without the option of a fine. William Taylor, his wife Louise Maxwell, and repeat offender Josephine Turner each received sentences of three months. Emelia Webster who pleaded guilty to keeping a house of ill fame, got five months. But her husband, who had watched the court proceedings unfold, opted to plead not guilty in an

³⁹ Gray, *Red Lights*, 80.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 80 - 83.

⁴¹ *The Leader*, 14 February 1911.

attempt to throw a wrench in the discriminatory practice of the court.⁴² He was defended by C.A. Wood, who called the raid race-based discrimination.⁴³ According to historian James Gray, "Wood raised what was probably the first public outcry in Regina against racial discrimination."⁴⁴

Regina's sex workers heard of the harsh treatment of their colleagues. As a result they opted to plead not guilty if they were arrested in order to make the jobs of the city's police more difficult and to be sure to avoid jail time.⁴⁵ Due to the clandestine nature of sex work, there was generally a lack of evidence and, thus, it was practically impossible to get a conviction without a guilty plea. But Regina's moral reformers still demanded the eradication of the sex trade. And Chief Zeats carried out raids that almost always resulted in no convictions and continued to target areas in the city where people of colour inhabited. The Leader refused to publish police court proceedings involving the sex trade. Saskatoon's Phoenix stepped in and, on 3 February 1910, published Chief Zeat's report which detailed his struggle in suppressing a trade that seemed to be out of control.⁴⁶ The Leader eventually broke its silence reporting on a raid that took place in December 1913 when it appeared that Zeats had become overzealous in his effort to obliterate Regina's sex trade.⁴⁷ He raided a home that had been rented out to a group of non-sex-working black women and their children. Their status as single women of colour had been enough to draw Zeat's suspicion.

Despite almost no convictions and no further cases of white slavery, moral reformers agitated to protect white women from prostitution. As a result, the provincial government

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gray, Red Lights, 82.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁶ Saskatoon Phoenix, 3 February 1910.

⁴⁷ The Leader, 23 December 1913.

instituted the racially discriminatory Saskatchewan's Act to Prevent the Employment of Female Labour in Certain Capacities or "The White Women's Labour Law," which barred Asian men from employing white women from 1912 to 1969. The new Act was used in 1914 when Quong Wing, a restaurant owner in Moose Jaw was convicted of employing two white women.⁴⁸ Ten years later, Regina resident Clun Yee applied to Regina City Council for a special permit to hire white women workers. Clun Yee's request was met by a storm of responses, some in favour and some against his application. In Regina's newspapers, some community members called into question the moral standing of the Chinese community, arguing that all Chinese businesses were involved in narcotic trafficking and gambling. Women's groups and business leaders agitated to prevent Clun Yee from receiving his requested permit.⁴⁹ In Saskatchewan, race-based discrimination and segregation were common practices well into the twentieth century, particularly in regards to the sex trade or the potential risk of a woman becoming involved in the trade.

Reports of prostitution in *The Leader* almost completely disappeared at the start of the Great War, reflecting a larger trend that shifted attention from moral issues to the war effort. By the time Martin Bruton became chief of police in 1916, most sex workers had relocated from Regina for the more profitable and less morally-concerned Moose Jaw. Those who did go to work in Regina usually did so temporarily and worked alone in hotels rather than brothels, a fact that *The Leader* noted in both its 28 June 1921 and 26 September 1921 issues when the paper reported that women had been selling sex out of John McCarthy's hotels in Germantown.⁵⁰

Regina's *Leader* published the majority of its reports involving the sex trade prior to the twentieth century. Saskatoon did not have an established newspaper until 1902. Following the

⁴⁸ Quong-Wing v. The King [1914] 49 S.C.R. 440, 23 February 1914 SCC. <http://scc.lexum.org/decisia-scc-csc/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/9673/index.do>.

⁴⁹ Constance Backhouse, "White Female Help and Chinese-Canadian Employees: Race, Class, Gender and Law in the Case of Yee Clun, 1924," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 26 (1994): 34-40.

