

If Japan Should Attack: Perceptions of Fear and Threat in
British Columbia's Newspapers, 1941-1943

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

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Abstract

From 1941 to 1943, incidents in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War seemed to bring the conflict closer and closer to the shores of British Columbia. Anxieties about a potential Japanese attack began to grow. British Columbia's newspapers discussed fear and anxiety through their articles, editorials and opinion pieces, bringing together the thoughts and words of Canada's military and government officials, and the writers and readers of the newspapers. The newspaper pieces dealing with the potential threat appeared most frequently surrounding major events in the Pacific, notably the attack on Pearl Harbor, the shelling of Estevan Point, and the Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands. Fear and threat were presented, debated, and reshaped within these newspaper communities. As the nature of the Japanese threat evolved with each major incident in the Pacific, so too did the discussions of fear.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated first and foremost to my incredibly supportive family, without whom none of this would have been possible. To my amazing mother, Charlotte, who has been there for every tear and every triumph. Where would I be without you, mom? To my Aunt Mema and Uncle Dave, who have always fostered all of my interests and have encouraged and supported me in every choice that I've made. It was with you that my passion for history truly began. And to my grandmother, Mona, whose homemade soups and sauces fueled me through the all-night writing sessions. I am so very grateful for the distractions, the laughs, and for the heartfelt care packages that always brightened my days.

I'd like to thank friends from my days as an undergraduate at King's University College, Danielle Brouwer and Marlee Goyette. Without you two, I surely would have lost my mind long, long ago. Thank you for always being willing to edit my work and to talk through ideas. You two are appreciated so much more than you know.

I'd also like to thank my friends here in the Carleton History Department. I am so lucky to have found such an amazingly talented and supportive group of people. Special thanks to Rob Blades, Laura Hochban, Natalie Hunter, and Renee McFarlane for always patiently listening to whatever I needed to get off my chest. Your friendship has kept me sane through these last two years.

Finally, I want to thank everyone I've had the chance to work with in the History Department. I must thank my supervisor, Dr. Norman Hillmer, who has guided me through this thesis every step of the way. Your mentorship and kind words of encouragement have meant the world. I would like to thank Dr. Michel Hogue, Dr. James Opp, and Dr. John Walsh. My work has been so profoundly shaped by what I have learned from your graduate seminars. And I must also thank Joan White, for her administrative assistance and the countless other things that she does for everyone in the department.

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Introduction

In early 1942, while almost all eyes were on the fighting in Europe, a daily newspaper in Vancouver was busy waging a war of its own. That spring, the widely-read *Vancouver Sun* was fined three hundred dollars by the Canadian government for demanding that it improve the defences on the Pacific coast. Through articles and editorials published at this time, the *Sun* generated a nearly continuous discussion about the potential for a Japanese invasion. One of the main arguments in these pieces was that the Canadian government needed to do more to strengthen coastal defences and prepare the province for potential invasion. Essentially, the *Sun* called on the government to take the threat of invasion more seriously.¹ These warnings occurred even more frequently surrounding major events in the Pacific theatre, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor, the shelling of Estevan Point, and the Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands.

From 1941 to 1943, such incidents in the Pacific seemed to bring the war closer and closer to British Columbia. Today, it is easy to say that the people of B.C. were never in any real danger of a serious Japanese attack. No enemy force invaded Canadian shores during the Second World War. But for those who lived through this period, the possibility was real. British Columbians may not have believed that an enemy invasion was inevitable, but there were certainly fears that there would be a major Japanese offensive directed at British Columbia. This is a thesis about these fears, focused on the perspectives of B.C.'s newspapers.

¹ "How Right We Were," (editorial), *Vancouver Sun*, 18 May 1943, 4.

Historiography

Most of the historiography on British Columbia during the Second World War does not give consideration to the concept of threat to the province. Instead, the literature concentrates on the experiences of Canadians with a Japanese ancestry and the fear of attack from within.² In 1942, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Canadian federal government decided to evacuate 22,000 Canadians of Japanese ancestry to the north of B.C. and afterwards to other parts of Canada, where they were closely watched. The study of the evacuation and relocation became a trend in an emerging historiography on the Canadian Japanese experience. Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* was the first work to examine in depth the Canadian Japanese experience during the Second World War. Adachi spent a portion of his childhood in a detention camp, and so his perspective was one of an evacuee. His book was an extensive look at the history of the Japanese in B.C., beginning with the first instances of contact and ending in what was Adachi's present day, the 1970s.³ His work was important in drawing attention to the then neglected history of the Canadian Japanese.

² There is also a vast body of literature on immigration to and immigration policy in Canada. See, for example, Donald Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners: European Immigrant Workers and Labor Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979) and *Reluctant Hosts: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995); Barbara Roberts, *Whence They Came: Deportation from Canada 1900-1935* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1988); Reg Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987); Jean R. Burnet and Howard Palmer, *Coming Canadians: An Introduction to a history of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988).

³ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy that Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976). There were works on the Canadian Japanese during the Second World War before Adachi's, particularly Forrest R. La Violette's *The Canadian Japanese and World War II: A Sociological and Psychological Account* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948). This was an approach to the topic that was mostly interested in the Japanese evacuation as a social phenomenon. Writing in the 1940s, La Violette's research was limited by wartime censorship, and he completely accepted government explanations at the time. This work is discussed in Ann Gomer Sunahara's *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981).

The oral historian Barry Broadfoot published his book on Japanese experience in Canada during the Second World War in 1977. Broadfoot focused his research on those who had gone through the experience, basing his narrative on oral accounts. This approach put personal experience at the forefront, but resulted in historical inaccuracies. Broadfoot's work showed the complexities of the story from both Canadian Japanese and non-Japanese perspectives. It also demonstrated that many who had been involved did not fully understand what had happened to them, and were still looking for answers.⁴

Peter Ward's *White Canada Forever* appeared the next year in 1978. Returning to more traditional sources such as the provincial press and federal inquiry documents, Ward set out to examine the history of west coast racialism and the origins of anti-Asian attitudes and policies in the province of B.C. He argued that public pressure on local, provincial, and federal government resulted in discriminatory policies in immigration and employment, which culminated in the evacuation and relocation of the Canadian Japanese during the Second World War. The third section of his book was dedicated to a discussion of the war.⁵

Building on such work, Ann Gomer Sunahara set out to provide the first account of evacuation and relocation from the viewpoint of the federal government and its policies. The work done before her had been hindered by the inability to access federal documentation; the reliance had been on inquiry publications, royal commissions, and other public domain documents. Sunahara's work sought to "strip away the mask of

⁴ Barry Broadfoot, *Years of Sorrow, Years of Shame: The Story of Japanese Canadians in World War II* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1977).

⁵ Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978).

wartime rhetoric” and trace the origins and evolution of the policies from their birth in B.C. to their implementation under the War Measures Act.⁶ She demonstrated that, at every step, the policies were rooted in racist traditions that were accepted by governments. Policies were implemented despite the fact that both federal and military officials opposed them. While much of her book focused on what the newly accessible documentation revealed, Sunahara also discussed how the Canadian Japanese reacted to and coped with these policies.⁷

With this access to government documents and intelligence, new considerations of government motives and policies concerning the Canadian Japanese emerged. In 1988 a collection of essays regarding government policy and the ethnic experience in Canada during the war were published in *On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*. One of the chapters in this collection, written by J.L. Granatstein and Gregory A. Johnson, assessed whether or not there were concerns that would in any way justify the evacuation of Canadian Japanese in 1942. Titled “The Evacuation of the Japanese Canadians, 1942: A Realistic Critique of the Received Version,” the chapter examined police and military intelligence, the pro-Japanese actions of some Canadians before the war, and the potential for Japanese military offensives against North America. The authors asserted that, if the government had been aware of all these factors, “the arguments for evacuation would certainly have appeared far stronger than they already

⁶ Sunahara, 3.

⁷ Ibid.

did.”⁸ While this chapter entertained other factors regarding the Japanese threat, it focused on and used evacuation as its starting point.

Approaches to the topic continued to develop into the 1990s. In 1993, R.L. Gabrielle Nishiguchi wrote an M.A. thesis on the transportation of Japanese-Canadian citizens out of Canada and to Japan between 1941 and 1947. She argued that the government used and promoted this ‘transportation programme’ in order to “reduce the number of Canadian Japanese in the country” and defuse the tense situation in B.C.⁹ While this work tackled a new aspect of Canadian Japanese history, it also used evacuation as its point of departure, with the decision to evacuate being the focus of Nishiguchi’s first chapter.

General histories of B.C. usually have some part of them dedicated to the Canadian Japanese in B.C. during the war. A history of British Columbia written by George Woodcock, for example, contained a small eight-page chapter on the Second World War. It opened with a discussion of the Japanese in the province and growing suspicions about Fifth Column activity. There was a brief mention of how the attack on Pearl Harbor heightened these feelings; however, the narrative quickly returned to the Canadian Japanese experience of evacuation. It ended with a statement on the long-overdue financial compensation awarded to survivors in the late 1980s.¹⁰ Other histories of the province emphasized the racial policies towards the Asian population. A collection

⁸ Norman Hillmer, Bohdan Kordan, and Lubomyr Luciuk, eds., *On Guard For Thee, War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1988), 120.

⁹ R.L. Gabrielle Nishiguchi, “*Reducing the Numbers*”: *The Transportation of the Canadian Japanese [1941-1947]* (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1993), abstract.

¹⁰ George Woodcock, *British Columbia: A History of the Province* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990).

of essays on the history of British Columbia, edited by J. Friesen and H.K. Ralston, dedicated one chapter to the ‘Oriental Menace’ during the early part of the twentieth century, written by Patricia Roy. However, the chapter dealt with the history of anti-Asian attitudes in B.C., and not with the Japanese specifically.¹¹

More recent work done by Patricia Roy has expanded the historical knowledge of Asian experience in B.C. Roy investigated the extensive history of Asian experience on the west coast through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹² Together, her books offered an in-depth examination of policies and experiences in B.C. from 1858 to 1967. In *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41*, Roy took a look at the larger issues of ‘Oriental’ discrimination in B.C., as well as the federal policies that allowed it. She discussed the distinctions made between Chinese and Japanese within the province, the different immigration policies regarding the two groups, and the way attitudes toward each group evolved over time.¹³ Her next book, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-67* examined the evacuation and relocation of Canadian Japanese during the Second World War. Roy included media commentary in her research and also addressed the impact that the attack on Pearl Harbor had on the perceived threat within the province. However, Roy expanded the study of the legacy of evacuation and relocation, dedicating a large portion of her

¹¹ J. Friesen and H.K. Ralston eds., *Historical Essays on British Columbia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

¹² Among her many works on Asians in B.C., Patricia Roy also published a book alongside fellow Canadian historian J.L. Granatstein and Japanese historians Masako Iino and Hiroko Takamura titled *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

¹³ Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003).

study to the human rights activism done by the Canadian Asian population in the post-war era.¹⁴

Stephanie Bangarth's work on people of Japanese ancestry in Canada and the United States placed a considerable emphasis on resistance and activism against government policies during the 1940s. Published in 2008, *Voices Raised in Protest* examined the violation of citizenship rights within government policies, the differences between their implementation in Canada and the U.S., and the opposition they provoked. Bangarth's study addressed the anti-internment activities of both people of Japanese ancestry and people of non-Japanese ancestry, including the legal action these groups undertook to fight evacuation, relocation, and deportation during the period from 1942 to 1949.¹⁵ A large portion of her research was centered on the policy of evacuation and relocation in North America.

Few scholars have ventured away from considerations of internal and subversive threats to the security of British Columbia itself during the Second World War. Even fewer engage with the idea of Japan as a serious military threat. When they do, it is almost always to discount it. There are rare exceptions. In *The Maritime Defence of Canada*, Roger Sarty devoted an entire chapter to the issue of the defence of B.C. in the early twentieth century. Sarty demonstrated that, during this period, the Canadian government lacked both resources and the appropriate policies to deal with the defence of the province, and that it was largely due to the pressure and protest from within the

¹⁴ Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-67* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

¹⁵ Stephanie Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending North American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

province that things changed in the 1930s. Sarty explained that, at the outbreak of the First World War, British Columbians panicked about the province's defences, worried about a German attack. However, by the end of the war, British Columbians were most concerned about the Japanese presence in the Pacific. Sarty asserted that the choice to evacuate Canadian Japanese in 1942 was a result of a long history of racial prejudice within the province, but also due to the "years of insufficient attention to Pacific coast defence."¹⁶

The issue of the Japanese military threat to the province of British Columbia was much more explicitly addressed in a pioneering article written by Gregory Johnson and Galen Roger Perras, published in *Contradictory Impulses: Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century*. The chapter argued that, although Canadian officials appeared indifferent about a potential Japanese threat against Canada publicly, in private they were becoming increasingly suspicious, especially after the 1907 anti-immigration riots in Vancouver. The authors explained that these concerns were widened as the tension between Japan and the United States continued to grow in the 1920s, making it quite easy for military officials to begin formally planning for Pacific defence. However, Johnson and Perras concluded that these concerns were always held by a minority in the official circles. They stated that "Japan's alliance with Britain, Canadian admiration for a striving Japan prior to 1914, and Japan's support for the Allied cause in the First World War calmed most fears that Japan might attack British Columbia."¹⁷ However, these views

¹⁶ Roger Sarty, *The Maritime Defence of Canada* (Toronto: Brown Book Limited, 1996), 52.

¹⁷ Gregory A. Johnson and Galen Roger Perras, "A Menace to the Country and the Empire: Perceptions of the Japanese Military Threat to Canada before 1931" in *Contradictory Impulses: Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century*, Greg Donaghy and Patricia E. Roy eds., (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 76.

changed as tensions thereafter between the U.S. and Japan continued to mount, and Japan's ambition became clearer. The defence of B.C. was re-evaluated after the Japanese seizure of Manchuria in 1931.¹⁸ This article was important to my research because it directly addressed my subject and provided a concrete basis upon which to build. The perception of the Japanese threat presented by Johnson and Perras is the subject that I wish to discuss: the concept of a physical attack or invasion by Japan against Canada's west coast. However, I aim to address the public perception of this threat, rather than the response of government or military officials. I am interested in the anxieties, concerns, and fears about the Japanese military threat held by B.C.'s public and discussed in the province's newspapers.

The History of Fear and the Nature of Threat

Historians were at first very leery of writing about emotions because they can be so difficult to define and locate.¹⁹ When approached historically, "the subjective experience [of emotions] is invisible," wrote historian Joanna Bourke.²⁰ In her book, *Fear: A Cultural History*, Bourke explained that, even when faced with indisputable examples of fear, historians "have been more comfortable analysing 'utilities' or 'moral economies' than studying the ebb and flow of anger, hatred and fear. Individuals and groups in

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The study of emotions is an immense area. Within Carleton's Department of History, there are several M.A. students working on histories that discuss the emotional past. Evan Jones, for example, is writing his thesis on the ways in which emotional rhetoric was used by a 12th century abbot to emphasize religious difference between Christians and Jews. Laura Hochban is looking at the ways emotion is expressed in the diary of Emily Shore. She specifically wants to discuss the emotional experience of 'being ill,' as opposed to a medical and scientific examination of disease. Emily Cuggy discusses a collective feeling of nostalgia regarding Brandon Manitoba's now-demolished Prince Edward Hotel.

²⁰ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 2005), 73.

terrifying situations are portrayed as economic subjects in trousers and skirts, calmly calculating personal and social risk...”.²¹ She described this approach as a “sober, dispassionate logic to human behaviour.”²² What Bourke argued was that it is important for historians to remember, in contrast, that all humans are emotional beings.

The difficulty lies in accessing past fears. Bourke stated that “The only access we have to fearful people from the past is through the things they left behind.”²³ She argued that “Emotions enter the archive only to the extent which they transcend the... individual psychological experience and present the self in the public realm.”²⁴ One of the ways in which this is done is through the use of language. The language of fear manifests itself in a number of ways, and historians need to be more open to them. Yet, even when words like ‘anxiety,’ ‘fear,’ or ‘terror’ are present on a page, there is no way of knowing for certain what they were truly meant to express. Bourke referred to this as a problem of nomenclature. There is no standardized measure for emotions, and so there is no way to know if what people in the 1870s, for instance, referred to as ‘fear’ was the same as what people in the 1970s called ‘fear.’²⁵ Historians, in Bourke’s view, must let go of a preoccupation with nomenclature and learn to trust their archive. They need to be open to the different ways that fear can manifest itself through language. According to Bourke, expressions of fear can be found in “frightened stammerings,” but they can also be found as “faint, hesitant whispers.”²⁶ Historians need to take the words, ‘anxiety,’ ‘fear,’ ‘panic,’ ‘terror,’ and ‘threat,’ at their face value and engage with them as they would any

²¹ Bourke, 289.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid, 7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 6.

²⁶ Ibid, ix.

other historical writing. However, they also need to consider blatant denials of these feelings or the absence of them, for these are just as telling. The said and the unsaid, the assertion and the denial – all of these were important to my research.

Bourke's advice is central to this inquiry, and it has resonance in our own fear-bound society, as we live with the consequences of 11 September 2001. The *New York Times's* David Brooks described our time as "The Age of Small Terror" and claimed that we are all at risk of random terror, whether in Tel Aviv or Boston.²⁷ Random acts of terror generate a very specific sense of fear, but also a very general and widespread feeling of anxiety. Brooks argued that anxiety is the worst of the two emotions, because it "is an unfocused and corrosive uneasiness."²⁸ The degree of uneasiness is therefore affected by the perceived nature of the threat. Threats can be made either explicitly or implicitly and, as scholars and citizens, it is important to understand the difference.

Brooks stated that, at present, "anxiety induces a sense that the basic systems of authority are not working, that those in charge are not keeping people safe."²⁹ This thesis argues that the same kind of corrosive uneasiness can be found in the past. In British Columbia during the Second World War, the nature of a Japanese military attack changed over time, and this in turn influenced the understandings of and reactions to threat. The term 'threat' has multiple definitions, some simple and others complex. In their book *On the Nature of Threat*, Thomas Milburn and Kenneth Watman stated that at its simplest,

²⁷ David Brooks, "The Age of Small Terror," *New York Times*, 5 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/05/opinion/the-age-of-small-terror.html?_r=0 (accessed 24 March 2016).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

threat takes the following formula: “If you do A, I will do B.”³⁰ However, the authors explained that threat can be more ambiguous than this: “threat exists to the extent the target feels anxiety or anger generated by the threat perception.”³¹ They also posited that the perception of a threat is the result of an assessment made on an individual level, addressing the threateners’ intentions as well as their realistic capabilities.³²

The type of threat that is made also factors into this assessment. Threats can be explicit, when there is a clear sense of who the enemy is and what their specific intentions are. Threats can also be implicit, when the nature of the enemy and its intent are somewhat uncertain. An implicit threat is often considered to be worse than its counterpart because of the uncertainty that surrounds it.³³ As Brooks said, uncertainty and uneasiness is corrosive and results in widespread anxiety.³⁴ Implicit threats are never formally issued, so their existence is perceived in the threatener’s actions and the responses of those who are threatened. For example, one nation’s sudden deployment of armed forces may be perceived as a threat to another. Not knowing who or what the specific target is, or the intended actions of the enemy, results in panic. Targets are left to develop their own answers to these questions, often under- or over-estimating the power of their enemy.³⁵ This thesis argues that the threat posed by the Japanese to the people of B.C. was a mixture of both types. It was explicit in nature because the identity of the

³⁰ Thomas Milburn and Kenneth Watman, *On the Nature of Threat: A Social Psychological Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 8.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, 8-9.

