Figure 2 The staff at Ivy's Bookshop, Oak Bay Avenue, 12 Jan. 2018 (Shirley
– left; Jessica – right)

Figure 3 The mystery novel section at Ivy's
(Photos: S. Dollinger, 2018)

1 What is Canadian English?

> Until quite recently . . . few Canadians were interested enough in their speech
> to undertake the gigantic task of finding out about it. Consequently, there
> were no Canadian dictionaries worthy of the name; and our imported
> dictionaries virtually ignored Canadian usage. After all, British dictionaries
> are primarily intended for Britons and American dictionaries for Americans;
> no reputable editor claims anything more.
>
> (Walter S. Avis)[1]

Murder he must have read often. Professor Scargill was a man who loved
English whodunnit novels. From the 1960s until well into the 1990s, Scargill
used to get his weekly fix of crime novels at Ivy's Bookshop, which today is a
local Victoria institution in the heart of lovely Oak Bay Village. The friendly
staff at Ivy's remember Scargill, the Yorkshire–Canadian gentleman, habit-
ually browsing the mystery section (opposite). Bookseller Shirley St. Pierre
tells me that staff knew Scargill as a linguistics professor at the then small
University of Victoria, but that they did not fathom his importance as a key
figure in the making of Canadian English – in the creation of a national variety
of English, lifting it and its speakers from ridicule and linguistic insecurity to
some prominence and pride. The way that Scargill, who was formally Director
of the Lexicographical Centre for Canadian English, and his many associates
achieved this monumental task was by writing a series of high-quality diction-
aries. The flagship of the resulting four-volume series called Dictionary of
Canadian English was the scholarly *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical
Principles* (*DCHP-1*),[2] which was published in Canada's centennial year of
1967 (Avis *et al.* 1967). Between the late 1950s and, basically, their deaths –
just one of the main players is alive today – Scargill and his team members
were continuously banging the drum for Canadian English. They were tooting
their own horn, but not primarily for their own sake.

Dictionary writing is, surprisingly perhaps, a lot like crime solving. Do you
remember *Columbo*, the detective show with Peter Falk? I know *Columbo*
because it attained a cult status when I was studying in Austria, running in the
Sunday 10 p.m. slot for years, long after no other station would buy it. That's a
bit how I imagine Scargill going about establishing the correct etymology of

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toque – invariably pronounced "tooke" in Canada – or *Canuck*: cigar in hand and the like, much like Inspector Columbo. It's not really how Margery Fee, our team, and I proceeded half a century later on the second edition, but the basic Sherlock-Holmesian principles have remained unchanged: data, data, and more data; facts; plausible chains of events; historical knowledge; linguistic knowledge; logic; and a good helping of Occam's razor as explained in Chapter 4. These are the eternal tools of the word sleuth.

So far in the story, people are usually with me. I tell them about what I did this past dozen years, at least some of the time, and they get it: writing a dictionary. Boring, perhaps, because folks know what a dictionary is. But "Canadian English"? This phrase people often repeat after me with a little bewilderment and usually, if not always, a rising intonation, as if to question whether such work could possibly be a real job. Their final intonation gets particularly raised if they detected the colourful notes in my English accent.

So what, then, is Canadian English? By Canadian English we mean the English language as used in Canada. Canadian English is therefore not a monolithic thing but an assembly of the varieties of English that are spoken, written, texted, dreamed, and occasionally sung in the country. Later, I will introduce a more technical definition of what Canadian English is – or, to be precise, what Standard Canadian English is, which is the English we hear from George Strombolopolous, Canada's news anchors, the prime minister, Avril Lavigne, and Shawn Mendes, for the most part. But for now the very loose definition provided will do.

When it comes to language in Canada, English is just one of many languages, of course. Besides French, the other former colonial language in the federal domain, English is only 1 of at least 263 languages spoken in the country.[3] English is the most widely used language in the country, but there are quite a few oddities about English in Canada that we will need to explore later. About 60 of the 263+ languages are the languages of the original population of Canada. I say "about" because it is not universally agreed upon what counts as a particular language and as a dialect of a given language. This should not be surprising, as the concept of language is paradoxically not so much a linguistic one as primarily a social one.[4] Like all things social, the concept of language is subject to debate and as many opinions as there are colours in the rainbow.

Where scholars do agree, however, is that the five dozen or so aboriginal languages are divided into no fewer than ten language families,[5] and some fifty of them are spoken in the province of British Columbia (BC) alone. This is one reason why some researchers think that BC is something like the cradle of Indigenous languages in (northern) North America, as it is possible that the rest of the (northern half of the) continent was settled, via Asia, from BC. This was long before the Europeans made a showing with their Indo-European languages, which they turned, through their actions, into colonial languages.