⁵⁰ *The Leader*, 28 June 1921; 26 September 1921.

failed temperance paper, the Saskatoon Sentinel, the Saskatoon Phoenix published its first issue 17 October 1902. Unlike The Leader, the Phoenix showed no apprehension, in its early years, over reflecting a more realistic image of the city's sex trade — a fact that is apparent in its frequent admission of a "red light section" around the train station.⁵¹ Its frankness in reporting such matters could be attributed to Saskatoon's reputation of being a place where the sex trade was openly tolerated.⁵² The city was dominated by a largely male working class population that was not concerned with projecting a morally-upright image. By 1902, the original plan for Saskatoon as a temperance colony was long over. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Saskatoon would become a railway centre and urban space that was filled with single working class labourers who created a strong demand for sex work.

By early November 1904, the sex trade had become so widespread that Saskatoon's town council asked the Royal North-West Mounted Police (RNWMP) to take steps to suppress the trade.⁵³ Until then, the police had permitted the buying and selling of sex as the vast majority of Saskatoon's residents were not bothered by it. But the mounted police acted on the council's request and raided Theresa Mandel's brothel later that month.⁵⁴ When Theresa was charged for keeping a house of ill fame, the Phoenix reported under "Police Court Proceedings" that "Miss Mandel pleaded guilty to the charge of keeping a house of ill fame near the town of Saskatoon and with having four inmates. The magistrate imposed a fine, which was promptly paid." Perhaps one of the most clear examples of the contrast between The Leader and the Phoenix is the way they covered stories when brothels burned down. When Clara Forester's brothel burned down in early

⁵¹ Saskatoon Phoenix, 6 April 1908.

⁵² Gray, Red Lights, 99.

⁵³ Saskatoon Phoenix, 11 November 1904.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1904.

April, 1908, the Phoenix reported the story in its to-the-point style, a major contrast to The Leader's religious and morally-panicked reportage of Gertie Underwood's brothel:

The blaze was beyond the Grand Trunk Pacific grade, in the red light section, and was a shack built and owned by Clara Forester. The brigade was out with the engine promptly, but they did not go all the way to the blaze which could scarcely have been reached before it would be so far gone as to make the building not worth the saving. The building was burned to the ground.⁵⁵

Unlike The Leader, the Phoenix reported on such cases without morally-charged commentary by the editor or clergy.

Though treatment of the sex trade differed, evidence from both papers reveals that when people of colour were involved in the sex trade, they were usually disproportionately targeted by the mounted police. The Phoenix reported on 19 September 1908 that the police had performed a midnight raid on the three black-owned brothels in the city's west end resulting in half a dozen arrests.⁵⁶ As usual, the sex workers were fined, but before allowing them to leave the court, Magistrate John Jackson told the women that "somewhere in the wide, wide world was the place for them, and that they must set out for there right off."⁵⁷ They were warned by the magistrate that "they would not be tolerated in the vicinity" and were given one week to get out of town.⁵⁸ Doris Denette, the owner of a mixed-race brothel targeted on that September day, employed women who, according to the Phoenix, were "girls of foreign appearance."⁵⁹ The police, the Phoenix informed, "declared war on such houses" in Saskatoon.⁶⁰ Whether they meant all houses of ill fame or just those owned by people of colour is unclear.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 6 April 1908.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 19 September 1908.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Annual numbers of arrests and charges in Saskatoon remained consistent for the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. Every year, the mounted police would arrest five or six women for sex trade-related offences, with the exception of 1912, when they arrested nine.⁶¹ Unlike Regina, the invention of Saskatoon's own city police force in 1906 did not arise from concerns over social vice but rather a concern over an increase in population. But starting in 1909, articles about the sex trade in the Phoenix began to take a moral tone. On 7 June 1909, the paper published a sermon by Presbyterian Reverend J. W. Flatt of Wesley Church on Saskatoon's 20th Street.⁶² In his message, Reverend Flatt discussed the church's role in the city and likened Saskatoon to the Jerusalem that Christ wept over in the New Testament book of Luke: "Jesus saw the wickedness of the people and was concerned about them. While the buildings would decay their souls were immortal. He had a passion for souls and longed that they might be turned from their sin." Applying the text locally, the reverend argued that the same wickedness of Jerusalem before its fall could be found in Saskatoon. "Souls are being bartered for gain," Flett declared about the city's sex trade. "Profanity and immorality are rampant while the amount of drunkenness is such that the people cannot close their eyes to it." "We should be concerned about these things," he said, and called his congregation to action encouraging them to be mindful of their behaviour. "If only our lives were clean and pure and righteous the church would be a mighty power." Flett's sermon had a galvanizing effect on the Phoenix. From that day forward, it changed its approach to the sex trade, adopting a no-tolerance view and choosing to publish articles that revealed the "moral depravity" of Saskatoon's sex trade.