³³ Ibid, 11-12.

³⁴ Brooks, “The Age of Small Terror.”

³⁵ Milburn and Watman, 12.

threatener was known, but it was implicit because the enemy's intentions and main objective remained unknown.

My research will use these definitions and understandings to discuss the concept of a Japanese military attack or invasion of B.C. from 1941 to 1943. I will take the approach laid out by Bourke in *Fear: A Cultural History*, and focus on fear itself. I will examine instances of fear and instances of feelings associated with fear. Fear as an emotion is rarely isolated, often occurring alongside other emotions simultaneously. Fear is induced as a result of a perceived threat, and is often connected to feelings of anxiety, concern, and panic. I will place fear and its associated feelings at the centre of my discussions, and not reduce them to economic or societal by-products.

I will also use the definitions and types of threat described by Milburn and Watman to discuss the Japanese threat and the ways in which it was perceived by the people of British Columbia. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, it came as a complete shock to North Americans. After this incident, it was clear that the Japanese were the enemy and the threat, but their overall objective was still unclear. They had struck Pearl Harbor, but would their advance stop there? The intent of the Japanese threat remained unclear over the course of the next year. When a single Japanese submarine shelled the remote lighthouse at Estevan Point, it was unknown whether or not the raid was a preview of a larger assault or a random nuisance raid. However, as the Japanese moved into the Aleutian Islands, the nature of the threat became clearer, as it appeared, indeed, that an assault against the North American continent was in the works. The ways in which the Japanese could strike from a base on the Aleutians made it easier to imagine what an attack or invasion would look like. If the Japanese did attack, it would likely be

through the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. These small changes in the nature of the Japanese threat resulted in changes within the conversations taking place in B.C.'s newspapers. The province's newspapers were a source and site of such complex conversations.

The Language of Newspapers

At the most basic level, newspapers are a commodity to be purchased and consumed. Information is selected and presented in a way that is thought best to appeal to readers, and the commercial aspect of newspaper production cannot be ignored. Professor of Journalism History, Martin Conboy, stated that this was a very traditional and outdated understanding of the purpose of print media in his book *The Language of Newspapers*. Conboy argued that there was a symbiosis between newspapers and their readers. The reader is not just a "passive vessel" on which information is imposed.³⁶ Instead, they play an active role in the "meaning-making" of newspapers, and an important aspect of their involvement is through the use of specific language.³⁷ Drawing from Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities, Conboy asserted that, through language, "newspapers extend...[social] activity beyond the confines of face-to-face discourse to an extended, imagined community of kinship...".³⁸ Language within the newspaper is therefore part of a powerful social activity. Important messages and themes can emerge out of the specific language used within a given community and out of the ways in which

³⁶ Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2010), 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, 3.

certain topics are discussed. Newspapers are representative of a community, and readers have agency.

Like all types of media during the Second World War, British Columbia's newspapers were subjected to government censorship. In his book on Canadian censorship during the war, Mark Bourrie wrote that the Canadian censorship system was "the most draconian media-control mechanism among the Allied countries."³⁹ Canadian censorship was backed by the powerful and controversial War Measures Act, and was implemented for two main reason: to protect military secrets and to prevent the breakdown of civilian morale.⁴⁰

Contemporaries brooded over the complexities of censorship throughout the war. In early 1940, the social democratic journal, the *Canadian Forum*, published an in-depth article on the dissemination of information through print media and radio during times of war. The article began by outlining the lessons learned during the last war:

Since the last great war, governments have forgotten nothing and learned much. They have not forgotten for instance, that he who most effectively wields the words wins the war; and they have learned a great deal about wielding the words. It has been said that in modern large-scale warfare everyone is a soldier. And while every army still moves upon its belly, government knows that the army at home moves faster and more satisfactorily on a belly filled with wind.⁴¹

In order to keep the army at home moving, the *Forum* stated that certain types of media coverage needed to be avoided. It emphasized the danger of "eyewitness" accounts, and

³⁹ Mark Bourrie, *Fog of War: Censorship of Canada's Media in World War Two* (Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 2011), 11. Another source regarding Canada's censorship during the Second World War is Richard S. Malone's *A Portrait of War, 1939-45* (Toronto: Collins, 1983). Malone worked closely with many senior commanders and political leaders during the war. The fifth chapter of the book deals with the press and propaganda.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ John Fairfax, "Canada and the World War," *Canadian Forum*, vol. XX, no. 231, April 1940, 7.

stated that American press agencies had promised the United States Federal Communications Commission that they would try to avoid such reports. According to the Commission, eyewitness accounts resulted in “horror, suspense, and undue excitement.”⁴² There was an understanding of the power of language of anxiety, fear, and threat in the media and its potential social repercussions.

However, Bourrie explained that, in practice, censorship of the print media had no teeth. The system in place was too small to be effective: “one- or two-person bureaus were set up in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver with a small head-office in Ottawa using borrowed space near Parliament Hill... The censors had no extra gas rations, worked in tiny borrowed offices, and they became testy when out-of-town reporters made collect calls to them.”⁴³ Although reporters and journalists were aware of how this system worked, most willingly abided by censorship regulations. Yet there were several instances where reporters blatantly defied the rules. One such incident concerned the 1942 series of articles published in the *Vancouver Sun* on B.C.’s defences and preparedness, for which the *Sun* was fined.⁴⁴

Canada’s newspapers did operate under censorship regulations throughout the Second World War, but the adherence to and enforcement of censorship are complex topics. In writing, the Canadian censorship program was harsh, backed by powerful legislation and clear-cut penalties. However, the rules were obeyed on a voluntary basis. Media conversations about sensitive topics, like the state of B.C.’s defences, were not fully restricted. The fact that several Canadian newspapers were charged for reporting on

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Bourrie, 32.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 48.

such topics is evidence of this. It is also evidence that criticism and critical thinking was being written and published. And, if we apply Conboy's understanding of newspapers, this meant that criticism and critical thinking was happening within the community of which the newspaper was an integral and crucial part.

British Columbia's Newspapers as a Primary Source

I have attempted to gather information from a group of B.C.'s newspapers that varied in terms of circulation and geographical region. These choices were deliberate and merit some explanation. Choosing a Vancouver newspaper was a necessity, with that city being "the largest centre of population W. of Toronto" in 1941, in the words of the *McKim's Directory of Canadian Publications*.⁴⁵ Two large newspapers competed for dominance in Vancouver during the early twentieth century, the *Province* and the *Sun*. In 1942, the *Province* was far ahead of the *Sun*, with circulation numbers sitting at over 90,000.⁴⁶

However, the *Province* circulated all over British Columbia, and was not confined to the area of Vancouver. The *Sun* circulated within a thirty-seven-mile radius of the city and was concentrated on Vancouver alone. While its circulation numbers were nearly 20,000 less than the *Province*, it was more representative of a specific community and therefore more appropriately fit the aims of my research.

Choosing Victoria as another research site was a straightforward decision because it was the province's capital. It was also important because it was a headquarters of the

⁴⁵ *McKim's Directory of Canadian Publications, Thirty-Fourth Edition* (Toronto: A. McKim Limited, 1941), 394.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force.⁴⁷ The *Victoria Daily Times* held the largest circulation numbers for a daily paper in the city with over 13,000 subscribers, was liberal in leaning, and, according to the McKim Directory of Canadian Publications, had “strong reader appeal.”⁴⁸ Prince Rupert was another place and space of military and commercial importance. Prince Rupert was “the western terminus of the C.N.R. [Canadian National Railway]” and the “chief port for deep sea fisheries, having a larger tonnage of fish than any other Pacific port.”⁴⁹ The *Daily News* was the highest circulating paper in the city in 1941, and was independent.

These three cities are all located along the province’s coastal region, and it was important to include other geographical regions in my research in order to extend my understanding of provincial opinion. Papers from Prince George, Kelowna, and Vernon are also examined in this study. Prince George was located in the central interior of the province, and laid at the intersection of the Trans-Provincial and Alaskan Highways. The town’s population in 1941 was less than 2,500 people and only one weekly paper was in circulation. The *Citizen* was a recently founded paper in 1941, having been first established in 1916, and was independently run. Circulation numbers for this paper were around 1,300.⁵⁰

While the population of Kelowna was nearly double that of Prince George in 1941, it too had only one weekly paper in circulation, the *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, with circulation numbers around 1,400. Like the *Prince George Citizen*, the *Kelowna*

⁴⁷ Ibid, 404.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 406.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 389.

Okanagan Courier had been recently established in 1904, and was independent. The town of Kelowna was important as the main site of fruit and vegetable production within the province during the 1940s. Vernon was located in the same district as Kelowna, and both were located in the lower interior of the province. In 1941 Vernon had a population of around 4,000 and was the host to a Permanent Militia Camp. The town had only one weekly paper, the *Vernon News*, which was established in 1891 and independently run. The circulation numbers of this paper were much higher than those of the *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, reaching about 2,300 people.⁵¹

These newspapers present a diverse array of sites. They operated in both cities and small towns, in the province's coastal region and in the central and lower interior. For the most part, they declared themselves independent of political leaning, or were slightly liberal. Most of the locations held some sort of commercial or strategic importance, and many held a direct connection with the Canadian armed forces. These are important reasons in choosing all of these locations and the newspapers that served them. However, accessibility was also a factor. All of these newspapers were available through the Library and Archives of Canada catalogue, and could be consulted in person. The majority of the newspaper material I consulted appeared on the front pages of these newspapers; however, the location of pieces is noted throughout my research. I mainly focused on articles, editorials and opinion pieces within these newspapers. Letters to the editor and op-eds are used sparingly, as the majority concerned a racialized notion of the Japanese threat within B.C. itself, a large topic outside the scope of my research. Although for the purposes of my analysis I isolate one specific understanding of the

⁵¹ Ibid, 403-404.

Japanese threat, that apparently represented by the Japanese population within the province of B.C. must have affected how the external threat posed by the Japanese in the Pacific was perceived. While the two threats could fruitfully be studied together, I chose to focus on just one of them, and the one that has been given little attention by scholars.

The purposes of my research are twofold. First, I aim to carry out a careful examination of the perceptions of threat on Canada's west coast during the Second World War, with specific reference to British Columbia and the threat of a Japanese attack. I cover the period from the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 to the Allied recapture of the Aleutian Islands in August of 1943. The Japanese threat will be treated solely as an external military threat, and not as a threat from within the province – a scholarly area that has already been extensively studied. Second, I inquire into the views of B.C.'s newspapers and the communities in which they existed. This inquiry will be conducted by using specific approaches, definitions, and understandings of fear, the nature of threat, and the importance of newspapers as sources.

I take the same approach as Bourke did in her work, placing anxiety and fear at the centre rather than the outskirts of my analysis. I look for both “frightened stammerings” and “faint hesitant whispers” of anxiety and fear in B.C.'s newspapers.⁵² I also search for absences and denials. Some articles and editorials describe fear and threat in clear, straightforward language, while others deny its existence completely. Both presence and absence are important and will be discussed in detail. I will use the careful definitions of threat and the nature of threat that were laid out by Milburn and Watman.

⁵² Bourke, xi.

And I will consider the scope and significance of newspapers as Conboy captures them, aware of the dynamics between newspapers and the communities in which they operate. I will use B.C.'s newspapers for both their narrative power as well as their explanatory power. It is through the newspapers that I will examine British Columbian fears and anxieties about a potential Japanese attack.

The chapters that follow are structured chronologically, beginning with a brief discussion of British Columbia before the attack on Pearl Harbor. The first chapter examines the newspaper coverage concerning the attack on Pearl Harbor and the ways the media attempted to reassure readers of their safety. The second chapter addresses the coverage during the first six months of 1942, focusing on the growing concern about British Columbia's defences. The final chapter considers the newspaper coverage during the final six months of the Japanese Campaign in the Aleutian Islands, emphasizing the sense of heightened concern. These chapters will discuss the language, themes, and messages about the anxieties and fears of a Japanese attack presented in the newspapers under study, and how they changed over time between the years 1941 to 1943.

Chapter One

War Comes to the Pacific: Reassurance versus Fear, November to December 1941.

The Second World War did not provoke the first instances of concern over defence in British Columbia. It is important to note that threat from without, and protection from it, had concerned residents of the province for decades prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. Before representatives from B.C. agreed to join Confederation in 1871, the responsibility for the maintenance of a defensive naval base at Esquimalt had to be assumed by the Dominion government.⁵³ During the First World War, when rumours arose of German cruisers terrorizing the Pacific, Premier of B.C. Sir Richard McBride privately negotiated the purchase of two American submarines for the protection of his province. He had initially asked authorities in Ottawa to approve the sale, but did not wait for a response. For several days the two vessels were technically the property of British Columbia, acquired by their premier during a time of heightened emotion.⁵⁴

It is therefore not surprising that residents of B.C. were once again concerned about the province's safety during the Second World War. This chapter will explore the contents of selected B.C. newspapers during the month of December 1941. It will focus

⁵³ Clause number nine of the Order-in-Council admitting British Columbia into Confederation stated that "The influence of the Dominion government will be used to secure the continued maintenance of the naval station at Esquimalt."

Government of Canada, "Order of Her Majesty In Council Admitting British Columbia Into the Union," *British North America Acts and Selected Statutes, 1867-1948*, (Ottawa: King's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1948), 157.

⁵⁴ Gregory A. Johnson and Galen Roger Perras, "A Menace to the Country and the Empire: Perceptions of the Japanese Military Threat to Canada before 1931," in *Contradictory Impulses: Canada and Japan in the Twentieth Century*, Greg Donaghy and Patricia E. Roy, eds., (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 66.

on the coverage surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, discussing the reactions presented in the newspapers and the distinct themes that emerged within them.

Even before the attack on Pearl Harbor, a number of groups in B.C. had begun preparing for the crisis that would result from an attack. The Air Raid Precaution Program (A.R.P.) was just one example, launched in Canada as a branch of the Department of Pensions and National Health in the 1930s. While largely focused on responding to air attacks, the A.R.P. was designed to “give protection to the civilian population against any form of enemy activity.”⁵⁵ The program offered a number of courses on emergency training for civilians, including first aid and the proper way to deal with incendiary bombs and gas attacks. Statistics for this program were taken annually and were published by the Department before Pearl Harbor. In 1941, the number of A.R.P. participants in B.C. was in the low forties, suggesting that the public was not overly interested in preparedness or the possibility of attack.⁵⁶ Just two years later, after increasing Japanese activity in the Pacific, this number exploded. While the survey of participants was expanded to include service workers in firefighting and healthcare, the number of those associated with the A.R.P. in the province of B.C. by 1943 was estimated at over sixty thousand.⁵⁷ There is no way to know for certain that this increase was a direct result of a greater concern over a Japanese attack, but the statistics are noteworthy nonetheless.

⁵⁵ Government of Canada, *Report for the Work of the Department of Pensions and National Health for the Year Ending in March 31, 1941*, (Ottawa: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1941), 164-165.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Government of Canada, *Report for the Work of the Department of Pensions and National Health for the Year Ending in March 31, 1943*, (Ottawa: Printer to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1943), 59.

Another potential indicator of the concern about a Japanese attack was the news coverage on the actions of the Japanese in the months before Pearl Harbor. Newspapers across Canada, both big and small, had been monitoring the growing tension between Japan and the United States. The two nations were negotiating terms of agreement throughout 1941, and some B.C. newspapers remained optimistic about the outcome. In September, Captain Elmore Philpott – journalist, politician, and First World War veteran – wrote a piece for the *Vernon News* in which he stated that Japan was doing everything in its power to come to terms with the United States. Philpott was convinced that Japan was determined to be on the winning side in the Second World War, and was therefore “getting ready to rid herself of the Axis stigma while there [was] still time to do so.”⁵⁸ He continued by saying that the Japanese would soon come to their senses and realize that peace with the United States was the only way to accomplish this.⁵⁹

While the language of the Philpott piece seems to downplay the threat of the Japanese, other articles were not as hopeful. The *Victoria Daily Times*, for example, had a more ominous attitude about Japan’s ambition. The articles published in this paper provided a serious consideration of the problems that war with Japan would present. On 3 November 1941, the paper ran an article in the bottom left corner of the front page titled “West Coast Grows In Importance.” While this article was small and lacked great detail as to exactly why the West Coast was becoming more important, it did note that “it [was] generally known’ [amongst civilians] that new air bases had been established in order to connect Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon to Alaska for defensive

⁵⁸ Captain Elmore Philpott, “JAPAN LEADS,” *Vernon News*, 8 September 1941, 6. The reference to “Axis stigma” made in this quote refers to the German-Italian alliance in the Second World War .

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

purposes.”⁶⁰ The timing of this piece’s publication as well as its presence on the front page suggests that this “growing importance” may have been tied to the escalating tensions between the U.S. and Japan.⁶¹ As the title of the *Daily Times* article suggests, the potential for conflict was becoming a more serious matter.

The paper used similar language in articles published the next day, continuing the conversation about Japan and the province’s defences. Although tucked away on the fifth page, an article titled “Esquimalt, Victoria in Hazards Class” immediately grabbed the reader’s attention. It discussed the contents of a recent federal Order-in-Council that named the areas of Canada that were “peculiarly subject to hazards as the results of enemy attacks or counter-action.”⁶² Esquimalt-Victoria was considered to be just as vulnerable to potential danger as Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa-Hull, Prince Rupert, Sydney, Halifax, Saint John, and Quebec City. While not considered important enough news to grace the front page, the language used was serious, even ominous. Words like ‘hazard’ and ‘attack’ had the potential to arouse feelings of uneasiness.

Other *Victoria Daily Times* articles used variations of the word ‘imminent’ in discussing the likelihood of a clash between Japan and the U.S. The daily newspaper

⁶⁰ “West Coast Grows In Importance,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 3 November 1941, front page.