The linguistic diversity of BC is indeed special in the North American context. Picture this diversity in comparison with the European Union, which

is often taken as the epitome of linguistic tolerance and multilingualism in western culture. One can quickly see that more than twice as many Indigenous languages are spoken in BC, a Canadian province of just 5 million inhabitants (Jan. 2019), as in the European Union, a 512-million-strong economical unit, with twenty-four official languages at present. English is also, it needs to be said at the outset, the offshoot of the language of the most "effective" colonizers. This "efficiency" has brought a number of negative effects that anyone living in Canada is still confronted with today. This far-reaching fact means that we need to consider the consequences of colonization, in particular by English-speaking colonizers, throughout the entire book, in one way or another. It's therefore a good idea to start with the basics before we turn to the story of the making of Canadian English.

First Nations Beginnings and Canadian English

The problems that are the result of colonialism are linguistic, cultural, and social – in other words, they affect every area and cut through every aspect of life. If you live in Canada, whether you're aware of it or not, you're without exception affected by this colonial legacy.

Flashback to just a century before Professor Scargill's browsing in the crime-novel section at Ivy's. Residential schools had not yet established their steady grip on the First Nations peoples in the far west. *Residential school* is a historical euphemism for colonial schools whose primary goal was to "take", by any legal and illegal means, "the Indian out of the child", resulting in cultural genocide that almost completely wiped out entire Indigenous cultures and languages. These institutions were nothing other than inhumane places of neglect, terror, and abuse: anything but places of learning. In 1897, a century before Scargill's death, a host of First Nations languages would have been heard in the meadows, woods, and soft slopes through which Oak Bay Avenue cuts today. While English – by which we mean forms of British English, some American English, with some speakers starting to show early Canadian English features – would have been firmly rooted by then, the Indigenous languages that had been exclusively heard for thousands of years in this land were still dominant in some locations. The first sizeable in-migration of settlers happened in the wake of the Fraser River and Cariboo Gold Rushes of the late 1850s and 1860s; before then, the settlers were outnumbered by and depended on the goodwill of the First Nations. Migration from the Canadian East in considerable numbers only occurred after the completion of the trans-Canadian railway in 1885, a generation after the big BC Gold Rush.

The First Nations languages of the region are the languages of Coast Salish peoples. Today these languages are frequently called Salishan, to distinguish them from their linguistic relatives of the same name in Eastern Washington

Figure 4 View in 1896 from Oak Bay
(Gonzales Hill) to Tl-chess (Discovery Island)
(Photo: Oak Bay Archives, Image number 2012–001-018, used by permission)

State (Salish languages). The languages in and around Victoria belong to an extensive array of Salishan and upriver varieties that are quite closely related. It would be any dialectologist's or sociolinguist's dream to study these languages and their relationships, yet most of them are either sleeping – what used to be called *dead* – or on the brink of extinction with only a handful of native speakers left. (In linguistics today, we prefer the term *sleeping language* over *dead language* – by which is meant a language awaiting revitalization based on archived material. Revived languages include Modern Hebrew and, in fact, the Musqueam language that is now taught to dozens of people at the University of British Columbia.) Ivy's Bookshop is located on traditional Chilcowitch territory, referring to the family or "band" of Songhee Lekwungen speakers that are the traditional custodians – in western parlance, "owners" – of that part of Oak Bay. The Chekonein Lekwungen dialects would be heard as well, in addition to nearby Esquimalt Lekwungen and Saanich Lekwungen dialects.[6]

Indigenous heritage is written all over Oak Bay and Greater Victoria – all across Canada, actually, yet we have forgotten much about it. The islands off Oak Bay, for instance, are in plain sight of Willows Beach, a popular Victoria location that is visited by many locals and visitors alike. When you look out to sea from Willows Beach, it's impossible to miss them. This book's cover photo shows the islands in the foreground. They have a story that is not so widely known, however, and today the two biggest ones are still most often

referred to by their colonial names of Chatham and Discovery Islands, named after Captain Vancouver's two ships. The real name, from the local Lekwungen dialect of Salishan, is of course another one – so much so that it looks different at one glance: *ƛ̓čés*. This word may be transcribed in English letters as something like *tl-chess*, which is pronounced close to *til-chess* with stress or emphasis on *chess*. *ƛ̓čé*s is an interesting case because it is a particular place name in Lekwungen culture but also the general word for 'island' – any island. Tim Montler from the University of North Texas, one of the experts in Coastal Salish informs us that *ƛ̓čés*

is both the word for 'island' and the proper name of Discovery Island in Lkwungen, SENĆOŦEN (spelled ȾĆÁS), and in Klallam, which has a direct relative [a so-called "cognate"], ƛ̓čás. The word for 'island' in Hul'q'umin'um' [spoken from Saanich to Nanaimo and over to the southern Gulf Islands] is not [related], but it is in Upriver Halkomelem [Fraser Valley, Chilliwack, Harrison Lake], tl'chá:s, which has no proper name for Discovery Island. Other smaller islands have their own names and the generic word used is typically the diminutive of ƛ̓čés, ƛ̓əƛ̓éčəs. (Tim Montler: pers. correspondence, April 2018)