⁶¹ SAB, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RG 18, B1, "Indexes and Registers to the Official Correspondence of the Office of the Commissioner, 1875 - 1920." Microfilm.

⁶² Saskatoon Phoenix, 7 June 1909.

In the first two months of 1910, the Phoenix published three articles detailing "moral depravation" in Saskatoon's "red light section."⁶³ On 1 January 1910, the Phoenix ran a story about a man of colour who owned a brothel and employed his daughter, among other women.⁶⁴ And it was also during this period that the Phoenix began publishing Regina's police reports. On 3 February 1910, the Phoenix revealed that a similar case of a father employing his daughter had also been found in Regina.⁶⁵ But it was the case of Babe Belanger that made the Phoenix's new stance on sex work most apparent.

When Belanger was found "not guilty" of attempting to bribe a mounted police constable, the Phoenix published the only evidence against Belanger - a letter she admittedly wrote to the officer:

Broderick, 8th Oct., 1909

Dear Sir,

Just a few lines to tell you that I am in Broderick ... I was going to see you because I like to talk business to you ... Some one [sic] told me that you have got a summons for me, but I didn't believe it because I don't think that you would like to see me going to jail for six months if you could help it at all. I was going to make an offer to you ... Mr. _____ if you would let me run my house, I suppose it is just with one girl, I would be satisfied. I will give you hundred dollars cash for a couple months, and i [sic] can take my oaths that it will never come out. nobody [sic] will never know ... You don't know how lonesome it is in this little town. If you write I would be glad.

From sincerall [sic] friend,
Babe Belanger⁶⁶

Belanger's only defense was that her letter was meant to be a joke. She had prior convictions of keeping a brothel, the last of which resulted in her banishment from Saskatoon. Both the editor of the Saskatoon Phoenix and the judge who oversaw the proceedings were furious with the

⁶³ Ibid., 1 January 1910; 3 February 1910.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1 January 1910.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3 February 1910.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

verdict. The editor charged that Babe's real joke had been played on the jury and Saskatoon's law-abiding citizens.

Saskatoon became a booming city with a population that jumped from 3,011 in 1906 to 12,004 in 1911, a 299 per cent increase in five years.⁶⁷ With that boom came a new newspaper in 1912, the Daily Star. The Star's ambition was to sell as many newspapers as possible and its owners were willing to use the sex trade to sell those papers. The Star's approach to the trade was also apparent by its business dealings; it owned the building next to its office and rented it to a woman who used it as a brothel.⁶⁸ Given Saskatoon's new status as an up-and-coming city, the Star reflected a changing more urban landscape. The Phoenix represented Saskatoon's past while the Star was its future. It employed both tabloid-style and literary-style reportage in order to draw in a large audience and reflect Saskatoon's new urban vibe. Its approach worked. By 1928 it was so financially successful that it bought-out the Phoenix.

Because Saskatoon's boom had been condensed into five years, the city experienced a major housing crisis. And, according to the Star, Saskatoon's hotels and boarding-houses opted to house sex workers instead of other tenants as sex workers could afford to pay more for their rent.⁶⁹ During Fair Week in August 1912, one boarding house kicked out all its male tenants to make room for incoming sex workers.⁷⁰ The housing crisis created such a problem that the city council attempted to lease downtown churches as dormitories for women and children refused accommodations in boarding houses and hotels.⁷¹ Magistrate William Trant was troubled and angered by these recent housing trends. But rather than blame sex workers, Trant directed his

⁶⁷ Canadian Census, 1911

⁶⁸ Gray, Red Lights, 110-111.