⁶¹ Attitudes about Japan’s ambitions quickly changed when the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931. Tensions between the United States and Japan, specifically, began to worsen when Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September of 1940. The official history of the American Army, written by Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild claimed that this pact was primarily aimed at the United States. If the U.S. attacked Germany or Italy, Japan would attack the U.S. However, this pact also allowed Japan a “freer hand” in the western Pacific. In July of 1940, Japanese commanders decided to expand their control into Indochina, Thailand, Malaya, Burma, and the Dutch and British East Indies. This expansionist attitude concerned American authorities. However, the Japanese sent Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura as an ambassador to the U.S. to begin negotiating an American-Japanese agreement. These negotiations slightly eased tensions between the two nations and were still ongoing when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *United States Army in World War II The Western Hemisphere: The Framework of Hemisphere Defense* (Washington: Officer of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1960), 74-76

⁶² “Esquimalt, Victoria in Hazards Class,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 November 1941, 5.

covered the negotiations between the U.S. and Japan extensively, providing commentary from high-ranking military and government officials. All of the pieces contained a similar message – that conflict between the two nations was looming and that the United States was more than ready for it. A little over a month before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the *Victoria Daily Times* published a front page article quoting the Lieutenant-Governor of California, Ellis E. Patterson. After returning from a visit to Washington, D.C., Patterson told the press that he was thoroughly convinced that the United States and Japan were on the verge of war.⁶³

On 10 November 1941, the front page of the *Daily Times* declared that Britain was sitting in wait, ready to support the United States when war with Japan broke out. The article said that the British declaration of war would come “within the hour” of the American declaration.⁶⁴ The article also included words from British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who said that war would “soon spread to the remaining fourth of the globe.”⁶⁵ The involvement of Britain would implicate Canada as well. If the Empire was going to support the United States, Canada would not have much of a choice in offering their support. Geographically and politically, war between Japan and the U.S. would mean serious action for Canadians as well.

None of the pieces published in B.C.’s newspapers in the months leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor specifically discussed the Canadian position on Japan. The coverage throughout the rest of November focused on the failing negotiations between the U.S. and Japan and the ready and willing British Empire. The Toronto-based

⁶³ “Pacific War Threat,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 November 1941, front page.

⁶⁴ “Britain to Join War on Japan If U.S. Fights,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 November 1941, front page.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Canadian Forum, however, did offer some insights on Canada's position on Japan. The December issue of the *Forum* included an article titled "The Reluctant Dragon" which bluntly stated for readers that the Pacific war was near. The author of the article suggested that a clash in the Pacific was no longer a matter of 'if' but instead 'when' and 'where.' It stated that "there [did not] seem to be any solution of Japan's predicament short of war, [but] it is still not clear just where, when or how war will come to the Pacific."⁶⁶

The answers to the *Forum's* questions arrived on the morning of 7 December 1941, when the attack it had warned against began. Around 7:55 a.m., a Japanese striking force of roughly three hundred and sixty planes was seen heading towards Hawaii. The planes attacked the island of Oahu, the naval base at Pearl Harbor, and the nearby Hickam Air Field in three coordinated waves, targeting the American Pacific fleet. In less than two hours, there were over three thousand casualties and the loss of, or severe damage to, "188 planes of all types, 8 battleships, 3 light cruisers, and 4 miscellaneous vessels."⁶⁷ Japan had brought the United States into the war, while extending the scope of the war itself to the Pacific Ocean – and to the province of British Columbia.

The Canadian press was quick to react, labelling the attack deceitful and treacherous. The event was front page news in every B.C. paper, with most publishing short summaries that included estimated casualties and damages, alongside quotations from U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Most of these accounts emphasized the calculated nature of the attack, borrowing from a speech Roosevelt delivered to Congress

⁶⁶ "The Reluctant Dragon," *Canadian Forum*, December 1941, vol. XXI, no. 251, 9.

⁶⁷ Congress of the United States, *Report of the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), xi.

shortly after the event. Roosevelt had said that “the distance of Hawaii from Japan made it obvious the attack [had been] planned deliberately many days or weeks ago. During the intervening time, he said, the Japanese government ‘had deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.’”⁶⁸

B.C.’s newspapers conveyed a clear message - the United States had been the victim of a surprise attack. While the exact numbers of casualties and lost ships varied from paper to paper, the underlying message of surprise and deceit was present in all of them.

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the threat to British Columbia, and to all of Canada, would be the unpredictable consequence of a clash between the U.S. and Japan. There was no way of knowing what these consequences might look like or how they might affect Canada. The attack on Pearl Harbor demonstrated what Canada might also have to face – a multi-wave aerial attack, launched from aircraft carriers somewhere else in the Pacific. It could cause great damage to even heavily defended areas. It could induce panic and chaos, since the intent of the enemy was unknowable; would it be the first of many, or perhaps a preview to an even larger assault or an all-out campaign? The potential for a Japanese threat to Canada’s west coast therefore became much more serious in the days after Pearl Harbor. While Japan’s next move was unknown, British Columbians had an idea of what the Japanese were capable.

B.C. newspapers were quick to project an attitude of cool calm concerning this threat, reassuring readers of their safety. In British Columbia, this attempt to reassure came in three noticeable themes: reassurance through physical distance, reassurance

⁶⁸ “3,000 Casualties At Pearl Harbor, U.S. Joins Britain in War On Japan, Japs Smash at Manila Airport and Fort,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 8 December 1941, front page.

through already-established defence systems, and reassurance through emergency preparedness. Each of the attempts presented in the papers reflect a government-approved response, aimed to maintain morale. However, each attempt was met by increasingly stronger questioning from readers and newspaper writers alike.

1.1 The Shattered Illusion: Reassurance through Physical Distance

The immediate move toward reassurance was made in order to prevent unnecessary panic and chaos in the province during the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The government's official history of the army by C.P. Stacey described the heightened sense of concern in Canada during this time. He stated that the attack had resulted in chaos and "the air buzzed with remarkable and alarming rumors. One of these rumors claimed that the main section of the Japanese fleet was '154 miles west of San Francisco...[and was] headed north-east.'"⁶⁹ Rumours like this presented uncertainties, which led to a general uneasiness. The fact that an uncertainty was roaming the North American Pacific challenged the notion of safety through distance. The enemy was quickly closing the gap and was bringing the war with it. The shattered illusion of security was clearly played out in B.C.'s newspapers as well. Main feature pieces on the front pages often attempted to uphold the concept of safety through distance, while editorials and opinion pieces opposed it with language that firmly placed Canada's west coast on a "front line" of the war.

⁶⁹ C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, Vol. I (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1957), 169.

The daily newspapers were the first to deal with the topic. On 9 December, the *Prince Rupert Daily News* published an instructional piece that explained how to handle the blackout precautions that had been implemented all along the Pacific coast in response to the attack in Hawaii. Towards the end of the piece, the paper turned to a reassuring tone, reminding readers that the enemy was still far off in the distance and that there was no need to worry. The article told the people of Prince Rupert “We are as safe as any place on the coast and probably much safer than most places.... We are very far from any Japanese base, so far that we are not likely to find our daily operations interfered with.”⁷⁰ Yet, at the same time, the concept of safety through distance was also challenged. An editorial published in the same column as the instructional piece asserted that B.C. was not safe. The editorial told readers that as a result of Pearl Harbor “conditions have changed and we find ourselves nearer the enemy. The Pacific Ocean does not so effectively separate us from Japan so we are liable to clash at any time.”⁷¹ On the same day, in the very same column, two pieces published by the *Prince Rupert Daily News* portrayed the different approaches to coping with the Japanese threat – outright denial of danger, and clear acknowledgement of it. This tension existed throughout the entirety of the 1941 to 1943 coverage.

The same type of discussion occurred in other B.C. papers, but was especially present in the *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*. The weekly newspaper discussed Pearl Harbor on 11 December with several articles focused on the theme of distance. The first article in a front page column titled “Canada at War,” said that the dropping of Japanese

⁷⁰ “Being Without Electricity,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 9 December 1941, 2.

⁷¹ “Nothing New in War,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 9 December 1941, 2.

bombs over Hawaii “moved CANADA CLOSER TO THE CONFLICT and brought British Columbia from the quiet backwater of the war right into the frontline.”⁷² Not only did this article use the same language to situate B.C. in the war, it also made use of capitalization to emphasize certain words. The choice to capitalize “CANADA CLOSER TO THE CONFLICT” was a deliberate one, making the words stand out from others on the page and adding a sense of urgency to the issue.

Another article in the *Courier*’s “Canada at War” column contained a similar message. It began by stating “War in the Pacific brought WAR CONDITIONS to the British Columbia coast and all air, naval and army units were made ready for instant action.”⁷³ The use of the words “WAR CONDITIONS” was similar to the use of “frontline,” in that it shifted the position of the province from a place on the homefront to a place on the battlefield. The article went on to declare that B.C. had been “removed” from safety and was now “likely to see enemy attack.”⁷⁴ The articles found in the *Vancouver Sun* at this time used similar language, with one piece asserting that the entire Pacific coast south of Alaska was now an “attack area.”⁷⁵

The *Prince George Citizen* also reported on Pearl Harbor by discussing distance, but did so by describing how the same belief in safety through distance had failed Hawaii. An 11th December editorial called “Excuses” argued that, because an attack had happened in Hawaii, it could by implication happen in B.C. as well. According to the author of the article, Hawaiians had assumed that “the Pacific Ocean was between them

⁷² “Canada at War” column, *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 11 December 1941, front page.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ “Prince Rupert Bristles With Defence Units,” *Vancouver Sun*, 11 December 1941, 11.

and any “trouble” that might arise, and they were protected by a mighty fortress and the whole U.S. Pacific fleet.”⁷⁶ Hawaiians had not only felt secure in their distance from the main areas of war, but also had the additional reassurance of an established naval presence. Yet they had still been attacked and hit hard by the enemy. This piece called on the residents of Prince George to avoid a similar fate. The article claimed that both American and Canadian authorities had thought an attack on the Pacific Northwest was “imminent,” and that because of its importance as a major centre of communication, Prince George might be a target.⁷⁷

All of these papers made use of specific language when discussing the state of B.C.’s safety in the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor. These words directly related to a recurring theme on the perception of safety through distance. The conversation continued when air raid alarms began to ring out along the American Pacific coast. Air raid alarms occurred more frequently in places like Los Angeles and San Francisco in December of 1941. B.C.’s newspapers were quick to report on these events and a large number of articles describing the alarms were published throughout the province. The articles on air raid alarms did not make use of the same kind of language to discuss the notion of safety through distance. However, they did still suggest that residents along the coast were growing more concerned about enemy raids on the mainland.

The first reports on an air raid alarm concerned an incident in San Francisco. The *Prince Rupert Daily News*’ 10 December front page included an article beside the

⁷⁶ “Excuses,” (editorial), *Prince George Citizen*, 11 December 1941, 2.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

headline and outlined in a dotted box to make it stand out from the other pieces. Titled “Frisco Has Raid Alarm,” the article reported that the entire city of San Francisco had gone into an almost complete blackout after flares were rumoured to have been dropped of the city, “presumably by enemy planes.”⁷⁸ The next day, a similar article explained that now Los Angeles too was on alert for enemy aircraft. According to the paper, this Los Angeles alarm was not a drill, but “the real thing.”⁷⁹ Alarms were also reported in San Diego and again in San Francisco on the 13th and 15th of December.

The alarms and blackouts were covered by the *Kelowna Okanagan Courier* and the *Victoria Daily Times* as well. The *Courier* asserted that the alarm in San Francisco had resulted in precautionary blackouts along the entire North American Pacific coast, including Vancouver and Victoria.⁸⁰ The *Victoria Daily Times* reiterated that the American authorities had declared that it had been enemy aircraft over their cities. On 10 December, the *Times* ran an article that included quotes from Lieutenant-General John Dewitt, commander of the 4th American Army. It recounted what Dewitt stated following the end of the alarm in San Francisco:

...[Dewitt] heaped scorn on San Francisco for the manner in which it responded to the first mainland air raid alarms of the Japanese American war Monday night and early Tuesday. He said the conduct of some San Franciscans who failed to heed the blackout orders was criminal, and said persons who doubted the reality of enemy planes being over California Monday night were acting in a manner that was “insane, foolish, [and] idiotic. It is damn nonsense to assume we would practice an alert.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ “Frisco Has Raid Alarm” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 10 December 1941, front page.

⁷⁹ “CALIFORNIA RAID ALARM,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 11 December 1941, front page.

⁸⁰ “AIR RAID ALARM,” *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 11 December 1941, front page.

⁸¹ “San Francisco Planes Comb Sky During Alarms,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 December 1941, 2.

The papers published articles on these raids multiple times as blackouts were ordered and alarms were called on and off. Usually, these updates appeared in the first few pages of the papers. This served as a constant reminder to readers that distance no longer mattered. If the enemy wanted to attack mainland North America, it appeared that they were perfectly capable of doing so.

For British Columbians, the Japanese threat was perceived more directly in the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The Japanese had attacked Hawaii, and they could likely attack B.C. if they wanted to. The Pacific Ocean was no longer a reliable safeguard ensuring the security of the province, Hawaiians knew that now. The attack on Pearl Harbor eliminated the notion that B.C. was safely distanced from conflict. Some now considered the province to be a ‘frontline’ of the Second World War. While the threatener was known explicitly to be the Japanese, their objective remained unclear. As a result of this uncertainty, rumours began to spread about where the Japanese were in the Pacific. False alarms were raised along the American Pacific coast more frequently, and claims that Japanese planes had been spotted over major cities. These rumours and false alarms were evidence of an increased concern about the Japanese threat and the perceived capabilities of the Japanese forces. They had hit Pearl Harbor, and they could possibly launch mainland raids next. As it became clear that there was no longer safety in physical distance from the enemy, the conversations around reassurance in B.C.’s newspapers began to shift, focusing instead on the safety and protection that could be provided by the province’s already established defence systems.

1.2 Watching and Ready: Reassurance through Already Established Defences

Before Pearl Harbor, Canadian government and military authorities asserted that the defences in place along the Pacific shores were adequate enough to deal with any probable scale of attack which, if anything, would likely take the form of hit-and-run-raids.⁸² However, the prevalence of “remarkable and alarming rumors” in the days following Pearl Harbor required that the presence of these defences be reemphasized to the residents of B.C. If this reemphasis on defences was another government attempt at reassuring the readers of their safety, it failed. For every feature article on the strength of Pacific defences, there was an editorial or opinion piece questioning if enough was really being done. Though the discussion of established defences is contradictory, it is important to acknowledge that the conversation was happening. It involved journalists and editors at B.C.’s newspapers, but also the readers themselves through opinion pieces. The newspapers therefore provided the space for a dynamic community of military and government officials, journalists and newspaper staff, and public residents to react to and debate what was happening in the Pacific.

The *Vancouver Sun* was fast to reassure its readers that, if the enemy did reach B.C.’s shores, there were efficient defences in place and there was nothing to be concerned about. The 8 December front page featured an article titled “B.C. Defences ‘Adequate to Meet Any Probably Attack’.” The reader did not have to digest the entire article to get the message. The title said it all. The article itself detailed exactly how adequate the defences were, discussing the technology and manpower that underpinned

⁸² W.A.B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force*, vol. 2, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 405.

them. It stressed that the "...preparations already made eliminate[d] the necessity of any immediate transfer of Canadian forces to the Pacific Coast danger zone."⁸³ This information was said to have come from military officials in Ottawa, who believed that the diverting of military forces to the Pacific Coast was "part of the Axis strategy." Stacey's official account verified this assumption, stating that "To have tied up men, armament and money in such tasks would have been to play the game of our potential enemies."⁸⁴ In the eyes of the government, there was no reason to devote more money and manpower to the Pacific coast because adequate measures had already been taken. B.C.'s newspapers reiterated this stance on Pacific defences in its coverage.

The *Kelowna Okanagan Courier* cited authorities in Ottawa in its coverage. The 11th December front page article declared that the distribution of forces on the Canadian Pacific coast was "adequate to meet any probable scale of attack."⁸⁵ It stated that, besides the main fortified positions, the approaches to the B.C. coastline were well-defended, including the Strait of Georgia, the Queen Charlotte Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Vancouver Island. With all of this in place, it was impractical to be alarmed after a single American outpost had been attacked. The article reassured readers that the entire Pacific coast "from the southern end of California to the Aleutian Islands" had been secured. The *Courier* continued to emphasize the adequacy of the defences on 23 December in an article that told readers that "every inch" of the coast was protected.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Stacey, 27.

⁸⁵ "ISSUES ASSURANCES," *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 11 December 1941, front page.

⁸⁶ "Canada's Coast Lines Protected By New Canadian-U.S. Air Bases," *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 23 December 1941, 3.

The *Prince Rupert Daily News* assured readers that not only were the defences in place, but they had also been organized and planned for many years. They were not quickly-constructed, improvised fortifications built in reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor. “Years of preparation” were behind this defence system, and “when war finally exploded in the Pacific the defence machine was immediately ready to function with smooth efficiency.”⁸⁷ With an article like this, readers were meant to know that the government and military had been planning for these kinds of emergency measures for a long time. Their plans were well thought out and the defences were adequately equipped, modern and sufficiently manned. All that was needed to keep Canadians on the Pacific safe had already been done.

If the words were not enough to convince readers, some papers included single photos or photo galleries of some of the defences in place. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* article included a number of photos of coastal guns, control chambers, and crews in action. Captions underneath explained how artillerymen were trained and the procedures they used to accurately hit their targets. The *Daily News*’s photo gallery included a shot of sentries standing “on guard through the night, their eyes scanning the sea and sky”, ready for any potential trouble.⁸⁸ The Fisherman’s Reserve Army was also pictured, along with an explanation detailing how they were helping to patrol the various inlets along the coast.⁸⁹ The *Victoria Daily Times* also made use of photos when they discussed defence. One example called “Christmas Pacific Coast 1941” included a photo accompanied by a small description instead of a complete article. It pictured a single

⁸⁷ “Canada’s Guns Ready To Roar Their Challenge On Pacific Coast,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 19 December 1941, 7.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

soldier on guard somewhere on the coast and the caption read: “This Victoria soldier, like a shepherd minding his flock, may see the Star of Bethlehem rising in the east tonight, but not for long can he take his eyes off the west, where a desperate foe lurks out beyond the broad horizon of the Pacific. In the background, other of our big guns guarding this West Coast port stand ready with their officers and men protect us from any Jap or other enemy.”⁹⁰

The use of these photos added another dimension to the conversation on B.C.’s safety. The photos and their captions provided both verbal and visual confirmation of the defensive system in place on the Pacific coast. B.C. residents now had a concrete, visual conception of the province’s defences. The conversation on the established defence system did not stop at with these photos either. The papers were also sure to let readers know that the scope of their protection extended beyond the Canadian border to include the American defence system.

