

# Foreword and Preface

## The Encyclopedia of British Columbia

### **FOREWORD by the Publisher**

Most people, on hearing of the *Encyclopedia of British Columbia*, have had one of two reactions. The first and, I would like to think, most common - is "At last. What a wonderful idea." The second is less definite and usually begins with the question "What will be in it?" Initially this struck me as odd, since by definition an encyclopedia has everything in it. It is, after all, made from two Greek words meaning 'to encircle knowledge.' But the waters have been much muddied by such usages as the 'Encyclopedia of Hockey,' or the 'Encyclopedia of Hunting and Gathering' which contrive to reduce that most inclusive of concepts to something highly exclusive. We are not entirely innocent on that score, since our encyclopedia excludes everything that is unconnected with BC. But within the realm of Canada's westernmost province our intention has been to encircle all subjects: everything from BC soup to BC nuts.

The next most common question is 'Oh. Do we need that?' We do, on several counts. First, the EBC provides practical information you can't conveniently get elsewhere, and will rival the phone book as a useful reference for anybody in BC or dealing with BC. But we have an ulterior motive that goes beyond practicality, and you will be able to tell what it is just by flipping through a few hundred pages. Even after having laboured for ten years to bring all these scattered bits of data together, we find ourselves awed by what it mounts up to now that it is collected and bound. You simply can't leaf through it without being struck by what a remarkable place BC is: how vast, how various, how unique. It is for this reason as much as any other - to show that not only does British Columbia occupy one of the world's most remarkable landscapes, but also it is the site of equally remarkable human doings - that we have compiled this massive work.

Some may consider the point sufficiently obvious as to make the effort unnecessary, and we wish that were so. But it is our experience here at Harbour Publishing, even after having published some 350 books on BC, that our own story is actually losing ground in the forefront of the public mind, especially among young people. As communications become more and more globalized, there is less and less place for local knowledge. Our hope is that by placing the essentials of the BC story in this concise, accessible form and by making it available not just in one handy volume but also in electronic media ([www.knowbc.com](http://www.knowbc.com)), we will provide basic BC knowledge with the kind of state-of-the-art vehicle it needs to keep pace on the information highway.

To be the first to do anything is both a privilege and a peril. It is a privilege to be the first to arrive at the place of asking "Who are BC's most important writers/athletes/high-tech corporations?" but it is also a terrible responsibility to have to carve the first path through so much new territory, knowing how closely one's choices will be scrutinized by those who follow. It is a challenge that backed me off for years, drawn though I was to the idea of an encyclopedia. The project would have remained in the day dream state had it not been for Daniel Francis. Dan, in addition to writing twelve books worked on the first and second editions of the *Hurtig Canadian Encyclopedia* and the *Hurtig Junior Encyclopedia of Canada*, and served as editorial director of the encyclopedia *Horizon Canada* illustrated history project. Dan had learned many things from this experience, but the chief things was not to be not to be intimidated by that word 'encyclopedia.' He agreed to come aboard as editorial director of the EBC in 1990, and before we knew it he had either written or assigned 2,000 entries and the book was halfway to completion. It was only then that I fully began to understand that our dream was headed for reality. Now that it has completed that journey, I have no hesitation in saying the one person most responsible is Daniel Francis, without whose great experience, enormous productivity and weakness for unlikely causes the EBC would never have come to be.

Several others deserve mention for contributions far beyond the call of duty. First Mary Schendlinger, managing editor, whose dedication to editorial quality is such that I began to understand it as more of a religion than a discipline. On the same plane is Peter Robson, production manager, whose dedication to assembling and deploying the galaxy of illustrations, charts, graphs and other manifold moving parts at times approached the obsessive, and was still not a bit less than the task demanded. Craig Riggs had the double duty of leading the marketing team and also directing the interactive effort, and handled both with competence and aplomb.

In a groundbreaking project such as this, it was especially valuable to have the support of some highly respected professionals in the scholarly and archival fields to assure us that what we envisioned was do-able and worth doing. Jean Barman, BC historian supreme, author of *The West Beyond the West* and co-editor of *BC Studies* in addition to serving as history advisor of the EBC, gave the project her formidable backing from inception to completion. The same can be said of Rowland Lorimer, Director of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University, and the matchless George Brandak who with his colleague Brenda Peterson marshaled the invaluable resources of the University of BC Library Special Collections Division behind the project. The Hon Andrew Petter, then BC Minister of Advanced Education, and the Hon Ian Waddell, BC Minister of Small Business, Culture and Tourism, both took personal interest in the project and gave crucial assistance. Our subject advisors, Jean Barman, Richard Cannings, Ken Drushka, Mark Leier, Ken MacLeod, Charles Menzies, Jock Munro, Jay Powell, Peter Robson, June Ryder, Andrew Scott, Martin Segger and Silas White, each a leading authority in his/her field, graced the project with their presence and made contributions far beyond anything we had a right to expect. I want also to extend my thanks to James Marsh, editor of *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, and Michael Francis, both of whom were unstinting with their advice.

The EBC would not be what it is if not for a large group of enthusiastic professionals who came forward and generously offered special skills and resources, from the photographers Rick Blacklaws, Roy Luckow and Philip Stone to Reimut Lieder of Image Makers, to naturalist extraordinaire R. Wayne Campbell to military history specialist Ken MacLeod to art scholar Martin Segger to labour historian Mark Leier to pop music aficionado Mike Harling to sports experts Fred Hume, Jim Kearney, Archie McDonald and Clancy Loranger. These and dozens like them gave freely of their time, asking no reward except to have a hand in giving their province an encyclopedia worthy of its name. In addition hundreds of interested citizens from all over BC rallied round the project from the earliest stages, offering rare knowledge, writing up local histories, offering family photos, researching obscure topics, vetting endless materials. Their faith buoyed us on bad days.