⁶⁹ Saskatoon Star, 24 March 1912; 1 April 1912.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 6 August 1912.

⁷¹ Ibid.

comments to other Saskatchewan residents and the police forces in the province.⁷² Where, he asked, was the Social and Moral Reform Society? Where were all the guardians of morality? Did they not know that vice was rampant in the province? That whole apartment blocks were being turned into brothels?⁷³ In response the mounted police began to "clean up" what the Star termed "social evil" in Saskatoon.⁷⁴

The subsequent arrests allowed the Star to present a glimpse of the lives of the women involved in the sex trade and, at times, display the masculinity of the police. One report that the Star itself described as "sensational in the extreme" offered both.⁷⁵ Chief William Dunning and his men raided a brothel on Second Avenue on 26 August 1912.⁷⁶ The brothel had seven sex workers and even more johns. When the police arrived, mayhem ensued but the police outsmarted any attempts to escape. One woman was so desperate to escape that when the police broke down her door, she jumped through the window: "but her ankle failed to escape the eagle eye of the officer." He grabbed her by the ankle, lifting her with one arm, dangling her out the window. "She was hauled back and rushed to the police station in the police patrol," the Star reported. The raid demonstrated the physical strength, intelligence, and masculinity of the city police while also revealing the overcrowded and "squalid" conditions that some sex workers lived in.⁷⁷

In true tabloid-style, the Saskatoon Star treated the sex trade as a site of scandal and gossip, often presenting charged women much the same way celebrity magazines treat the famous today. Journalists given the task of covering court cases often focused on the women's

⁷² Ibid., 31 May 1912.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 20 July 1912.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 26 August 1912.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

attire and behavior in the courtroom. When Frankie White and Flossie Sherman were charged with keeping a house of ill fame, the Star reported that Flossie cried and shook in the prisoner's dock, begging for leniency. Frankie, dressed in expensive furs and black clothing to convey a sense of mourning, showed no emotion and walked to the prisoner's box "as though she was promenading the city's thoroughfares."⁷⁸

Saskatoon's police often performed raids when brothels were least busy.⁷⁹ For example, when the police conducted one raid on a brothel during the day in Saskatoon's west side, only one white woman and two black women were arrested.⁸⁰ Normally such a raid would take place during the evening and would find a dozen people or more. This method made it appear that the police were making efforts to clean up the city while also protecting johns. But since johns rarely received consequences for buying sex, demand for the sex trade continued and sex workers were often found to be repeat offenders. On 10 August 1912, a few short weeks after the Star published its first article about Frankie White, she appeared again in a story about a raid. The Star called her "an enemy of the police" and detailed again what she wore in the court room during her hearing.⁸¹

Later in August, following the city's fair, the Star began to publish literary-style pieces about Saskatoon's sex trade. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, literary journalism was a male-dominated field that emerged on the cusp of a burgeoning gender crisis, when what had been the normal and preferred notion of manliness was beginning to be replaced with a more physical and working class masculinity.⁸² Some men who worked in fields that were

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 July 1912.

⁷⁹ Gray, *Red Lights*, 106.

⁸⁰ *Saskatoon Star*, 6 August 1912.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 10 August 1912.

⁸² Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the U.S., 1880 - 1970* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1995), 11-13, 19.

not physically laborious hollowed out a new sphere of manly adventure. In the case of journalism, New Journalism or literary journalism became a popular way for male journalists to step into the different and adventurous slum or underworld to explore and demonstrate manly courage and report their findings to their audience.⁸³ Literary journalism shifted the focus somewhat from the poor or racialized or prostitute, the object of investigation, to the affect of the reader and the risk-taking of the reporter, as if the main point of the work was to demonstrate the manly courage of the reporter and the possibility for sympathy - or moral outrage - latent in the reader.⁸⁴

One unnamed Star reporter had written an article that investigated the life of a Japanese sex slave in Saskatoon's west side.⁸⁵ The woman "related a most degrading story of maltreatment her husband had subjected her to." According to the author, Mrs. Kayabashi lived in squalid shack where she was kept by her husband, Eddie Kayabashi, who "worked very little and brought men to the house for immoral purposes." The reporter noted that "a colored man also brought some men" to have sex with her. When Mrs. Kayabashi became pregnant, Eddie forced her to continue to have sex with men. During her pregnancy she got sick and had to be hospitalized. Though Eddie paid her hospital bills and, in her own words, "kept her alive," he did not visit her while she was in the hospital.