After the U.S. entered the war, articles began to state that both Canada and the United States had been planning joint defence schemes for some time. An article in the 15 December issue of the *Victoria Daily Times* confirmed this. The piece discussed Canadian Major-General R.O. Alexander’s visit to the province to survey the defensive positions. One reporter was able to interview Alexander outside of his hotel before he left on the tour. He was quoted as saying the following: “I would like the public to know this. We have been at war on the Pacific for two years, but now, although we are at war with Japan, we have gained another powerful ally – the United States – and consequently our

⁹⁰ “Christmas Pacific Coast 1941,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 24 December 1941, 4.

position is very much stronger because of the fact. Plans for defence on this coast were formulated by the Joint Defence Board and these plans have automatically been put into effect.”⁹¹ The *Prince Rupert Daily News* reported essentially the same narrative. A front page article declared that the two nations had been making plans for “every contingency which [could] be foreseen and in the case of any contingency developing the various forces of the two countries – naval, military and air – know exactly what their duties are.”⁹² Readers could be assured that all of the possibilities had been thought of and planned for, and that both Canada and the United States were ready to cooperate to deal with them.

B.C.’s newspapers also emphasized the strength of the American forces, despite their heavy losses at Pearl Harbor. Residents of B.C. could be sure that the U.S. remained one of the strongest powers in the war, and that they would come to Canada’s aid should an attack occur. Some of B.C.’s newspapers provided detailed examinations of the state of the American Pacific fleet after Pearl Harbor. The *Victoria Daily Times* published two articles on 9 and 10 December that did this. “Jap vs. U.S. Navy” included a graph to aid in the comparison of American and Japanese naval strength, both before and after the attack. The graph accounted for the number of vessels lost or damaged on both sides and the captions alongside stated that, although hard hit, the American force remained superior.⁹³ Other captions included supportive quotes from President Roosevelt, insisting that the Japanese had no chance against the U.S. The 10 December article stated that “he emphatically denied Japan’s boast that she had gained naval supremacy in the Pacific by

⁹¹ “Defences Strong With U.S. Ally, Says Stuart,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 15 December 1941, 15.

⁹² “Unit of Command,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 15 December 1941, front page.

⁹³ “Jap vs. U.S. Navy,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 9 December 1941, 4.

her lightning strike at Hawaii, and he confidently declared: ““We are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows.””⁹⁴ The same words were echoed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in other articles.

Reassurance about defences therefore came in different forms. Articles were often published on the front pages to convey to readers in vivid language that defences were in place, while photos and graphs did this visually. Readers were also told that the United States was working to protect them, often with supportive rhetoric from major political figures like Roosevelt and Churchill.

However, there is evidence of doubt regarding the state of the established defence system. This often surfaced in opinion pieces and articles reprinted from other Canadian newspapers. The *Vancouver Sun* was the first to publish a piece that challenged the state of B.C.’s defences. An opinion piece published four days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, titled “Time for Action,” asked readers if they thought anyone was aware of what had happened in Hawaii. The author, only known as “L.B.,” wrote “Is it clearly realized that one solitary Jap plane, carrying several hundred incendiary bombs, would stand a very good chance of turning this city of Vancouver into one gigantic flaming torch?”⁹⁵ L.B. called for more information on how to deal with incendiary bombs and the consequences of an air raid, reminding readers that what happened in Hawaii could easily happen in B.C.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ “Roosevelt Denounces Japs’ Claim to Pacific Mastery,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 December 1941, 3.

⁹⁵ L.B., “Time for Action,” (opinion editorial), *Vancouver Sun*, 11 December 1941, 11.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Another opinion piece from the *Victoria Daily Times* went so far as to say that the Japanese could potentially execute a land assault. “HOW SAFE ARE WE” asked “Could not Japan land an expeditionary force up-land and, supported by ships and planes, move that force down to take this unprotected city from the north, and thus gain control of this strategic island in an unexpected way?”⁹⁷ The author recognized that this thought would immediately be “pooh-poohed,” but that, if the authorities were planning for every possibility, should not this too have been considered? Could not even more be done?

Mrs. W.A. Baldwin of Victoria shared similar sentiments in a letter to the editor of the *Victoria Daily Times*. While acknowledging the efforts of the A.R.P. and other various organizations, Mrs. Baldwin wondered why no shelters were being constructed in B.C. She wrote “As a citizen of Victoria I am interested to know just what is being done (besides blackout air raid warnings, and preparations for first aid and protection) for the protection of families.”⁹⁸ Noting that some homeowners had been advised to construct shelters, she wondered what could be done for those who lived in apartment buildings, or for the sick and elderly who could not build shelters of their own. She suggested several sites that could have been used to construct large shelters for the public. Sure that absolutely everyone would need protection at some point during the war, she concluded her letter by stating “I know our different organizations are doing wonderful A.R.P. work. But how useless it all is if no shelters are provided. It is time for all of us to cooperate for the common protection of us all...and not to be sanguine and think “It can’t

⁹⁷ D.M. Hill, “HOW SAFE ARE WE,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 15 December 1941, 5.

⁹⁸ Mrs. W. A. Baldwin, “WHY NO SHELTERS,” (letter to the editor), *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 December 1941, 11.

happen to us.” We must get busy and realize it is a very grave possibility and see that we are all prepared and ready.”⁹⁹

Others looked to the United States for an example of what needed to be done to improve defences. Arthur B. Langlie, Governor of Washington, was quoted in an article published by the *Victoria Daily Times* on 22 December. Although he emphasized that there was “no reason for panic,” the Governor admitted that more needed to be done to protect Seattle.¹⁰⁰ According to information he had received from American military officials, Seattle was in real danger of attack. Langlie believed all possible precautions had to be taken, stating that “The more effectively we prepare for any kind of an attack, the less likelihood there is that such an attack will be made...”¹⁰¹ The same day, the *Daily Times* reported that hundreds of anti-aircraft guns were being moved to Seattle and the American Pacific Northwest. Seattle and Vancouver were not that far away from one another, and the article ended with an assertion that Vancouver was just as vulnerable as Seattle.

Others in Canada also wondered where the extra guns were, including writers at the *Winnipeg Free Press*. The *Vancouver Sun* published an article using excerpts from the *Free Press* piece in its 15 December issue. Although most British Columbians understood that any potential threat would be small in scale, the *Free Press* took a much “darker” view of B.C.’s current “perils.”¹⁰² Although the *Free Press* was based in the relatively safe interior of the country, the paper was “acutely alarmed about the almost

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ “Pacific Coast in Danger, Langlie,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 December 1941, 2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² “Winnipeg Paper Urges Pacific Coast Defences,” *Vancouver Sun*, 15 December 1941, 15.

defenceless state of this coast. In a vigorous editorial [the *Free Press* demanded] that the Canadian government stop SAYING that British Columbia is safe, and instead, MAKE IT SAFE.”¹⁰³ The *Free Press* claimed that only minor obstacles would stand in the enemy’s way once they landed. It stated that “the air forces of Canada and the United States and the light craft of both navies” were all the countries had.¹⁰⁴ The *Free Press* article continued, “These could be swept aside. And then what? Invasion. Invasion accompanied by all the frightful consequences of such an attack.”¹⁰⁵ The choice to include excerpts from this article in the *Sun* suggested that the editors might have believed much of the same: that the defences in place were not in fact adequate and that invasion was a possibility. The *Prince George Citizen* may have agreed. A small article published on Christmas day quoted the town’s Mayor in its summary of the province’s defences. He said: “Ottawa leaves us alone. We have no protection at all, except on paper”¹⁰⁶ Residents of B.C. felt an intense isolation from Ottawa, and as a result believed the government could not be solely relied upon for their protection. It would be up to the people to reinforce the province’s defences.¹⁰⁷

Because the nature of the Japanese threat to British Columbia now centered on the possibility of raids like that of Pearl Harbor, the conversations about the province’s safety began to focus on the defences in place to counter such an attack. There was a clear division of opinions concerning the state of B.C.’s defences present in the newspaper coverage. Most main feature newspaper articles were in line with the government’s claim

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ “Coast Paper Says this City Now Unprotected,” *Prince George Citizen*, 25 December 1941, 9.

¹⁰⁷ Roger Sarty, *The Maritime Defence of Canada* (Toronto: Brown Book Company Limited, 1996), 51.

that B.C.'s defences were adequate to handle any probable scale of attack. These articles also re-emphasized Canada's connection to American defences. However, the opinion pieces published in the newspapers remained skeptical, suggesting that there was a fear that the province was not prepared. They called for the improvement of defences as well as greater participation in emergency preparations provided by the A.R.P. As a result, the conversations in the province's newspapers shifted once again, this time insisting that residents take defensive measures into their own hands.

1.3 Prepare Yourself: Reassurance through A.R.P. & Civil Protection Organization

In possibly yet another attempt to reassure readers of their safety, the newspapers in B.C. published articles that focused on the efforts of civilian protection and emergency service programs. If the Japanese did reach the province, readers could take comfort in knowing that plans were in place, people were properly trained, and the necessary equipment was on hand. Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, some of these programs and plans were put into practice as blackouts were ordered all along the coastline. For some, these blackouts made the war all the more real. The *Vancouver Sun* spoke to this in an editorial published on 12 December. It read "In some ways the black-out of British Columbia has been a good thing. It has brought the war home to us. How quickly a darkened house, a soundless street, and the thought of Japanese planes overhead can make you realize what war is!"¹⁰⁸ For the author(s) of this editorial, war conditions had

¹⁰⁸ In Praise of Black-Outs," (editorial) *Vancouver Sun*, 12 December 1941, 6.

been felt in the province and would continue to be experienced for the foreseeable future. More emergency plans and equipment might soon be needed.

Much emphasis was placed on just how organized the current emergency measures were, as seen in articles published by the *Prince Rupert Daily Times*, the *Prince George Citizen*, and the *Vancouver Sun*. On 15 December, the *Prince Rupert Daily News* printed an article that said nurses and other first aid responders were perfecting their training and mobilizing within the city. A meeting was being held that night so that each team's 'captain' could ensure that all members were organized and ready.¹⁰⁹ The next day, the *Daily News* reported that the local Red Cross was about to receive more emergency supplies. Blankets, surgical units, and other provisions were being deployed, but the local station had already received "150 blankets, and forty surgical dressing units...sufficient to take care of one thousand casualties, should the need arise."¹¹⁰ Whether or not an attack was imminent, emergency services in Prince Rupert were going to be sufficiently in place, and its paper encouraged citizens to prepare themselves on an individual basis.

The *Victoria Daily Times* emphasized preparedness during the month of December. The 10 December front page noted that Ontario was rushing to send ten new firefighting pumps to B.C. At this time, it was believed that "Vancouver would receive 15 pumps, Kamloops 10, Nelson 17, Prince Rupert 5 and Prince George 5."¹¹¹ Another article towards the back of the paper explained that even more equipment was on its way. According to the Minister of Pensions and Health, and B.C. stalwart in the Federal

¹⁰⁹ "FIRST AID ORGANIZED," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 15 December 1941, 6.

¹¹⁰ "RED CROSS ON JOB," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 16 December 1941, 2.

¹¹¹ "Victoria Will Get 10 Ontario Pumps," *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 December 1941, front page.

Cabinet, Ian Mackenzie, “additional supplies” had been immediately sent following the outbreak of conflict in the North American Pacific.¹¹² Mackenzie was the former Minister of National Defence, transferred to Pensions and National Health when war was declared. He was the only British Columbian representative in Cabinet during the war and was the province’s voice in Ottawa.¹¹³ The supplies he advocated for would aid A.R.P. volunteers in perfecting their training and preparing for the worst.

A similar article, again towards the back of the paper, discussed the first aid situation. The article reported that area doctors were already organized and “Ready for Emergency.”¹¹⁴ Besides having the medical staff organized, the hospitals were also fully staffed and supplied. Firefighters, however, were in short supply. On 22 December, citizens were urged “to prepare and protect their property from possible destruction by fire through air raids. Should an emergency arise it will be impossible for the fire department to cope with all the fires which might occur.”¹¹⁵ The city’s resources could not wholly be relied upon and citizens would have to take the proper precautions. Yet the paper also reassured readers that Ottawa had promised more assistance. The premier of the province was quoted several times, saying he was “confident the federal government realize[d] the seriousness of the situation in British Columbia.”¹¹⁶ A few days later, Premier John Hart announced that the provincial government would also be contributing upwards of \$50,000 to A.R.P. initiatives.

¹¹² “Equipment Being Rushed; Need Blackout Technique,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 December 1941, 16.

¹¹³ Patricia Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masako Iino and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 81.

¹¹⁴ “Doctors Ready for Emergency,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 11 December 1941, 18.

¹¹⁵ “Fire-Fighting Citizens’ Duty,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 December 1941, 9.

¹¹⁶ “More A.R.P. Help Is Promised by Ottawa,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 23 December 1941, 13.

A.R.P. programming increased elsewhere in the province. The smaller interior community of Vernon, B.C. appears to have been determined in their emergency preparedness. The *Vernon News* published numerous articles on the matter, specifically on the state of A.R.P. organization. The weekly paper had at least one piece dedicated to A.R.P. activity in every December 1941 issue. The 11th December headline read “Outbreak of Pacific War Comes As Shock To City – A.R.P. Intensified.” The article addressed Vernon’s location in the interior for those residents who may have assumed they were out of harm’s way. It provided quotes from Sergeant Nelson, “head of the Provincial Police detachment and chief A.R.P. warden,” who warned against this false sense of security. The Sergeant said that “Vernon may not be in a vulnerable position, but it is in a good position from which a bearing may be taken to get a more vulnerable location in the province and a very important military objective.”¹¹⁷ As he could not predict when blackout orders would come to the area, Nelson recommended that all homes prepare window and door covers. The paper had asked the largest department store and had concluded that only twenty yards of blackout cloth had been sold prior to that day. More needed to be done, and in order to do so, more district wardens and volunteers were required.

The *Vernon News* article elaborated on other ways citizens could help. Still quoting Sergeant Nelson, it suggested that citizens seriously consider attending a first aid training program of some kind to better prepare themselves. It said that “A well trained person [could] not only save human life by being able to administer the proper first aid, but by doing so [could] prevent others who are untrained from getting in a state of panic.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

The first aid training gives the person confidence in his work and with such confidence he is cool and collected under trying circumstances, thus controlling the situation at hand.”¹¹⁸ Nelson was saying that better preparedness and more educated citizens would result in a much calmer, more collected public in a crisis situation.

Citizens were expected to prepare for an attack in other ways. The *Kelowna Okanagan Courier* published articles asking citizens to prepare their homes. Following Pearl Harbor, the paper ran articles that explained what homeowners should be doing to ready themselves for emergency. They were responsible for equipping their homes as well as educating themselves on how to protect their loved ones in different scenarios. It stated that “The individual must make all preparations to fight any fire that breaks out in his premises and he must take all necessary steps to see that his premises are blacked out. If he cannot control the fire [in the case of incendiary bombs] some assistance may be possible from headquarters but this is not at all certain.”¹¹⁹ In case of emergency, householders could not assume that emergency services like fire and ambulance would be able to aid them right away. For that reason, this paper suggested that citizens familiarize themselves with first aid practices and the instructions for dealing with foreseeable dangers, such as the Japanese use of incendiary bombs.

The *Courier* also printed two articles telling its readers where to find the supplies they would need to equip their home. The city had made sand available at various locations, free of charge, and suggested that both a household pail and garden shovel be on hand to fight incendiaries. These instructions were repeatedly printed in newspapers

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ “Householder Responsible,” *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 11 December 1941, front page.

throughout the course of the war.¹²⁰ The *Courier* emphasized the necessity to prepare for incendiaries because those at the paper seemed to believe that this was the greatest danger to the community. One subtitle on the front page read “Fire Is Greatest Danger To Kelowna During Air Raid.”¹²¹

Both the *Prince George Citizen* and the *Vancouver Sun* discussed preparedness in similar ways. Both papers told readers that blackouts meant that the war had finally arrived on the Canadian Pacific coast. Residents of the province needed to be reminded of their responsibilities. On 11 December 1941, the *Citizen*’s front page contained an article called “District A.R.P. Gets Move On.” This asserted that the outbreak of war in the Pacific had “put the spurs to the heads of the Prince George Civilian Protection Organization.”¹²² The entire province had been declared vulnerable as a frontline of the war. It said that, as a result, Prince George “no longer enjoy[ed] the security of even a few days from [an] air raid.”¹²³ Because of this all citizens were expected to prepare for the worst. The article said that blackouts would be occurring frequently in the coming weeks, and everyone was asked to adhere to and implement blackout procedures, a strategy outlined in other B.C. papers. The *Citizen* made sure to mention the “severe penalties” that would befall “anyone who either neglect[ed] or refuse[d] to obey all regulations regarding the blackout and thus jeopardize[d] the public safety.”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ “Fire Chief Pettigrew Warns Everyone Should Know How To Handle Incendiary Bombs,” 11 December 1941, front page.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “District A.R.P. Gets Move On,” *Prince George Citizen*, 11 December 1941, front page.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Talk of penalties and repercussions for those who refused to cooperate continued, especially after the initial blackout orders in the province. A blackout was ordered on 8 December and the *Victoria Daily Times* wrote about it the following day. While commending the willingness of most citizens to “obey instructions,” the piece was also a criticism. It asserted that “Hundreds of householders” were not prepared.¹²⁵ The fact that there had not yet been an attack in B.C. did not mean that the province was safe. The piece ended with a reminder of the consequences of uncooperative action. It stated that “...failure to comply will mean punishment, because indifference on the part of a comparatively few people may cause untold physical suffering and material destruction. A ruthless enemy is near at hand....”¹²⁶ Citizens could either cooperate or face the consequences.

Further criticism came on the December 10 front page in an article titled “Tonight’s Blackout To Be More Complete.” This piece said that, during the previous night’s blackout, planes had been flying over Victoria and the surrounding area, surveying the effectiveness of the blackout order. The pilots reported that “approximately 250 to 300 lights were scattered well over Victoria....”¹²⁷ Problems were also pointed out elsewhere. The front page of the 12 December paper displayed photos of a lighted-up San Francisco with a caption that sarcastically stated: “DAYLIGHT NO, JUST SAN FRANCISCO AT 3 A.M. DURING A BLACKOUT.”¹²⁸ This piece suggested the

¹²⁵ “Complete Blackout,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 9 December 1941, 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ “Tonight’s Blackout To Be More Complete,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 December 1941, front page.

¹²⁸ “DAYLIGHT NO, JUST SAN FRANCISCO DURING A BLACKOUT,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 12 December 1941, front page.

Victoria Daily Times wanted citizens to be wary and take extra precautions, and they did so by shaming those who failed to adhere to proper blackout procedures.