Even with the best efforts of all its supporters, the long task of research and writing could not have been completed without external financial assistance, and that was provided first and foremost by BC Hydro & Power Authority and the Insurance Corporation of BC, whose chairmen, Brian Smith and Robert Williams, are both men of letters as well as action and became early and committed advocates of the EBC. Another key corporate sponsor was CBC Vancouver Television, under the direction of Rae Hull, whose film and video archives are a national treasure. The interactive edition of the EBC would not have been possible without the support of the Telus BC New Media and Broadcast Fund and the Telefilm Canada Multimedia Fund. The BC Ministry of Education: Curriculum Branch provided special funding for placing the encyclopedia in BC schools.

**Howard White, Publisher**

### **PREFACE by Daniel Francis**

When Howard White and I embarked on the *Encyclopedia of British Columbia*, we imagined a convenient reference work containing basic information about the province and geared to general readers. Our modest intention was to put an entire library between the covers of a single book: a work that included all aspects of life in the province, from prehistory to the present. The arts, sciences, First Nations cultures, sports, prominent people and places, history, geography, religions and industries - all are important and, we felt, deserved to be covered in a comprehensive encyclopedia about the place. It seemed like a straightforward enough job. After all, I'd grown up here. Surely I knew most of what there was to know already. In my naivete, I expected to be finished in a couple of years.

As things turned out, a decade has passed since Howard and I began. During that time I discovered just how diverse, and fascinating, a place British Columbia is. I read hundreds of books about the province, and still did not exhaust the subject. I consulted scores of experts on every conceivable aspect of life in BC, from abalone to Nanaimo bars to rum-runners right-on through the alphabet to the acclaimed bassoonist George Zukerman. At the same time I made several excursions up the coast and into the Interior - by car, airplane, ferry and sailboat - visiting smaller communities and exploring the different regions that make up the provincial mosaic. On Vancouver Island I stayed overnight in the former home of the famed nature writer Roderick Haig-Brown, the only historic site I know of that doubles as a bed and breakfast. Outside of Bella Coola my battered old Honda laboured up the infamous Big Hill, still unpaved and as terrifying as on the day it opened to traffic in 1953, to reach the stunningly beautiful Chilcofin plateau. At Hudson's Hope I plunged underground into the bowels of the W.A.C. Bennett Dam to view the giant turbines that generate close to 30 percent of the province's hydroelectricity. I saw whales in the Inside Passage, hoodoos at Farwell Canyon, the largest tree crusher in the world at Mackenzie, the open Pacific breaking onto the stone beach at Yuquot, the world's tallest totem pole at Alert Bay, the site of the Last Spike at Craigellachie, a historic salmon cannery at Port Edward, the goats on the roof at Coombs. And each time I returned home feeling I had hardly scratched the surface, there was so much still to see.

The story of British Columbia might fill forty volumes. We only had room for one. It was obvious that decisions had to be made. To help us decide what subjects should be included, we assembled a team of knowledgeable advisors, experts with long experience in their fields, who helped us to identify the most important BC people, places and events. With that outline we went about gathering more details, with the objective of providing useful information without becoming too technical or arcane. We were also concerned to make the EBC an encyclopedia for all British Columbians, wherever they happen to live. Too often British Columbia is considered to be synonymous with its southwest corner. We wanted to be sure to include the other three-quarters of the province, and to this end we consulted people in all the different regions to make sure that the EBC did justice to their areas. Many subjects are not specific to BC. Butterflies, for example, occur almost everywhere, as do whales and forest fires. However, BC does have its own species of butterflies, its own populations of whales and its own pattern of forest fires. In every EBC article, it is that local aspect of the subject that is emphasized; so that, for instance, the biographical article on the explorer Alexander Mackenzie concentrates on his expedition west of the Rocky Mountains, and the article on filmmaking is about the industry as it has evolved in 'Hollywood North.' There are other encyclopedias about the world, and about Canada, the EBC is the only one that takes British Columbia as its focus.

The EBC contains much that a reader will erect to find in a general knowledge encyclopedia. There are articles on every premier and lieutenant governor, every significant animal species and every populated place, and articles on writers, visual and performing artists, major businesses and industries, ethnic and religious groups and so on. But there are also many articles on topics that are unique to BC and reflect the singular, sometimes quirky, character of the province: Ogopogo and sasquatch, Chinook jargon, float houses, rain forests, A-frame logging, Baby Duck argillite, Lotus Land, the Flying Seven and many others like them. Most of the articles were written by the staff of the EBC. Many others were written by experts in the field. Every article was then reviewed by a knowledgeable expert to ensure that subjects were treated fairly and comprehensively and that the information in the EBC is as reliable and objective as we can possibly make it. Contributors were allowed to express opinions - their own or someone else's but they were asked to balance their articles by presenting opposing points of view. The EBC is a source of information, not a forum for pleading causes.

I want to express my special thanks to Howard White, without whom the EBC would never have been published because I am quite sure that I never would have found another publisher with enough faith in the idea to give it a try. Howard's urgent belief that the story of BC must be told and preserved inspires the *Encyclopedia of BC*, just as it does all the books produced by Harbour Publishing. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him and with the dedicated people in his company.

**Daniel Francis, Editor**