The Star followed Mrs. Kayabashi when she was called to the police court to act as a witness against her husband. In the courtroom, she looked like "a Japanese picture of death" holding her new baby boy "in her thin arms." When Magistrate Brown heard Mrs. Kayabashi's testimony, he called it "one of the most detestable cases he had ever heard of." After sentencing Eddie to six months imprisonment with hard labour, the magistrate turned to Mrs Kayabashi and

⁸³ Bivona and Henkle, *The Imagination of Class*.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Saskatoon Star, 27 August 1912.

said: "Go to Manitoba, for goodness sake, and stay with your people. Give the baby to someone or some society that will look after it properly." The case appealed to Anglo-European concerns over the behaviour of racialized peoples, the sex trade, and racial and ethnic mixing — a concern made most apparent by the magistrate's instruction to leave Saskatchewan and to stay with her own kind.

The Star filled its 1912 issues with stories of the city's sex trade. The paper published four stories on the subject in August alone and ten over the course of the year. It was its first year in print and it used the local sex trade to titillate, entertain, and enrage its readers. But in the Star, reader responses were rarely published. Unlike the Phoenix and The Leader, the Saskatoon Star's editor did not publish commentary on the subject, and the paper published only one letter to the editor that represented a readers' view of the sex trade. But that was not until April 1913 when a concerned citizen wrote about the danger of "White Slave Traffic."⁸⁶ That letter would be the last mention of the trade until after the war.

Like The Leader, the Phoenix and Star rarely published articles about the sex trade during the First World War. After the war, new concerns over venereal disease (VD) shifted the conversation about the sex trade. Doctors had become the new authority on the subjects of the sex trade, social vice, and venereal disease. On 11 February 1918, the Star published a talk by Toronto-based Dr. Shearer who traveled to Saskatoon to discuss the health effects of social vice.⁸⁷ To Dr. Shearer, social vice included white slave traffic, venereal disease, and liquor. In an attempt to reinvigorate social concern over the trade, Dr. Shearer explained that though white slavery did not receive much attention following the war it was still a serious issue. He blamed the Protestant Christian community for forgetting the problem of white slavery. He urged the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 April 1913.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 February 1918.

church to take its "rightful place back in the centre of society" and encouraged Saskatoon's churches to serve all the "fallen women" in their community. According to the doctor, it was "Christian chivalry and defence of the suffering and oppressed" that drew Canada into the war. It would be that legacy of compassion and "care for thy neighbour" that would usher in a new vice-free and venereal disease-free era. A year later, the Phoenix published a call for a new "home for wayward girls" in Saskatoon.⁸⁸ Concerns over venereal disease continued into the 1920s.

On 2 November 1924, Wm. J. Battley of the Social Hygiene Association spoke to an audience at Knox United Church about how to combat the spread of venereal disease in the province and the Phoenix published his talk in full.⁸⁹ Battley believed the sex trade was the primary cause of VD and he argued that sex education, strong father figures, and a shift in the province's "male culture" were necessary to end the VD crisis.⁹⁰ It was up to men to "protect their homes" and to prevent their daughters from becoming prostitutes. "Fathers cannot expect their daughters to grow up to the pure type of womanhood they would expect if they insist in telling "smutty" stories before them," he advised.⁹¹ "By setting the proper example," Battley urged, "a father can instill the proper mind of his girl and save her from a life of heartache."⁹² He argued that the cultural norm of men "sowing their wild oats" had to go and that men should aim to be "more chaste, like their mothers and sisters."⁹³ Battley and the Phoenix contributed to what came to be a popular characterization of the sex worker as an infected and dangerous woman who embodied contagion, a depiction that would affect the treatment of sex workers for decades.