Some citizens were given the opportunity to correct their failures and test the extent of their preparedness through mock raids. Kelowna was planning such a test for early January 1942. The *Courier* discussed the logistics of such an exercise in a front page article on 18 December. Referred to as a “Full Dress Rehearsal,” the simulated attack would be “complete with casualties, burned houses, power shortages, [and] communication interruptions.”¹²⁹ Chief A.R.P. Warden R. Whillis was quoted in the article, enthusiastically supporting the idea. He said “We feel that if we are going to go to the trouble of having a blackout, we might better carry it one step further and have as complete a trial of our plans as is possible.”¹³⁰ The mock raid warning would be simple and brief, informing citizens only that a blackout and raid exercise would begin after a certain hour on a certain day. Those chosen as “casualties” would be notified beforehand, but no one else would know their planned fate in the attack. It would be up to first aid workers and emergency responders to deal with the “victims” of the attack. The organizers also planned to have certain houses ‘bombed’ and others set on fire from incendiary bombs. Whillis stated that “householders w[ould] have no advance warning of this and it w[ould] be a real test of their preparations.”¹³¹ The end of the article returned to the opinions of Whillis, who spoke to those who thought the mock raid a silly exercise. Citing the Defence of Canada Regulations, the paper warned readers that anyone not

¹²⁹ “Kelowna May Have Mock Air Attack In Early January,” *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 18 December 1941, front page.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

cooperating or defiantly disobeying blackout orders could face serious penalties. But Whillis, of course, did not expect the good people of Kelowna to fall into this grouping.

All of these newspaper articles discussed the organization of civil protection units, the preparedness of the various communities and the importance of citizen action in times of threat. The threat perception was that the Japanese could attack B.C., and the fear perception was that the province's defences were in a questionable state. As a result, B.C.'s newspapers recommended citizens take defence and preparedness into their own hands. Residents were encouraged to get involved with their local A.R.P. organizations and to educate themselves on how to handle emergencies that might result from air raids.

1.4 Summary in Conclusion

By the end of 1941, it was clear that any kind of attempt to reassure the public through the newspapers would be met by an increasingly doubtful audience. The threat of a Japanese attack and the fear of what might happen if it did come were at the forefront of all these conversations. In *On the Nature of Threat*, Milburn and Watman argued that "threat exists to the extent the target feels anxiety or anger generated by threat perception."¹³² Anxiety and concern over the possibility of a Japanese attack were clearly identifiable in B.C.'s newspapers in the month following the attack on Pearl Harbor. While the words 'anxiety,' 'fear,' and 'threat' were not always used explicitly in the coverage, one must remember the advice of Joanna Bourke. Historians must let go of a

¹³² Thomas Milburn and Kenneth Watman, *On the Nature of Threat: A Social Psychological Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 8.

preoccupation with nomenclature and trust their archive.¹³³ In the days leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, there was anxiety over the “imminent clash” between the U.S. and Japan, and how this would have an impact on Canada.¹³⁴ After the attack, the nature of the Japanese threat began to take on a more specific form, but still remained quite uncertain. Borrowing from David Brooks’ “The Age of Small Terror,” a “corrosive uneasiness” set in along the entire North American Pacific Coast.¹³⁵ While the enemy was easily identifiable as the Japanese armed forces, their intentions were unknown. The “corrosive uneasiness” on the coast resulted in rumours about where Japan might strike next and false sightings of Japanese planes over major cities. This uneasiness might also have been one of the reasons that some B.C. residents questioned the province’s defences. Fear entered the narrative here as well – would the province’s defences be able to fend off an attack like the one at Pearl Harbor? Perhaps as a result of this growing fear and concern, residents of B.C. were encouraged to take matters of defence and preparedness into their own hands. Newspapers began emphasizing the importance of personal preparedness and the activities of the A.R.P.

There are important trends in the way that B.C.’s newspapers attempted to deal with the news of Pearl Harbor, the threat of a Japanese attack, and anxieties and fears. Over the course of roughly one month, the approach taken by the newspapers changed at least twice. It began with an attempt by government and newspaper authorities to reassure readers of their relative safety in the war. This was first attempted by emphasizing the physical distance between B.C. and Japan, and when that was questioned, by

¹³³ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 2005), 6.

¹³⁴ “Pacific War Threat,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 5 November 1941, front page.

¹³⁵ David Brooks, “The Age of Small Terror,” *New York Times*, 5 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/05/opinion/the-age-of-small-terror.html?_r=0 (accessed 24 March 2016).

emphasizing the province's already established defences. When those too were doubted, the newspapers began to move away from messages of reassurance. Instead, they stressed personal preparedness and individual involvement. There were more reports on the activities of the A.R.P and emergency training courses were discussed in greater detail. These shifting approaches to the Pearl Harbor coverage demonstrated the ways in which B.C.'s newspapers encouraged an active social interaction between its readers, writers, and government and military authorities. The approach to the news changed after the topic had been exposed in and by the papers, and readers and writers had an opportunity to respond. This interactive process would continue as the nature of the Japanese threat steadily evolved between 1942 and 1943.

Chapter Two

The Possibility of Invasion No Longer Denied, January to June 1942

The war continued to move perilously towards the North American coastline during the first six months of 1942. That year, the Japanese would shell coastal cities in both Canada and the United States, and then invade the Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska off the coast of Alaska. The escalation in activity, and the increasingly close proximity of it, resulted in even more changes in the newspaper coverage. The discussion around a Japanese attack and Pacific defences also became intertwined with other issues. In February, the official order was made for the evacuation and relocation of citizens of Japanese ancestry away from the heavily-populated parts of the west coast. As a result, the tone and language used in 1942 was noticeably different than that of the previous year. Words like ‘complacency,’ ‘fear,’ and ‘panic’ began to appear more and more, especially in editorial pieces. This chapter explores the news coverage in selected B.C. newspapers over the course of the first six months of 1942. It focuses on the coverage surrounding important events in the North American sphere of the Pacific War, notably the shelling of Estevan Point and the beginning of the Aleutian Island campaign. This chapter will look at the changes in the conversations around Canada’s defences, and the specific language that was used in these conversations.

2.1 In the Aftermath of Pearl Harbor

The first traces of the conversational shift in 1942 were found in the reports on the aftermath of Pearl Harbor. U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ordered an official investigation into the attack almost immediately after the final bombs had been dropped.

By mid-December 1941, B.C.'s newspapers had begun writing about the investigation. The news coverage repeatedly emphasized the lack of alertness among the commanders at the Hawaiian base. The first *Prince Rupert Daily News* article on the investigation alleged that the base had not been "sufficiently alert" on the day of the attack.¹³⁶ The *Victoria Daily Times* quoted U.S. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox in an editorial published the same day. The editorial asserted that those in Hawaii on 7 December "were not on the alert against surprise attack."¹³⁷ The men at the base had been efficiently trained and the base was adequately prepared for an attack, but the people in charge had not been on the watch. While the terms 'prepared' and 'alert' seem synonymous, there are subtle and important differences between the two. To be prepared means to be ready, with adequate training and preparation. To be alert means to be watchful, actively seeking out where the next challenge will come from. The news coverage emphasizing alertness clearly stated that mistakes had been made by the top commanders at Pearl Harbor. These articles suggested that, with the war steadily expanding in scope, being 'prepared' was not enough – one had to be constantly on the alert as well. Harkening back to Milburn and Watman's thoughts on the nature of threat, these articles and editorials also emphasize the hidden Japanese threat. The intent and overall objective remained unknown and the enemy's actions were unpredictable. As a result, one had to be alert as well as prepared, thinking about where the enemy might strike next.

In the wake of Pearl Harbor, Ottawa took serious steps to examine the Japanese situation and the role of Japanese Canadians on the west coast. In the early days of

¹³⁶ "PEARL HARBOR INVESTIGATION," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 16 December 1941, front page.

¹³⁷ "An Unvarnished Report," (editorial) *Victoria Daily Times*, 16 December 1941, 4.

January 1942, a Conference on Japanese Matters was organized in Ottawa. The conference was chaired by B.C.'s Ian Mackenzie, Minister of Pensions and National Health, and was attended by a number of other government representatives, including J.E. Michaud, the federal minister of fisheries; J.T. Thorson, the minister of national war services; G.S. Pearson, the provincial secretary and minister of labour for British Columbia; the members of the standing committee, and representatives of the Department of External Affairs, the RCMP, the British Columbia Provincial Police, and the armed forces.¹³⁸ The two day conference came to a number of conclusions about the defence of B.C. and the Japanese in the province. Everyone in attendance agreed that the Japanese in Canada were to be protected and that the "full force" of the law would be used to prevent anti-Japanese demonstrations. However, the attendees also acknowledged that it was logical to monitor and possibly remove the Japanese from participation in the fishing industry, the sale of gasoline and blasting powder, and the handling of short-wave radio transmitters and cameras. These recommendations were taken into account by the federal government, their first action being the confiscation of the Japanese fishing fleet in B.C.¹³⁹

The talks about the Japanese and B.C.'s defences among officials at various levels of Canada's government and military quickly grew tense. In most cases, there was a clear division of opinion between those who represented or worked in B.C. and those who resided in Ottawa. Not surprisingly, the representatives from B.C. took the threat of a Japanese invasion seriously. These representatives became more vocal in the House of

¹³⁸ Patricia Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 81.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, 82.

Commons in January of 1942 and B.C.'s papers rushed to reprint their words. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* reported on 30 January that Howard Green, Conservative member for Vancouver South, told the House of Commons that "a Japanese invasion attempt of Canada was probable."¹⁴⁰ Green argued that Pacific defences were completely inadequate and that the government was foolishly relying on the protection of the crippled American naval fleet. Green believed that the invasion would likely begin in the Aleutian Islands, with the Japanese then setting up bases at Prince Rupert and Port Alberni, from which they would attack Vancouver and nearby American ports. Green's words were so provocative that Minister of National Defence J.L. Ralston jumped in to refute his claims, assuring everyone in the House that the Pacific situation was being treated with the utmost seriousness.¹⁴¹

The next day, the *Daily News* published an article featuring the words of B.C.'s attorney general, R.L. Maitland. Maitland had issued a warning on the 31st, declaring that all of British Columbia be considered a part of the "danger zone."¹⁴² Maitland admitted that the organization and implementation of civilian protection programs had not gone smoothly, but insisted that the government was doing all it could to improve defences and acquire more equipment.¹⁴³ Unlike Green, Maitland had kept earlier reassuring sentiments in his rhetoric.

Most B.C. politicians did not follow Maitland's lead in this regard. One of the most reported on was T.G. Turgeon. Turgeon was the Liberal M.P from Cariboo, B.C.,

¹⁴⁰ "INVASION LIKELY," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 30 January 1942, front page.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² "ATTORNEY GENERAL ISSUES WARNING; MAKING PROGRESS WITH CIVILIAN DEFENCES," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 31 January 1942, front page.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

and he was featured in articles from nearly every paper selected for this study. In early February 1942, long before the outbreak of Japanese activity in the Aleutians, Turgeon voiced his concerns about the role of Alaska in Pacific security. On 4 February, the *Prince Rupert Daily News* reported on a speech Turgeon had just delivered in the House of Commons, in which he passionately argued for the establishment of a naval base and road between Prince Rupert and Prince George. This, he said, would benefit Canada's defensive system and also provide valuable support to Alaskan defences.¹⁴⁴

Turgeon consistently stressed the importance of Alaska in Canada's overall security, especially after the start of the Aleutian campaign. He continued to address the House of Commons with his concerns, maintaining that the occupation of the Aleutians was a grim threat to Canada.¹⁴⁵ The various newspapers that published pieces on Turgeon included the same quote over and over again: Turgeon asserted that the activity in the Aleutians meant that the Japanese were "virtually upon the coast of Canada."¹⁴⁶ However, Turgeon did recognize that North America was probably not one of Japan's top priorities, suggesting that their first major objective would be to strike at Siberia. Once this was accomplished, however, Japan would then turn its full attention to the North American campaign. Then, according to Turgeon, there would be "every likelihood of an attack on British Columbia."¹⁴⁷ In another article from the *Prince George Citizen*,

¹⁴⁴ "Turgeon Urges Naval Base and Road For Here," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 4 February 1942, front page.

¹⁴⁵ "Japs Virtually on Coast of B.C.," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 June 1942, 3.

¹⁴⁶ "Turgeon Sees Threat to B.C. Coastline," *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 June 1942, 3; "Japs Virtually on Coast of B.C.," *Vancouver Sun*, 19 June 1942, 3.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Turgeon stated that the only way to prevent the invasion of B.C. was to take action against Japan before it got the chance to focus on North America.¹⁴⁸

Some politicians from outside of the province of B.C. spoke in favour of increasing Pacific defences. Postmaster-General William Pate Mulock, for example, agreed with Turgeon, believing that an invasion of B.C. was entirely possible. The Ontario-born Mulock was in favour of diverting forces and resources to Pacific defence, while the majority in Cabinet were greatly opposed to it. The *Victoria Daily Times* quoted him, stating that “Japanese attacks must be stopped before they reach Canadian territory, but those who opposed the government bill would seek to prevent troops called under the National Resources Mobilization Act from fighting alongside troops in the defence of Alaska.”¹⁴⁹ A similar piece in the *Prince Rupert Daily News* contained the same message, quoting Mulock’s warning “Unless sacrifices were made, the war could not be won.”¹⁵⁰ Mulock also claimed that the Japanese had been planning their Aleutian campaign for some time and everything possible had to be done to stop them.¹⁵¹

The coverage of the growing outspokenness of politicians is important to note when discussing perceptions of threat on the Pacific coast. There was a division between the opinions of those in Ottawa and those in B.C., affirming that B.C. felt isolated from the decision makers in Ottawa. The majority of those speaking for greater Pacific defence came from B.C. The language they used in their addresses to parliament, and the

¹⁴⁸ “Stave Off Jap Attack by Going On the Offensive,” *Prince George Citizen*, 25 June 1942, front page.

¹⁴⁹ “Japs West Coast Threat,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 25 June 1942. The National Resources Mobilization Act was passed in June of 1940 and stated that service overseas would remain purely voluntary, but men could be conscripted to serve within Canada. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the pressure for general conscription in Canada began to increase. Stacey, 118-123.

¹⁵⁰ “FEARS FOR COAST ARE EXPRESSED,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 25 June 1942, front page.

¹⁵¹ “Jap West Coast Threat,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 25 June 1942, front page.

language that B.C.'s newspapers most often quoted, was straightforward. They claimed that a Japanese invasion in B.C. was 'probable' and 'likely.' Some of these politicians even considered how such an invasion would be achieved, focusing on the importance of Alaska in the defence of Canada. The choice to publish the thoughts and opinions of these individuals in B.C.'s newspapers was also important. Readers were shown through these articles and editorials that British Columbian politicians were concerned and treating the threat seriously. The strong words of these politicians were reiterated by some of the newspapers' own staff writers, as seen through the *Vancouver Sun*'s "Derelict Defense" series.

2.2 The Derelict Defence

The *Vancouver Sun* proved in 1942 that one did not have to be a politician in Ottawa to voice vivid opinions on the situation in B.C. The newspaper's "Derelict Defense" series did just the same. Written by staff writer Alan Morley, the series was published over the course of three days and levelled some serious charges against both military and government leadership regarding Pacific defences. The first installment of the series appeared in the 13 March paper. The article was published at the beginning of the second section of the paper, located on page nineteen, but was advertised on the front page. The title was headlined in cursive and outlined in a box at the bottom of the page to draw the reader's attention. The brief description on the front page included a luring hook, telling

readers that Morley's series would charge "Canada's political and military authorities with a spirit of hopelessness and a lack of preparation" that had doomed B.C.¹⁵²

In the first of the three articles, Morley explained exactly how lacking Pacific defences were. In "Derelict Defense, 1. Weakness," Morley insisted that there was a deep divide between B.C. and Ottawa over the Japanese threat and the state of defences. Regardless of this divide, he asserted that the residents of B.C. had been doing their best to prepare for the worst. He wrote, "While the people of Vancouver and all of British Columbia have been buying Victory Bonds, preparing A.R.P. organizations and worrying about enemy aliens," military and government officials had decided that these same people would have to be content "with the pleasant status of Japanese captives if the Japs descend[ed]" upon the province.¹⁵³ According to Morley, these officials had convinced themselves that, even if there was a legitimate threat, nothing could be done adequately to defend the coast. They assumed that the major battles of the Pacific would happen elsewhere, leaving B.C. completely safe. They believed that the decisive battles of the Pacific war would be fought "at Hong Kong, Singapore, [and] in Burma and Java."¹⁵⁴ If the battles were to be fought elsewhere, there was no sense in wasting valuable resources on Canada's Pacific coast.

Morley did not think that any more of the country's resources had to be spent in B.C. in order to properly defend it. He stated that B.C. had the strongest natural defences in the world due to its geography and natural terrain. The province also had its own resources and manpower. What was needed, in Morley's opinion, was better leadership

¹⁵² "Derelict Defense Is Exposing B.C.," *Vancouver Sun*, 13 March 1942, front page.

¹⁵³ Alan Morley, "Derelict Defense, 1. Weakness," *Vancouver Sun*, 13 March 1942, 19.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

and organization. He asserted that “if organized for total defense, [B.C. would] not take a single bullet away from the other theatres of war.”¹⁵⁵ If the province’s resources were used to their full potential and properly organized, Morley believed B.C. could become “a hornet’s nest” that could “put up a real and fierce defense against any possible number of invading troops.”¹⁵⁶

Morley provided plans for this improved organization in the next installment of the series, “Derelict Defense, 2. The Plan.” Here Morley laid out exactly what he thought ‘total defence’ in B.C. would look like. One of the main requirements was the participation of every able-bodied resident. He wrote that “Every man, woman and child should be ready and trained to play their part; first in stopping the invader....”¹⁵⁷ He wanted to exploit the vast local knowledge of the province’s population, targeting individuals who would know the land well like hunters, ranchers, and trappers.¹⁵⁸ Without knowledge of the province’s terrain, the enemy would experience considerable difficulty in its invasion attempts. Morley also outlined procedures to be implemented should the enemy successfully land on B.C.’s shores. The responsibility of every resident was to ensure that, if the enemy did land, “his advance w[ould] be made more difficult and no single thing [would] be left behind for his use.”¹⁵⁹ Morley wanted to plan for the destruction of anything and everything that could be used by the enemy. This would include the destruction of “every single house, stock of supplies, building, wharf, power line, dam, industry, factory and everything useful....”¹⁶⁰ All of this would be an integral

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Alan Morley, “Derelict Defense, 2. The Plan,” *Vancouver Sun*, 14 March 1942, 19.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

part of a B.C. total defence scheme, but Morley argued that such a scheme was impossible under the current defence system.

After outlining his plan, Morley returned to criticism in discussing the bureaucratic organization of Canada's defences. He referred to the current organization as the "Most Asinine System Ever Recorded," noting that there were too many people involved for it to ever be effective. Responsibilities for west coast defences were spread among a number of individuals and across a number of different government branches. To emphasize his point, Morley listed all of these individuals: "The Minister of Justice, the Minister of National Defence, the military, naval, and air force commanders, the provincial Attorney-General – even the Postmaster General and the Minister of Railways and the Department of Transportation."¹⁶¹ Each had assigned duties and no one was willing to take on more than their precise share. Morley compared this to something Napoleon has said. It was impossible to wage war with a committee. What was needed was a single, supreme commander for Pacific defence.¹⁶²

In the final installment of the series, published on 16 March, Morley talked about the way Britain was trying to wage war and how it was outdated for the current conflict. Morley argued that Britain had always lagged behind the other great powers when it came to military technology and strategy. As a result, Britain usually spent the first years of a war adapting to new strategies and learning from their mistakes. They did this at the expense of vital material resources but also at the cost of "the best of a new generation."¹⁶³ While this method always involved great sacrifice at the start of the war,

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Alan Morley, "Derelict Defense, 3. The Ancient Curse," *Vancouver Sun*, 16 March 1942, 13.

there had always been enough resources to allow Britain to make the necessary adjustments. In the past, Britain had been able to rely on having greater resources than their enemies, but this was untrue in the current situation. Morley suggested that, like Britain, B.C. was also unprepared to fight a modern war because it was behind the times. He wrote that “Modern battles [were] fought in spheres and cubes.” But B.C. was only prepared “to fight a battle on a line – and not a very long line.”¹⁶⁴ Morley was really saying that B.C. was vulnerable in its present state and could potentially become a British-style ‘sacrifice’ to the war before the government came to its senses.

B.C. needed to update and improve its defences. Morley again provided some suggestions as to how this could be done. He implied that the many mountain ranges and valleys could provide excellent locations for training and stationing troops for counter-offensives. He also reemphasized the importance of the local knowledge of B.C.’s topography, declaring that more guerilla units needed to be formed throughout the province. He noted that the *Sun* had been suggesting this for some time, but that the majority of guerilla units had been formed “only in towns where the public ha[d] become uncomfortably vocal” about the issue.¹⁶⁵

Whether or not Morley’s article was avidly read by *Sun* readers is unknown. However, his series did catch the attention of Ottawa’s official censors in B.C. On 23 March, the *Vancouver Sun* was charged with sharing “information about coastal defences that could compromise the war effort,” an offense outlined in Regulation 39 of the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Defence of Canada Regulations.¹⁶⁶ The government alleged that the *Sun* staff had attempted “to create panic and discourage military recruitment” and wanted the paper to pay a five hundred dollar fine.¹⁶⁷ The *Sun* eventually agreed to a plea bargain and paid a three hundred dollar fine. At the same time, however, certain initiatives were taken to improve B.C.’s defences. The series was a clear demonstration of one newspaper’s outrage over the state defences in B.C. and the ways in which the federal government was dealing with the situation. The persistent uneasiness on the west coast and the growing fears of a Japanese attack may have contributed to such a critical assessment of the province’s defences and the military and government leadership. The series surely generated much discussion amongst its readers, but it certainly led to an interaction between the newspaper and government authorities that resulted in action. There is considerable evidence of a greater government effort on the Pacific coast after the publication of this series. The *Sun* would later claim that this was a direct result of the pressure it exerted on the government through articles and editorials like “Derelict Defense.”

One of the most prominent changes to occur after the publication of the series was the new leadership at Pacific Command. Every newspaper covered the announcement that Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart was coming to the West Coast as Officer Commanding-in-Chief.¹⁶⁸ Some used this move as evidence that B.C. was in real danger,

¹⁶⁶ Stewart Muir, “The Sun cops a plea and pays a fine,” *Vancouver Sun*, 22 March 2012 <https://login.proxy.library.carleton.ca/login?qurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.proquest.com%2fdocview%2f940338440%3faccountid%3d9894> (accessed February 1, 2016).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ At this time, Stuart was Chief of the General Staff for the Canadian Army. He took the position as Officer Commanding-in-Chief on the West Coast, only after firing Major-General R.O. Alexander, whom Stuart felt “had failed to exercise command with sufficient energy.” Major-General George R. Pearkes would be appointed to Commander-in-Chief Pacific Command in the fall of 1942. J.L. Granatstein, *The*

arguing that the well-regarded Stuart would not have been sent otherwise. On 11 June, the *Victoria Daily Times*, the *Prince Rupert Daily News*, and the *Vancouver Sun* published front page articles about Stuart's appointment to Pacific Command. The *Times* referred to Stuart as "Canada's greatest soldier" and explained that he would be in command of British Columbia, Alberta, and the Yukon.¹⁶⁹ The *Times* also suggested that the shakeup in command was linked to the growing importance of Canada's Pacific coast in the war.¹⁷⁰ The *Daily News* wrote that, according to the Minister of National Defence, Stuart was being sent to the coast "in order to deal with organization plans arising out of the expansion of army forces in that command."¹⁷¹ The *Vancouver Sun* article, titled "Ottawa Wakes Up to Pacific Front," asserted that this decision demonstrated that the government had "at least realized, as this paper has long argued, that this coast is definitely in the line of attack."¹⁷²

The *Sun*'s article on Stuart's appointment was lengthy, and emphasized the role that the newspaper had played in changing attitudes on Pacific defence in Ottawa. It stated that the reversal of government policy had come quite suddenly. It read "That this decision is taken by a government, which according to its own statement in parliament a few weeks ago, could see no danger of anything more serious than hit-and-run-raids here, reveals an important reversal of policy." The writers at the *Sun* believed that their words had driven political action in Ottawa. The paper claimed that, through its persistent

Generals: The Canadian Army's Senior Commanders in the Second World War (Toronto: Stoddart, 1993), 225-226.

¹⁶⁹ "Canada's Head Soldier to Command All Defence Forces On This Coast," *Victoria Daily Times*, 11 June 1942, front page.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ "STUART IN COMMAND," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 11 June 1942, front page.

¹⁷² "Ottawa Wakes Up To Pacific Front," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 June 1942, front page.

demands for greater consideration of B.C.'s protection in Ottawa, a dialogue had been created between "the people" of B.C. and government officials. These claims reflect Conboy's argument about the importance of newspapers. He asserted that there is a newspaper symbiosis between readers, writers, and governments. The claim made by the *Vancouver Sun* suggested just this, that change had resulted from a dialogue between readers, writers, and authorities, facilitated through the words and actions of the newspaper.

The *Sun* article stated that federal policy would have to continue to change if the war was going to be won by the Allies. The author believed that the next biggest issue that would need to be addressed was Canada's role in the security of Alaska. The article asserted that Canadians needed to be ready not only to defend their own territory, but to also "co-operate with our neighbors in holding Alaska, which for military purposes [wa]s part and parcel of Canada."¹⁷³

Despite the *Sun*'s insistence that Alaska must be the next preoccupation in the discussion on B.C.'s defences, some newspapers concentrated their 1942 coverage on localized defence efforts, and specifically on the formation of volunteer guerilla and ranger units. This development was most often discussed in the *Victoria Daily Times*, the *Prince Rupert Daily News*, and the *Vernon News*. Articles about guerilla and ranger units began appearing in January of 1942, detailing the different types of units, their purpose, and the unique training being undertaken.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

The organization of volunteer units happened around the same time as an expansion in the number of reserve units on the Pacific coast. In late January 1942, Major-General R.O. Alexander, then in charge of Pacific Command, had declared that a brigade of reserve forces would be organized for Vancouver Island and the lower mainland of the province. This brigade would include three infantry battalions, a machine gun battalion, and a mobile artillery battalion. Field engineers, signals, army corps, medical and ordinance units would also be established. The *Victoria Daily Times*' report on this announcement extensively quoted Alexander, who stated that the expansion was being undertaken in order "to provide additional defence of vital points on the British Columbia coast, to strengthen the Active Army in the event of attack, and to give every man unable to join the Active Army an opportunity of serving in the defence of his country."¹⁷⁴ However, according to the *Times*, Alexander stated that the main purpose of greater reserve units was to create "a real combat force capable of smiting the enemy should he come on Canadian soil."¹⁷⁵ The *Prince Rupert Daily News* corroborated this assertion in its coverage of the announcement, noting that the troops were receiving specialized training to repel any kind of enemy invasion that might be attempted.¹⁷⁶ The coverage of this announcement was important because through it the newspapers could claim that Alexander was acknowledging that invasion was a possibility. He was bringing more troops to the coast and instituting specialized training to deal specifically with an enemy invasion attempt. It appeared that one of Canada's most high-ranking military

¹⁷⁴ "5th Regt. To Be Mobile Scots Machine Gunners," *Victoria Daily Times*, 20 January 1942, front page.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ "DEFENDING OF COAST," (editorial) *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 21 January 1942, front page.

officials was taking the threat of invasion seriously. It also perhaps suggested that Ottawa did not need as much prodding as the *Sun* had alleged.

In April, the *Vernon News* published an article about the guerilla units that were being formed to support Alexander's reserves. The units in Vernon were created as auxiliaries to the official forces, and their organization and operation was being overseen by the Royal Canadian Legion. These units were advertised as "something between a military unit and a police force, with specialized training to make it easily adaptable to meet any emergency."¹⁷⁷ They were open to men not of military age and men who had been turned down by the active and reserve forces. Knowledge of firearms was considered as an asset, but not a requirement. Not all guerilla units in the province were officially recognized. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* reported in May of 1942 that an unofficial ranger unit had been formed, known as the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, a group designed to use local knowledge of the region for defence purposes. The *Daily News* said that the Rangers aimed to have at least one hundred members, including a number of First Nations participants.¹⁷⁸

The coverage on the formation and activity of these units suggested a greater interest, official and unofficial, in preventing an invasion of B.C. The volunteer units were designed to mobilize all able-bodied men, even ones who had been turned down by active and reserve units, and they also emphasized the importance of local knowledge of the land and resources. The men who joined these units were given specialized training, focusing specifically on repelling an enemy invasion. In the articles and editorials

¹⁷⁷ "GUERRILLA UNITS FOR KELOWNA AND DISTRICT," *Vernon News*, 9 April 1942, 7.

¹⁷⁸ "GUERRILLAS ORGANIZED," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 27 May 1942, front page.

reporting on these units, the possibility of invasion was no longer being denied. The newspaper coverage was telling readers that both military personnel and civilians were attempting to prepare for it explicitly.

2.3 The Language of Doubt: 'Complacency,' 'Fear,' and 'Panic'

Despite and perhaps because of increased efforts at Pacific defences, the doubts about B.C.'s safety persisted. This doubt became more visible in 1942, taking the form of specific and repetitive language in the newspapers. One of the most common words in the newspapers was 'complacency.' Readers were consistently warned of the danger of complacency and how it had led to disaster in other areas of the war. However, words like 'fear' and 'panic' also began to appear more frequently in articles and editorials alike. These words were most often used to tell readers what they were not. Readers were told that they were *not* fearful: what they were feeling were other, less powerful emotions like curiosity. And they were told that they were *not* panicking, but were simply annoyed at and frustrated by the inconveniences the war had brought them. The province's newspapers used this negative language of doubt and uneasiness in an attempt to encourage calm in a time of chaos, rather than reinforce fear. The newspapers, in this respect, reflected what government and military officials expected of their citizens in times of threat. Local reactions were often quite something else.

The use of language of doubt first appeared in discussions about B.C.'s safety in the wake of Pearl Harbor. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* published a number of editorials that discussed feelings of complacency towards the end of January. "On Our

Toes” began by summarizing the ways in which complacency had already resulted in disaster in the war:

Complacency has been as great an enemy to the democracies as the militant foe. Pre-war complacency in Great Britain resulted in unpreparedness. Complacency in European countries now occupied by the Axis prevented unified action so that (to use Churchill’s phraseology) they were taken “one by one.” Complacency built on isolation caught by the United States only partially prepared when Japanese and European gangsters embroiled that nation in the conflict.¹⁷⁹

The article continued to explain that despite these important lessons, a sense of complacency remained in B.C. There was still a sense that B.C. was at a safe distance from the war and there was nothing about which to be overly concerned.¹⁸⁰

The *Daily News* published another article with similar language the next day. “Question on Defence” told its readers that there had already been many examples that proved B.C. was not out of the war’s grasp. It stated that “There ha[d] been enough grim lessons to make [everyone] appreciate the danger of complacency and wishful thinking.”¹⁸¹ However, the author of this piece believed that the majority of British Columbians were well aware of their place in the current war and the responsibilities it presented. The article was cautious, advising readers not to panic over the province’s defences. It asserted that that this was “no time to be despondent or destructively critical” about the efforts being taken by local organizations and the government.¹⁸² Instead, it stressed the personal responsibility of individual preparedness, requesting that readers reassess what they had been doing to prepare themselves.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ “On Our Toes,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 30 January 1942, 2.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ “Question of Defence,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 31 January 1942, 2.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Around the same time that these articles and editorials were being published, the *Prince Rupert Daily News* ran a series of location-specific Victory Bond ads that warned against the danger of complacency. One of these ads, called “Prince Rupert On The SPOT,” was aimed at those who thought they were still safe because of the physical distance between B.C. and Japan. It stated that those who remained complacent should “realize that Prince Rupert is only 3815 miles away from Japan. If that seems a long way off, let them reflect that Pearl Harbor is 3380 miles from Japan – only 435 miles less. And we all know what happened at Pearl Harbor.¹⁸⁴ This ad, admittedly official propaganda, emphasized the fact that distance was no longer a reasonable justification for thinking that B.C. would be safe from a Japanese attack or invasion. And, because of this, there was no reason to remain complacent about the province’s safety and the current state of defences. It perhaps suggested government concern that the people of B.C. were not sufficiently alert to the threat of Japanese attack.

The *Victoria Daily* stressed the danger of complacency in its coverage on the San Francisco air raid alarms in January of 1942. “Blackout Teaches San Franciscans Valuable Lessons” claimed that San Francisco, much like communities in B.C., had been a complacent city. They had clung to the “it can’t happen here,” attitude held by many, and as a result the city was unprepared. When blackout precautions were implemented and issues of preparedness raised by a few, the topics were “lightly passed over for pleasanter” ones.¹⁸⁵ People found the blackouts inconvenient, with dim lights and quiet streets making social life difficult. However, when the air raid alarms went off for the

¹⁸⁴ “Prince Rupert On The SPOT,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 14 February 1942, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Ed Kerr, “Blackout Teaches San Franciscans Valuable Lessons,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 10 January 1942, (magazine section), 7.

first time, the atmosphere had been noticeably tense.¹⁸⁶ The *Prince Rupert Daily News* was concerned about the panic that might arise when such alarms were raised in B.C. for the first time. Stressing the need for increased participation in A.R.P. activities, district chairman of the A.R.P., J.J. Little said that panic would present the biggest danger to the province. He avowed that “More damage could be done that way than even by the bombing,” and that the emotions of fear and panic needed to be mastered. He believed that one method to accomplish this was through the training and education provided by the A.R.P.¹⁸⁷

A series of events in June of 1942 made the debate over distance and complacency even more relevant. At the beginning of the month, the Japanese raided Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands off the coast of Alaska. On 3 June, despite some unfavourable weather, seventeen planes took off from Japanese aircraft carriers about 180 miles south of Dutch Harbor. They reached their target around six o’clock in the morning, encountering no aerial opposition. They attacked again the next morning, around the same time, damaging “several fuel tanks, a hospital, and a transport ship.”¹⁸⁸ Dutch Harbor was under attack and the main body of American forces – nearly 40,000 personnel – “sat rather uselessly at posts far to the east of Dutch Harbor.”¹⁸⁹

There would be three raids on Dutch Harbor in total, and the B.C. newspapers reported on them as soon as details became available. The *Victoria Daily Times* reported on the official announcement of the raids, made by Minister of Defence J.L. Ralston, who

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ “A.R.P. IS STRESSED,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 4 May 1942, 4.

¹⁸⁸ Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 80.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 81.

stated that the damage done to the Harbor had been minimal. However, the same article told readers that there was a potential for more of these raids. It said that the attacks on Dutch Harbor, which was located “about 1,800 miles from Victoria, shifted the focus of the Pacific war to North America itself and put defences from the Aleutian Islands to Panama on alert...”¹⁹⁰ To give more validity to this claim, the article also quoted U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who said that the raids on Dutch Harbor would not be the only or the last raids to be seen on the North American Pacific coast.¹⁹¹

Tensions ran high after the raids on Dutch Harbor, and soon the air raid alarms in Prince Rupert wailed for the first time. The 10 June front page of the *Prince Rupert Daily News* detailed exactly what had happened. An air raid alarm indicating imminent danger had been raised after unidentified aircraft were spotted approaching the city. Although later determined to be, in the article’s words, “definitely not enemy planes,” the situation was tense. The article suggested that the citizens of Prince Rupert had dealt with the emergency with the utmost calm and self-possession, stating that “There was certainly nothing in the way of panic and excitement was at a minimum.”¹⁹² The *Daily News* said that the feeling amongst citizens was one of curiosity rather than fear.¹⁹³ An imminent danger alarm had been raised, but it, according to the article, had resulted in no excitement, fear, or panic of any kind. Yet the article also acknowledged what it called “wild rumors” had begun to spread once the alarm had been raised. These rumours suggested that “combat was raging nearby, that B.C.’s Queen Charlotte Islands were

¹⁹⁰ “All Pacific Coast On Alert,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 June 1942, front page.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² “PRINCE RUPERT FIRST IMMINENT DANGER CALL IS HINT OF REAL THING,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 10 June 1942, front page.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

being bombed, and that several enemy planes had been shot down.”¹⁹⁴ This was clearly more indicative of fear rather than healthy curiosity.