⁸⁸ Saskatoon Phoenix, 25 March 1919.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

Saskatchewan's newspapers attempted to shape public consciousness of the province's sex trade by directing and controlling conversations about sex work. These conversations changed across time and between places, reflecting characteristics of communities and their members. Regina's *Leader* reflected differences and tensions between approaches to the sex trade. Saskatoon's two newspapers differed in their approach, with the *Phoenix* treating it as part of life and then, later, as a site of moral and social concern; while the *Star* used the trade to sell papers by employing tabloid and literary reportage methods. But as the *Phoenix*'s report of the case of Babe Belanger indicates, the views presented in newspapers did not necessarily reflect the perspectives of all Saskatchewan residents and they certainly did not represent the views of sex workers. Each of the papers reveal how concepts of gender, race, class, and ethnicity were understood and enforced during the period. As *The Leader*, *Phoenix*, and *Star* affirm, people of colour in Saskatchewan were treated as suspect even when they were not involved in the sex trade, and when they were involved they were punished more harshly than their white counterparts. As a site of social response to Saskatchewan's sex trade and as a cultural tool that held a position of significance in Saskatchewan's colonial society, newspapers provided a location where certain ideas about the sex trade could flourish.

CONCLUSION:

"WHORE-FRIENDLY PEOPLE"

Social responses to Saskatchewan's early sex trade were complex and often contradictory. And as the police records and the province's newspapers reveal, social responses differed from one location to the next. While some saw a trade that did no harm, others considered it a menace to Anglo-Canadian society. In the late territorial period and in Saskatchewan's early years as a province, the sex trade was widely accepted as the population was dominated by men, who created a large demand for sex work. But as the moral reform movement began to gain clout and concerns over white slavery reached a high point, it became difficult to argue for a tolerant approach to a trade that was characterized as a form of coercion and sexual slavery. Social perspectives shifted again with the onset of the Great War. As the venereal disease crisis mounted, sex trade workers were characterized by public health campaigns as conduits of infection and vectors of disease. But regardless of the ways social perspectives shifted around them, sex workers were agents in their own lives. They worked with available resources and negotiated with law enforcement to perform their work.

Law enforcement attempted to take a tolerant approach to the trade. Many North-West Mounted Police constables were clients of sex workers and the force saw a benefit to allowing the trade to exist as it provided sexual outlets. Some officers even came to the defence of sex workers. In the territorial period when a Presbyterian minister wrote to Commissioner Herchmer asking him to remove twenty-six sex workers from Lethbridge, the commanding officer of the town, R. Burton Deane, curtly responded that the town's clergy would do better to pay more

attention to the juvenile depravity among their own congregation.¹ The "professional ladies," said Deane, are "orderly, clean, and on the whole not bad looking."²

Given the connections that sex workers had with police, such as that of Moose Jaw's Chief of Police Walter Johnson and Saskatoon's Chief Robert Dunning, it is no surprise that women like Babe Belanger offered to strike up deals with police in order to conduct their business without legal consequence. One brothel owner, Renée Costa of Swift Current, traveled to the mounted police's Regina office in July 1912 to discuss business matters with Commissioner Aylesworth Perry. According to Costa, the mounted police at Swift Current had shut down her brothel for no reason and, thus, prevented her from continuing to make a living. She called their actions "discriminatory" as the police had allowed two other women to build brothels just outside the town's limits, but had refused to let her do so.³ Perry's response is not recorded, but it is clear that many sex workers felt comfortable advocating for their business interests with the police.

Some sex workers worked closely together and, at times, protected each other. On 24 October 1888 in Fort Edmonton, when Constable Cairney threatened to burn down Nellie Webb's brothel, Webb shot Cairney to protect herself and the other women working in her brothel.⁴ During a period when their surrounding Anglo-Canadian culture was so concerned with ethnic and racial segregation, sex trade workers from varying backgrounds worked together in brothels. Though, according to journalist and historian James Gray, Saskatoon's red light section was partly segregated with one black brothel, one east Asian, and several white ones.⁵ That

¹ S.W. Horrall, "The (Royal) North-West Mounted Police and Prostitution on the Canadian Prairies," in Gregory P. Marchildon (Ed) *History of the Prairie West Series: Immigration and Settlement, 1870-1939* (Regina: CPRC Press, 2009), 137 - 138.