Perhaps to head off such rumors, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, the officer in charge of Canada’s Pacific Command, quickly gave an official statement on the activity in the Aleutians. This announcement was covered by several B.C. newspapers and one of the most popular quotes taken from it was Stuart’s instructions to residents “not to be alarmed by the “little invasion” of the Aleutians by “a small Japanese force.”¹⁹⁵ He asserted that, even in Prince Rupert, the city closest to the action, there was nothing to worry about.¹⁹⁶ Stuart must have received considerable criticism for this remark, since two days later the *Vancouver Sun* published a front page article in which he corrected himself. The article said that Stuart wanted to change “what he termed a “wrong impression” given in press reports of his views....”¹⁹⁷ He made sure to tell reporters that he did in fact attach “considerable significance” to the Dutch Harbor raids and that, if the Japanese did manage to take the Aleutians, there would undoubtedly be consequences for Canada.¹⁹⁸

2.4 The Shelling of Estevan Point

There would be consequences for Canada even before the Japanese were established in the Aleutians. Soon after the outbreak of activity at Dutch Harbor, an incident occurred much closer to home for the readers of B.C.’s newspapers. Around ten

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ ““Don’t Be Alarmed,’ Stuart,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 16 June 1942, front page.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ “RCAF, Army Join Fight In Alaska,” *Vancouver Sun*, 18 June 1942, front page.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

o'clock p.m. on 20th June 1942, Japanese submarine *I-26* surfaced near Estevan Point, located on Vancouver Island. The submarine fired approximately seventeen shells towards the lighthouse at Estevan before slipping away. The attack resulted in very little damage and no casualties, but the event was significant as it was "the first direct attack against Canadian soil since the Fenian raids of the 1860s and 70s."¹⁹⁹ The next day, submarine *I-25* executed a similar raid near Astoria, Oregon.²⁰⁰

Coverage of this incident was more about local reaction than the details of the attack. The *Vancouver Sun* article on the shelling declared that the event should have finally put an end to any sense of complacency on the west coast. It also used the shelling as justification for demanding more weapons from Ottawa for B.C. Yet the *Victoria Daily Times* article claimed that residents were completely unshaken by the event. It said that Victorians had calmly gone about their business "undisturbed, but greatly interested in the shelling."²⁰¹ This sentiment was reinforced with quotes from the Mayor of Victoria. A. I. McGavin, who told the *Daily Times* that the people's interest in the raid was "due to curiosity, not jitters."²⁰² He claimed that he had not noticed any change of attitude in the general public and that there was no reason to be worried over something like a "nuisance raid."²⁰³ Similar quotes were taken from the Premier of the province as well. When asked if he would issue a message requesting calmness, Premier John Hart answered, "No one has the jitters, and it would be ridiculous to suggest they need such a

¹⁹⁹ W.A.B. Douglas, Roger Sarty, and Michael Whitby, *No Higher Purpose: The Official Operational History of the Royal Canadian Navy in the Second World War, 1939-1943*, vol. II (St. Catherines: Vanwell Publishing, 2002), 355-57.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ "Japanese Subs Off Coast, Seaside Shelled After Estevan," *Victoria Daily Times*, 22 June 1942, front page.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

message because of the shelling of Estevan.”²⁰⁴ The assumption here in the message to British Columbians was that the people of the province would not naturally react with panic or ‘jitters,’ but would instead remain reasonable and calm. It is difficult to determine whether these examples are a reflection of public reaction, or an expression of officials’ expectations of their citizens during tense moments.

However, there is other evidence to suggest that a certain degree of fear and panic existed in B.C. at this time. Some of B.C.’s newspapers indeed began discussing evacuation of the coastal region in early 1942. The *Prince George Citizen* published a small article on its 1 January front page that discussed the city’s role should evacuation be ordered. The title of the article informed readers that “450 Cars, 380 Boats” were ready to mobilize if Vancouver Island needed to be suddenly and quickly evacuated. The *Citizen* stated that Civilian Motor Reserve Battalions were being established to organize civilian vehicles, with each battalion having three companies and its own headquarters. Each battalion would have “a repair car, a wrecking crane and a gasoline supply truck.”²⁰⁵ These battalions would be available to evacuate civilians and transport troops from place to place during an emergency.²⁰⁶

The *Prince Rupert Daily News* reported on the likelihood of an officially-ordered evacuation several times in June of 1942. At the beginning of the month, an article on the front page of the paper announced that residents could now register for immediate evacuation if one was ordered. It had been estimated that around 1,650 people in total would take advantage of this, but as of 3 June only 195 people had signed up. This

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ “450 Cars, 380 Boats Ready If ‘Island’ Attacked,” *Vancouver Sun*, 2 June 1942, 13.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

included “72 adults, 59 boys and 69 girls. The most of these were mothers, young children, and a few elderly invalids.”²⁰⁷ Even though few people had actually registered, the article stated that evacuation organizers were continuing their rigorous preparations and that provisions had already been made for 900 evacuees.²⁰⁸

Two days after this article, which essentially argued that not many were worried enough about evacuation to make concrete plans, another article on the *Daily News* front page noted that some people had already begun to leave the city. While no official announcement on evacuation had been made, “Transportation companies admit that there has been a movement outwards during the past couple of days and that others are preparing to leave...”²⁰⁹ The *Daily News* did not know exactly how many had left the city, but it suggested that those who had departed may have just been setting out on summer vacation. Or, the article offered, they could have been part of Prince Rupert’s ‘temporary population’ – meaning they had been working in the city for war purposes. These were usually “members of the forces and industrial workers” who had homes elsewhere.²¹⁰ According to the article, it was unlikely that any permanent residents had left the city out of a fear that it would be attacked.²¹¹ And yet an article published just a few days later said just that.

On 10 June the *Daily News* published an editorial that asked, “Is Prince Rupert Safe?”²¹² This piece stated that residents of Prince Rupert were in fact fleeing because of

²⁰⁷ “EVACUEES REGISTER,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 3 June 1942, front page.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ “SOME DEPARTING,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 5 June 1942.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² “Is Prince Rupert Safe?” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 10 June 1942, 2.

their fear of a Japanese attack. It began, “Since the Japanese air raid on Dutch Harbor last week, there has been consideration by many Prince Rupert people of the safety of the situation here from a physical standpoint. The fact is that some people, fearful of some sort of attack, have left and some more may be going.”²¹³ The author did acknowledge that some people may have been leaving for vacation, but offered a balanced conclusion on the matter:

Unfortunately, the enemy did not tell us their plans. There are undoubtedly reasons why they might elect to pay us an unwanted visit. On the other hand, there has been possibly a tendency on the part of the more fearsome to magnify the hazard. No doubt there are a good many safer places than Prince Rupert to be in these days and likewise there are many others that are a good deal more dangerous as far as the likelihood of attack is concerned.²¹⁴

The author reiterated that there had been no order or even hint to evacuate and therefore no reason to panic. However, the article ultimately stated that individuals were responsible for themselves and had to decide on appropriate action. It asserted that “The question of whether or not the nervous or the useless of the young children, the aged and the infirm, should move is something for personal and individual decision.”²¹⁵

2.5 Summary in Conclusion

In 1942 the possibility of a Japanese attack on British Columbia was no longer being denied. In the early months of that year, politicians, especially those from B.C., became more outspoken about the Japanese threat. Growing anxieties and fears about the threat also led to greater criticism of the defence system and those in charge of it, as seen most spectacularly through the *Vancouver Sun*'s “Derelict Defense” series. These

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

commentaries were presented and discussed through the newspapers, and perhaps as a result, more effort was put forth regarding Pacific defences. This was most noticeable when Lieutenant-General Kenneth Stuart, Chief of the General Staff, took over Pacific Command himself. Greater action was also taken by regular citizens as well. In 1942, more volunteer and guerilla units were formed to defend the coast. These units were not always officially sanctioned, and indicated that there was a growing desire among residents to become more active in the province's defence.

Much of the newspaper coverage involved powerful statements of anxiety and fear. Politicians like Howard Green claimed that a Japanese attack on Canada "was probable."²¹⁶ However, other words like 'complacency' were used repeatedly. In the early months of 1942, the articles and editorials in B.C.'s newspapers suggested there was a fear that the province's population was too complacent, despite all of the coverage on Pearl Harbor. However, the perceptions of the nature of the Japanese threat changed in June of 1942, challenging complacency in the province. Two events contributed to this: the Japanese raids on Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands and the Japanese shelling of the lighthouse at Estevan Point. These incidents brought the Japanese threat closer to B.C. than it had been before. The fact that evacuation became a more frequent topic in the newspapers suggested that the fear of attack in B.C. intensified after these events. The conversations presented in B.C.'s newspapers in 1942 certainly indicate that anxiety about and fear of the Japanese threat to B.C. continued to exist. The next chapter will explore whether or not the same was true in the following year.

²¹⁶ "INVASION LIKELY," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 30 January 1942, front page.

Chapter Three

Closer the War, Closer Japan, April to August 1943

The arrival of the Japanese in the Aleutian Islands closed any distance left between B.C. and the Pacific theatre of war.²¹⁷ No longer were the Japanese roaming the Pacific. They were on North American soil, operating out of established bases just off the coast of Alaska. There was no way of knowing whether or not they would venture any closer. Neither the Japanese nor the Americans knew the full intent or the capabilities of the other when it came to the Aleutians yet. The Japanese did not think that the Americans would be able to launch any serious counter-offensive until later in 1943. The Americans meanwhile believed they had destroyed too many Japanese seaplanes in earlier raids for the Japanese to be able to execute any more major attacks. In order to prevent the Japanese from reinforcing and consolidating their holdings in the Aleutian Islands, the American forces in Alaska continuously bombed the main garrison on Kiska.²¹⁸

By the fall of 1942, Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of the U.S. Pacific fleet, concluded that it would take more than aerial raids to drive the Japanese from the Aleutians. An amphibious landing would be necessary and troops needed to be properly trained. It was estimated that a successful landing on the Japanese-occupied Kiska Island could not happen until the spring of 1943 at the earliest.²¹⁹ While there was some minor action in the fall of 1942, much of the fall and winter was consumed in the U.S. planning

²¹⁷ The Japanese invaded and occupied the islands of Kiska and Attu in June of 1942.

²¹⁸ Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 100-102.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

for spring offensives. This chapter will cover the final five months of the Aleutian campaign, when these offensives were launched. It will discuss the presentation of the news of this activity and the tone and overall message of newspaper articles and editorials, and will consider whether or not there was any sense of relief once the campaign came to a close.

3.1 Attu

Kiska was the main objective, but Attu was the first obstacle. The first initiative against Attu took place on 18 April 1943, with heavy bombing from Allied fliers. However, the nasty Aleutian weather delayed the actual assault until early May. B.C. newspapers reported on the state of play on Attu in the days before the initial bombing. The news coverage still contained a sense of uneasiness regarding the Japanese presence in the North Pacific. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* published a front page headline article on 13 April, stating that the Japanese airfields on Attu and Kiska were nearing completion. It began: “Despite repeated bombing the Japanese are pushing to completion of a long fighter field on Kiska Island and a long bomber field on Attu...”²²⁰ The fact that the Japanese were working so hard to complete these bases indicated what the Japanese agenda in the Aleutians might be. The airbases gave the Japanese new possibilities in the North American Pacific, and the *Daily News* outlined them. From these bases, the Japanese would be able “to repel naval bombardment with zeros [long range fighter airplanes]. To repel any landing on the few existing beaches. To harass advanced United States bases if possible. [And] To hit United States shipping lines.”²²¹ According to an

²²⁰ “Japanese Establish on Aleutians,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 13 April 1943, front page.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

editorial published the same week, these potential threats could also include an attack on Prince Rupert. Titled “Japanese Look This Way,” the editorial asserted that it was not at all unreasonable to think that the Japanese might attack British Columbia. Closer to the Aleutians than many other cities in the province, Prince Rupert especially had to be “directly interested in the possibilities of what a strong enemy foothold in the Aleutians might imply....”²²² The best course of action would be to oust the Japanese from the Aleutians altogether.

The delayed invasion of Attu caused concern. Days before the Allied assault on Attu, the *Kelowna Okanagan Courier* published an article titled “Japanese Menace.” This article was concerned about the delay, saying that the time would allow the Japanese to consolidate its holdings further. As a result, “the chances of throwing the enemy out of his newly won empire [were] lessening....”²²³ The article linked this smaller concern to a larger one, suggesting that the entire Allied Command was not taking the Japanese military threat against North America seriously enough. The writer stated that there was a growing feeling amongst West Coast citizens, Canadian and American alike, that the Japanese situation in the North Pacific was not receiving sufficient attention. And while “The importance of the European theatre cannot be minimized... the feeling [wa]s mounting that a great deal more should be done without delay to weaken the menace of Japan in the Pacific.”²²⁴

Other articles contained similar sentiments about growing public concern. A *Prince Rupert Daily News* piece said that there was pressure from both the public and the

²²² “Japanese Look This Way,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 15 April 1943, 2.

²²³ “Japanese Menace,” *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 6 May 1943, 2.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

press to make the Pacific War the priority because it was “close to ‘home’.”²²⁵ It warned readers that the Japanese in the Aleutians “could ‘Doolittle industrial areas of importance on this coast at almost any time.’”²²⁶ It would have been foolish to allow the Japanese time to consolidate their position on the island. More needed to be done and it needed to be done sooner rather than later.

Another article from the *Daily News* reiterated this argument, discussing the details of the Japanese occupation of the Aleutians and the speed and efficiency of their establishment. The 8 May front page article said that the Japanese had managed to sail into Kiska Harbor, unnoticed, with a considerable number of vessels including “cruisers, a seaplane tender, destroyers, cargo and troop-laden ships.”²²⁷ Once landed, the Japanese forces immediately got to work, beginning with the creation of a tent city that would provide temporary housing for up to 3,000 people. They arrived with bulldozers, trucks, and anti-aircraft guns, clearly ready to develop and defend their position on the island. Soon the tents were changed out for wood framed buildings and out buildings that included a hospital, powerhouse and multiple radio stations.²²⁸ These were not the beginnings of a temporary base.

When the American landing assault began on 11 May, the Japanese defence was much stronger than had been anticipated. The official history of the Royal Canadian Air

²²⁵ “Pacific Coast is Awaiting Battle With Japan in Aleutians,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 13 May 1943, front page.

²²⁶ ‘Doolittle’ was a reference to a raid that had occurred on 18 April 1942, when eighteen American B-25 bombers led by Colonel James Doolittle bombed Tokyo and a few surrounding cities. The damage had been minimal but American authorities expected retaliation attacks, especially in Alaska. Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy*, 66.

²²⁷ “Leapfrog Tactics of Japanese Secret of Hold in Aleutians,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 8 May 1943, front page.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

Force recounts that “It took three weeks of intense and bloody fighting, at the cost of over 560 American and 2350 Japanese dead, to recapture Attu.”²²⁹ The B.C. newspapers got word of the landing three days later and began publishing whatever details they had. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* headline on 14 May declared the “BATTLE OF THE ALEUTIANS ON” and explained that United States forces were locked in battle with the Japanese on Attu.²³⁰ The article encouraged readers to believe that the landing was the first step in outflanking Kiska, which would make it difficult for the Japanese to sustain their 10,000 person garrison with “American forces between the Japanese stronghold at Kiska in the Aleutians and Japan proper.”²³¹

The first outbreak of “fierce” fighting in the Aleutians sparked an immediate response from those who were still worried about the safety of B.C.²³² This was most obvious in the editorials published in the days following the reports of the attack on Attu. The theme of distance was once again emphasized in the title. “The War Comes Closer” warned that, with the outbreak of activity on Attu, “the actual fighting of the world war [wa]s now brought within fairly close range of Prince Rupert.”²³³ It asserted that the result of the Aleutian fighting would have a direct impact on the people of Prince Rupert, and everyone should not assume they were not part of the Japanese plan.²³⁴ The only way people on the Pacific coast could feel any kind of relief would be through the complete removal of the Japanese from the Aleutians. The editorial stated, “Removal of the enemy

²²⁹ W.A.B. Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force (The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force)* vol. II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 419.

²³⁰ “BATTLE OF ALEUTIANS ON,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 14 May 1943, front page.

²³¹ “‘Yanks Invade Japan Base on Attu,’ Aleutian Fighting Going Well, Says Col. Knox,” *Vancouver Sun*, 14 May 1943, front page.

²³² “BATTLE OF ALEUTIANS ON,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 14 May 1943, front page.

²³³ “The War Comes Closer,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 17 May 1943, 2.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

from that area would, no doubt, reduce the menace here although, as we have remarked before, Prince Rupert cannot and should not feel completely safe until the last gun in the whole war has been fired and peace has been restored.”²³⁵ Towards the end of the editorial, the author(s) acknowledged the increased effort to organize and improve defences in B.C., noting that defences were “vastly stronger” than they were just a few months before, and they continued to improve every day.²³⁶

A similar editorial appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* on 18 May. Titled “How Right We Were,” it used the activity in the Aleutians to justify feelings of uneasiness and concern on the Pacific coast. The editorial was clearly directed at officials in Ottawa, who had not always thought the Pacific coast to be a priority. The editorial began by asserting that “Not until last Friday did the government at Ottawa officially admit how right were the claims for better protection of these shores.”²³⁷ It harkened back to the “Derelict Defence” series as well, suggesting that the government fine charged to the *Sun* was unjust and reimbursed. The editorial stated, “Having made these and other similar admissions in his address to Parliament, it may be assumed that [Defence Minister] Mr. Ralston will take steps to repay the *Sun* its \$300. Gladly we will undertake to turn the money over to the Red Cross.”²³⁸

Some articles and editorials continued to stress the need for coastal protection and a greater Canadian involvement in the Aleutian action. Howard Green, Conservative member for Vancouver South, once again addressed the House of Commons with his

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ “How Right We Were,” (editorial) *Vancouver Sun*, 18 May 1943, 4.

²³⁸ Ibid.

concerns in 1943. Green demanded a clear statement of Canadian policy on the Aleutians. He said that Canada had been one of the first to declare war on the Japanese, but seemed content to let others do all of the fighting for them. He believed that the threat posed to the west coast by Japan was ongoing, and that one morning the people of B.C. might wake up to a Japanese invasion. Green suggested that more coastal units be brought up to strength and properly trained because the Japanese threat was just as real as it had been before.²³⁹

The need for more recruits to operate anti-aircraft guns was advertised in a front page article in the *Prince Rupert Daily News*. The order was part of a larger announcement from the Department of Defence that reserve units were necessary to take “a more active role in the defence of the country.”²⁴⁰ The order declared that at least 200 recruits were needed to bring the units up to strength. Besides manning the anti-aircraft guns, the people of the province were asked to re-examine their roles and responsibilities should an emergency arise in Prince Rupert. The article declared that there would likely be little warning if a Japanese attack did come, and as a result there would be no time to evacuate a large number of people from the coast before the attack actually began. Residents were encouraged to get off the streets as quickly as possible and to remain in their homes. Traffic had to be kept to an absolute minimum so that emergency responders and A.R.P. members could move quickly and efficiently wherever they were needed.

²³⁹ “M.P. Urges Canada Share More in Pacific War,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 19 May 1943, 2.

²⁴⁰ “Reserve Unit Must Be Prepared To Assist In Manning Anti-Aircraft,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 20 May 1943, front page.

Citizens were also reminded to adequately prepare their homes for blackout and air raid conditions, and to consider getting involved in the A.R.P.²⁴¹

By mid-May 1943, newspapers were reporting that victory on Attu would soon come. On 21 May, the *Prince Rupert Daily News*'s front page headline stated that the Japanese had begun to evacuate Attu. The "Fall of the island was expected hourly."²⁴² The *Prince George Citizen* reported that the Japanese had been isolated in a small pocket on the northeastern end of the island and that they faced "annihilation or capture" at the hands of the Allied forces.²⁴³ But the fighting on Attu would continue for a number of days, resulting in "Fierce hand to hand battling" between the Allied and Japanese forces.²⁴⁴ The American troops were "blasting their way through Japanese death traps with bayonets and grenades."²⁴⁵ The isolated pockets of Japanese resistance on the island would not be neutralized until 29 May. B.C. newspapers did not report on this until 31 May, but did so with front page headline articles.

The *Prince Rupert Daily News* published an article that day, titled "AMERICANS TAKE ATTU." Tokyo had reported it first, but the Americans had all but cleared Attu Island, with the exception of a small number of snipers.²⁴⁶ The *Vancouver Sun* provided a summary of the assault against the island. Reminding readers that Attu had been held by approximately 2,000 Japanese forces, the summary held that "it took a strong American air, naval and land force to exterminate them in three weeks of severe fighting."²⁴⁷ It also

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² "Japanese Evacuating Attu Island," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 21 May 1943, front page.

²⁴³ "Allies Expecting Early Victory on Attu Island As They Corner Japanese," *Prince George Citizen*, 20 May 1943, front page.

²⁴⁴ "Hand To Hand Fighting On Attu," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 27 May 1943, front page.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ "AMERICANS TAKE ATTU," *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 31 May 1943, front page.

²⁴⁷ "Fall of Kiska Assured by Re-Capture of Attu," *Vancouver Sun*, 31 May 1943, 5.

asserted that the fall of Attu meant the probable fall of Kiska, which would “greatly weaken Japan’s chances of a successful attack on the North American mainland by the Alaskan route.”²⁴⁸

The newspaper coverage on the Aleutians, and Attu specifically, indicated that concern over B.C.’s safety continued well into 1943. Readers of articles and editorials were told that the war had come even closer to home than it had been before, and the outcome in the Aleutians could have serious consequences for Canada. The newspapers emphasized the fact that British Columbians could not be sure of their safety until the Japanese were completely out of the war. For this reason, none of the province’s defences could be relaxed, and recruitment programs were still underway to ensure the strength of these defences. Politicians continued to demonstrate the divide between Ottawa and B.C., the latter group calling for greater attention to the coast. The concern over insufficient attention being given to the Pacific theatre persisted during this time, and the charge of not taking the threat seriously was extended to include Allied commanders in the Pacific.²⁴⁹ The newspapers continued to promote these themes during the days leading up to the recapture of Kiska.

3.2 Kiska

The Japanese garrison on Kiska was five times larger than that of Attu. The same type of resistance experienced on Attu was expected in the re-capture of Kiska, which would not happen until mid-August, 1943. In the intervening time, B.C.’s newspapers published

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ “Japanese Menace,” *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 6 May 1943, 2.

articles and editorials that examined the province's defences and the ongoing possibility of a Japanese attack. The 29 May issue of the *Victoria Daily Times* included a large magazine section dedicated to an article on the men stationed in small, isolated posts all along B.C.'s shoreline. In "They Guard British Columbia Skyways," Corporal Lloyd Baker of the R.C.A.F. provided a detailed summary of what life was like for these men.

The men were known as 'spotters' and were responsible for constant vigilance over the Pacific coast horizon and for alerting coastal air bases should enemy forces appear. Armed with powerful binoculars, the coast watch took their job seriously, mixed as it was with hardships and loneliness. Corporal Baker stated that the job was difficult in its extreme isolation. The men lived in small, drafty log cabins that they had constructed themselves and sometimes went five or six months before returning to civilization. The men were chosen specifically because of their "ability and temperament."²⁵⁰ The watch units made use of local knowledge of the region, with "an older man with bush experience," leading each one.²⁵¹ The members of the units were from different occupational backgrounds, including "boys just out of school, farmers, a school teacher, an optician, mechanics, loggers and a policeman...men from all walks of life" who were sacrificing their lives and livelihoods in order to protect the Canadian coast.²⁵²

This article was important because it emphasized the necessity of having men to watch the coast, day and night. Even though Attu had been recaptured, the perception of the threat of an attack was real and the thought of an unprotected coast was frightening. There was a Japanese garrison on Kiska still, estimated at around 10,000 men. This

²⁵⁰ "They Guard British Columbia Skyways," *Victoria Daily Times*, 29 May 1943, section 4.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

article, detailing the sacrifices being made by ordinary B.C. residents conveyed just how important coastal defence continued to be.

The *Prince Rupert Daily News* also emphasized the danger British Columbians were still facing. The paper published an article on 29 June simply titled “Possibility of Attack.” The article included quotes from W.C. Mainwaring, head of the Civilian Protection Committee for the Pacific coast. Mainwaring stated that the truly dangerous period for B.C. was just beginning. He claimed that B.C. would be attacked with bombs and incendiaries before the end of the summer. This was particularly troubling for B.C. because the summer weather constituted the dry season. He said that, from “June to September, when the woods become tinder-dry, is the time enemy action is more to be expected and feared.”²⁵³ Mainwaring warned against complacency now that the Americans had recaptured Attu. He stated: “Apathy on the part of the public, as well as our A.R.P. personnel, possibly the result of recent American successes at Attu, is not justified, for we are far from being out of the woods yet.”²⁵⁴

Mainwaring laid out the different ways that a Japanese attack could take place. First, the Japanese could launch a direct attack on the coast from Kiska. If this was attempted, it was likely that at least a few planes would get through B.C.’s coastal defences, because even some German planes had managed to get through Great Britain’s “magnificent air and ground defences” during the Battle of Britain.²⁵⁵ Nuisance raids from sea planes and submarines were possible. The province had gotten a taste of that with the shelling of Estevan. There was also a possibility of long-range sea plane

²⁵³ “Possibility of Attack,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 29 June 1943, 2.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

bombing as well. In all of these instances, the fog in the Aleutians and down the Pacific coast would provide decent cover for any forces. Mainwaring called on the people of B.C. to continue to stay alert and not to relax any defensive measures already in place. The article concluded with another quote from Mainwaring. He reiterated that the threat of Japanese action against the Canadian Pacific coast was still very real. It read, "Let no one be convinced that the chances of a raid on this coast are non-existent. They are very real, very genuine."²⁵⁶ The *Kelowna Okanagan Courier* published an article with the same quote from Mainwaring, using his words to argue that the government was aware of the need for ongoing civil defence, despite the recapture of Attu.²⁵⁷

The remaining news coverage throughout the end of June and the entirety of July was mostly reports on the operations of the forces in the Aleutian and the incessant bombardment of Kiska. The *Victoria Daily Times* claimed that these raids were "softening the Japs for Knockout."²⁵⁸ Towards the end of July, Canadian airmen began to participate in the air raids on Kiska. This demonstrated direct Canadian involvement in the Pacific war, quieting the concern held by Howard Green that Canada was not doing its part. The *Prince Rupert Daily News* reported that, despite the almost constant bombardment of Kiska, the Japanese had managed to finish the airfield at Kiska. The article used this fact to warn that people of the Pacific coast should not yet feel relief. It read that there was "no reason to feel overly comfortable as long as the Japs remain[ed]

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ "Mainwaring Warns That Raids By Japs May Come This Summer," *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 1 July 1943, 5.

²⁵⁸ "Daily Air Raids On Kiska Soften Japs for Knockout," *Victoria Daily Times*, 29 June 1943, front page.

on the Aleutians and certainly we should continue to be on our guard when they improve their position there as they have done with this completion of a landing field at Kiska.”²⁵⁹

In the final days of July 1943, the bombs continued to fall on Kiska and the Allied forces began to prepare for the landing. The Allied forces expected to encounter the same resistance as they had experienced on Attu, and perhaps even more, due to the larger garrison. However, when the force of over 3,000 troops landed on Kiska on 15 August, they found it nearly empty. The Japanese had begun evacuating the island on 28 July, in the midst of Allied bombing. Between 29 July and 4 August, 152 tons of bombs had been dropped on an emptying Kiska Island.²⁶⁰

B.C.’s journalists met the news with much excitement. It took several days, however, for the reports to reach the province. The first ones were not published until 21 August. The *Prince Rupert Daily News*, the *Vancouver Sun*, and the *Victoria Daily Times* all published front page articles declaring the recapture of Kiska the same day. Some of these headlines immediately acknowledged that there were no Japanese left on the island to fight, such as the *Victoria Daily Times*’s “Kiska Yields Without a Shot, Canadian-U.S. Force Walk In.”²⁶¹ Others simply declared that the island had been recaptured. Later articles continued to emphasize the fact that Canadians had been present in the Aleutians and prepared to fight the entrenched enemy. One *Victoria Daily Times* article stated that one third of the landing force at Kiska had been Canadian, with other Canadians flying the fighter and bomber planes overhead.²⁶² While there were no encounters with the

²⁵⁹ “On Kiska Island,” *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 24 July 1943, 2.

²⁶⁰ Douglas, *The Creation of a National Air Force*, 419-424.

²⁶¹ “Kiska Yields Without a Shot, Canadian-U.S. Force Walk In,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 21 August 1943, front page.

²⁶² “Kiska Japs Left Much Material,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 23 August 1943, front page.

enemy, a lot of war material had been left behind. The Allied landing force was in the process of officially clearing the island, and at least two lives had been lost to land mines and booby traps left behind by the Japanese.²⁶³

In the days following the capture of Kiska, some articles expressed relief that the Japanese were finally out of the Aleutians. The first instance of this came from Major-General G.R. Pearkes, V.C., general officer commanding-in-chief of Pacific Command at the time. Pearkes had just returned from visiting the recaptured Kiska, and told reporters that this had “removed in very large part the threat which had existed against the Pacific Coast.”²⁶⁴ An editorial published in the *Prince Rupert Daily News* expressed similar opinions. The page 2 editorial was titled “Less Danger Here Now” and expanded on the thought that now the Aleutians were secured, the direct threat to the Pacific Coast had been eliminated. It opened by asserting that Prince Rupert was now in a safer position. It said that “Military leaders ha[d] publicly stated that the danger of invasion on the Pacific Coast of Canada or the United States ha[d] virtually passed and, with the establishment of defences and fighting forces further afield, even the liability of air raiding seems to have become greatly diminished.”²⁶⁵ While the sense of relief was present, there was also a cautious warning. The editorial reminded readers of the unpredictability of the Japanese enemy. It stated that “He deals in surprises and we should not feel too secure.”²⁶⁶ The people of Prince Rupert, and the people of the province of B.C., would “not be entirely safe” until the Japanese had been definitively defeated.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ “Japs Debunked at Kiska,” *Victoria Daily Times*, 25 August 1943, 4.

²⁶⁵ “Less Danger Here Now,” (editorial) *Prince Rupert Daily News*, 31 August 1943, 2.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

3.3 Summary in Conclusion

The Japanese occupation in the Aleutians drastically reduced the remaining distance between British Columbia and the enemy, and the nature of the Japanese threat to the province once again changed as a result. The war was truly “close to home,” with the Japanese only a few thousand kilometers away. While no direct Japanese threat was explicitly issued, intent could be inferred. The Japanese had secured an advance base in the Aleutians, with a good-sized garrison. If they wanted to attack mainland North America, they were apparently capable of doing so. It was logical to assume that such an attack would begin by leapfrogs through the Aleutians before an attack on Alaska.

B.C.’s newspapers consistently reiterated the danger that the Aleutian occupation posed to the province. Citizens were once again warned not to assume B.C. was not a Japanese objective. The people of the province needed to remain prepared and on the alert. The importance of citizen action and involvement continued to be emphasized, through articles that underlined the necessity for anti-aircraft gunners and ‘spotters’ on the coastline. Perceptions of fear and threat persisted into 1943. The relief expressed once both Attu and Kiska had been recaptured meant that that fear and threat had to have existed in the first place. However, relief was expressed alongside cautious warnings. The Japanese enemy was unpredictable, and the threat would not be completely eliminated until the Japanese were out of the war.

Conclusion

From 1941 to 1943, the threat of a Japanese attack was a serious concern for residents of B.C. For two years, perceptions of fear and threat were presented, debated and reshaped through the newspaper coverage of the events in the Pacific theatre of war. These conversations about fear evolved as the perceived nature of the Japanese threat changed. As Milburn and Watman stated in their study, threat is more complex than “If you do A, I will do B.”²⁶⁸ Throughout the 1941 to 1943 period, the Japanese threat to British Columbia was explicit, because the identity of the threatener was always clear. However, it was also implicit because the Japanese intent was unclear and unknowable. It was only through the actions of the Japanese forces that individuals assessed the potential threat and inferred Japan’s possible objectives. The conversations about fears of an attack therefore changed as the perception of the Japanese threat evolved.

Specific events such as the attack on Pearl Harbor, the shelling of Estevan Point, and the Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands contributed to the evolving perception of threat. B.C.’s newspapers responded to these changes, and the fears they sometimes inspired, in a number of different ways. Pearl Harbor had demonstrated what B.C. might potentially face should Japan attack. In reaction to the attack, B.C.’s newspapers followed the government opinion, and attempted to reassure readers of their safety. This was first done by emphasizing the physical distance between B.C. and the enemy, and when this was questioned, by reassuring readers of the strength of B.C.’s established defences. These attempts to reassure were met by an increasingly doubtful

²⁶⁸ Thomas Milburn and Kenneth Watman, *On the Nature of Threat: A Social Psychological Analysis* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981), 8.

audience. The newspapers' approach to the coverage changed, and instead encouraged readers to become more actively involved in their own defence by joining A.R.P. groups. By 1942, the potential for a Japanese attack was no longer being denied by Canadian military authorities or B.C.'s newspapers. Politicians, newspaper writers, and readers all became more outspoken about their fear. More effort was put forward to improve B.C.'s defences and more volunteer units were established through local initiatives.

In June of 1942, the nature of the Japanese threat changed when the enemy raided Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians and shelled Estevan Point off the coast of B.C. The enemy was now within close range of the province, making a potential Japanese attack all the more possible. The newspaper coverage of the Aleutians, in particular, suggested that British Columbians were worried about what would happen if the Japanese were allowed the time to reinforce and consolidate their holdings on Attu and Kiska. The nature of the Japanese threat therefore became much more specific than it had ever been. If the Japanese enemy did attack, they would likely start from their Aleutian Island bases. Even after the Japanese had been driven out of the Aleutians, the perceived threat was still presented in B.C.'s newspapers. Most papers warned citizens that they would not truly be safe until the Japanese were completely out of the war.

The coverage on the Japanese threat in B.C.'s newspapers from 1941 to 1943 was not always consistent, and many different opinions were present. However, the province's newspapers did facilitate a dialogue, bringing together the thoughts and words of ordinary citizens, newspaper staff, and military and government officials. B.C.'s newspapers thus represented a community, and demonstrated, as Martin Conboy argued

in *The Language of Newspapers*, a symbiosis between readers, writers, and officials.²⁶⁹

The newspapers provided a space for social activity and were not just a reflection of government propaganda. The fact that criticism of the government and the military existed in the newspaper coverage is evidence of this fact. Censorship did not stifle critical conversations in the newspapers, and if Conboy's understanding of newspaper/community relationships is applied, the same critical conversations were happening in B.C.'s communities as well.

Certain trends about fear and threat emerged, and they were continuously found in B.C.'s newspaper coverage between 1941 and 1943. Much of the coverage focused on the issue of distance between B.C. and the Japanese. The enemy steadily came "closer to home" and soon B.C. was being referred to as a "frontline" of the Second World War.²⁷⁰ There was also a continuous conversation about citizen action and involvement. In 1941, B.C. newspapers encouraged residents to become more active in defence and protection by joining the A.R.P. and preparing their homes for emergency. In 1942 and 1943, citizen action was discussed through articles that detailed the activities of local volunteer units and the important work they were doing to keep B.C. safe.

The themes of distance from the enemy and of the importance of citizen action are common to discussions about threat and fear in general. The same topics are found in Cold War conversations about Civil Defence, for example. The advent of nuclear weaponry eliminated distance between enemies, and people of the world lived in fear of

²⁶⁹ Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio-Historical Perspectives* (London: Continuum Publishing, 2010), 1

²⁷⁰ "Canada at War" column, *Kelowna Okanagan Courier*, 11 December 1941, front page.

nuclear conflict. Once again defence and citizen involvement became a Canadian focus.²⁷¹

The same themes have resonance in present instances of threat and fear. The only difference is that, at present, the identity and intent of enemies is harder to determine. As David Brooks argued, attacks are random. “In Israel there is a wave of stabbings. In [the U.S.] we have shooting sprees in schools and theatres. In cities there are police killings. In other places there are suicide bombings.”²⁷² Randomness and unpredictability generate location-specific fear, and a world-wide sense of anxiety. Fear and threat dominate contemporary society and are constantly presented in the news. Perhaps by continuing to study how fear was presented and discussed in the past we can learn to better manage with it in our present.

Fear has been at the centre of this discussion of British Columbia and its newspapers during the Second World War. One must remember, as Joanna Bourke said in her book, *Fear: A Cultural History*, that fear is not a by-product.²⁷³ Fear itself is an important life event, experienced by all individuals at some point or another. But past fear is not easy to access, and because of that the study of fear can be fearsome in itself. Bourke stated that fear is an invisible, subjective experience that depends on individual interpretations.²⁷⁴ It is difficult to clearly identify because the word ‘fear’ means different things to different people in different situations. Bourke argued that, because of this, a

²⁷¹ See Andrew Burtch’s *Give Me Shelter: The Failure of Canada’s Cold War Civil Defence* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012) a study of efforts at Civil Defence in Canada from 1945 to 1968, the public response to these efforts, and the reasons for Civil Defence’s failure.

²⁷² David Brooks, “The Age of Small Terror,” *New York Times*, 5 January 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/05/opinion/the-age-of-small-terror.html?_r=0 (accessed 24 March 2016)

²⁷³ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 2005), 289.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 73.

preoccupation with the nomenclature of fear must be pushed aside.²⁷⁵ Historians must be open to the many ways that fear can be expressed, and take indications of fear seriously. As seen in British Columbia's newspapers during the Second World War, fear is sometimes expressed through blatant acknowledgement. Opinion pieces often declared the author's fear of attack and concern about the state of B.C.'s defences. However, fear is also expressed through the denial of it, and these denials are just as important as the direct acknowledgements. Both are indications of the ways in which communities attempt to deal with their feelings.

Today, it is easy to say that the people of British Columbia were never in any real danger of a serious Japanese attack. For those who lived through the 1941-1943 period, however, the possibility was real. That is, the perception was real, that the Japanese threat would be actualized. British Columbian fears and anxieties about the Japanese threat cannot be dismissed because it cannot be codified. Fear is an inherent part of human experience, and is arguably the most pervasive and powerful emotion of all. To better understand and cope with it, one needs to acknowledge and take seriously the "frightened stammerings" and "hesitant whispers" about fears past and present.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, ix.

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