² *Ibid.*, 138.

³ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 27 October 1888.

⁵ James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971), 103.

segregation was in place for the benefit of the johns; they could walk the red light section and visit the brothel that suited their current inclination. The red light section was like a tourist destination that allowed men to travel far and wide without ever leaving their city.

Unfortunately, much of the evidence that would reveal in-depth knowledge of sex workers' realities during this period has been lost. In examining social responses to Saskatchewan's early sex trade it becomes clear that what evidence was documented came largely from the perspectives of those who wanted to see the trade abolished. Reformers and abolitionists, such as members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union or the owner of Regina's *Leader* Nicholas Flood Davin, held social positions that afforded them opportunities to voice their perspectives of the trade as well as gain political and economic capital to combat it. They dominated most public conversations about the trade and, consequently, have deeply influenced historical interpretations of the trade. It is often their social accomplishments that are celebrated in public and official histories. The sex trade is remembered as a characteristic of the seedy underbelly of early colonial life that warranted moral and police interventions.

Saskatchewan's early sex trade is largely erased from public memory. Upon visiting Saskatoon's pioneer cemetery in the city's south-east side, there is a plaque that names some of the cemetery's inhabitants. One such inhabitant is Grace Fletcher, a moral reformer who came to Saskatoon in its early years and made a successful business collecting buffalo bones and shipping them out to be made into fertilizer. The plaque calls Fletcher "Saskatoon's first businesswoman." As histories of Saskatchewan's sex trade reveal, however, it is likely that Fletcher was not Saskatoon's first businesswoman and more likely that an unnamed sex worker was. But that sex worker's history has been lost and forgotten.

In the last fifteen years, sex workers and their allies have made efforts to memorialize histories of the sex trade in North America. In 1997, the International Sex Workers Foundation for Arts, Culture and Education (ISWFACE) purchased the Dumas Brothel in Butte, Montana — a city with much the same colonial history that also contributed to Saskatchewan's early sex trade. Human Geographer Deryck Holdsworth describes Butte as a bachelor's world of miners, loggers, and cowboys who spent their relaxation time in the city's brothels.⁶ Given its long history in the area, ISWFACE saw the Dumas brothel as an ideal site for a cultural centre and permanent museum of sex trade histories. "This is a place that we must make our own once again!" announced the president of the organization, Norma Jean Almodovar.⁷ The brothel is one of the few remaining examples of the architecture peculiar to prostitution in North America and is on the United States National Register of Historic Places.⁸ The city of Butte also memorialized its sex trade in the Copper Block Park where local high school students created silhouetted sheet-metal figures representing sex workers and their customers. A plaque on the site reads:

This unique park commemorates a century of business transacted here. Residents still recall some of the women who were characters and community benefactors. The park is dedicated to these and thousands of other women who lived and sometimes died within the shadows of the district, contributing so significantly to Butte's legendary history.⁹

"Never in my life have I encountered more whore-friendly people," Almodovar commented when asked by a journalist about Butte's memorialization efforts.¹⁰

Though Saskatchewan has not made efforts to memorialize its sex trade history, evidence suggests that the area was also full of whore-friendly people. The case of Babe Belanger

⁶ Deryck Holdsworth, "I'm a lumberjack and I'm OK': The Built Environment and Varied Masculinities in the Industrial Age," in *Gender, Class, and Shelter: Perspectives on Vernacular Architecture*, by E.C. Cromley and C.L. Hudgens (Eds.) (Knoxville TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 11-25.

⁷ Christina E. Dando, "'Whore-Friendly People': Heritage Tourism, the Media and the Place of Sex Work in Butte, Montana," *Gender, Place & Culture* 16.5, (2009): 587.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 594-595.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 587.

indicates a tolerance and even a solidarity that existed in some Saskatchewan communities. Her case is perhaps the best example of the complexities and contradictions that were characteristic at the time. She existed in the liminal space between the starkly contrasting views of her jury and her judge. Similarly, while some saw sex trade workers as criminals, spreaders of disease, or women in need of rescue, others saw community members who were considered, above all else, “not guilty.”

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