The non-colonial, actual name for the island reveals an astonishing amount of cultural knowledge *and* the connections via the Salish Sea among the Coast Salish First Nations. Why, for instance, is one island's name in the Lekwungen language also the word for 'island' in general? It is as if it were a kind of archetypal island, as Tim suggests.

Part of *ƛ̓čés* is today legally known as Chatham Islands Indian Reserve No. 4 and still owned by the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.[7] Having largely remained in Native hands, *ƛ̓čés* – which from now on I shall render as *Tl-chess* to help readers remember it[8] – is sadly a rare exception to the rule of colonial land grab on more or less outrageous terms, if any terms were offered. It is a sad fact that British Columbia as a province has been exceptionally intransigent in refusing to negotiate treaties, which means that almost all lands were seized illegally from their Native custodians (see Mawani 2009; Barman 2007). Today, we also have good evidence that even disease, against which the First Nations had no immune response, was used as a means of conquest (Swanky 2012: 70–97).

As the legal names make clear in almost all cases, it was the colonizers who bestowed their names on everything, which had, among other things, the effect that even today it is not easy to unearth the traditional, original names. Although the land was usually taken from the First Nations by force or, less often, by some sort of shady agreement, on Tl-chess the original custodians managed, against all odds, to hold on to it until this day.

Who are the Songhees, then? (Today we usually speak of the Songhee, Saanich, and Esquimalt First Nations.) Chief trader Charles Ross, put in charge of Fort Victoria by Governor James Douglas, appears to be the first to spell

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Songhees in 1844, when he referred to the aboriginal people "encamped near the fort" and added "whose lands we occupy".[9] Prior to this spelling being standardized in English, the name had many variants, including *Songish*, *Samose*, *Stsamis*, *Tsomass*, *Tchanmus*, or *Etzamish*, depending on which Coastal Salishan dialect speaker's version was rendered in English and by whom. For the people as such, spellings were utterly irrelevant, as their tradition was predominantly oral, with spelling questions playing no role whatsoever. So by asking about the "right" spelling, we are already enacting colonial routines and expectations on another culture that had more important things to deal with, such as the co-existence with nature, sustainability, and fostering respect for all things, living or not, but definitely not with spelling.

There are two contracts between Governor James Douglas and the Songhees that are relevant for the land that the village of Oak Bay is located on, though the interpretation of the vague terms is not agreed on. How could it be? The territories were partly overlapping and somewhat fluid, as was the make-up of families. On that, James Douglas tried to tease out definitions for his western-style contracts that did not exist; asking for boundaries, he got descriptions that had worked for centuries but that were not the down-to-the-inch measurements he wanted to hear. It is like fitting square pegs into round holes: the exercise was bound to fail and we are living with its negative ramifications to this day.

The "Purchase of Land" from the Chilcowitch, dated 30 April 1850, is one of fourteen treaties that James Douglas signed between 1850 and 1854. Collectively, they cover only a minuscule part of BC's vast landmass. In the Chilcowitch case, the Crown agreed to pay "Thirty pounds sterling" for the treaty that includes the location of Ivy's Bookshop. While the Chilcowitch Lekwungen agreed to share some of their lands, the alleged surrendering part is overly explicit, as they

do consent to surrender, entirely and for ever, to James Douglas, the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company in Vancouver Island, that is to say, for the Governor, Deputy Governor, and Committee of the same, the whole of the lands situate [*sic*] and lying between the Sandy Bay east of Clover Point, at the termination of the Whengwhung [*sic*] line to Point Gonzalez, and thence north to a line of equal extent passing through the north side of Minies Plan.

What is less clear is the purchase price beyond the 30 pounds sterling – a bargain, truly, though it was not even paid in coins, but merely in blankets. And here it comes: for the entire lands in the Victoria region 371 blankets were paid.[10] I would call that a rip-off. What comes with that purchase is stated in the next paragraph:

The condition of or understanding of this sale is this, that our village sites and enclosed field are to be kept for our own use, for the use of our children, and for those who may follow after us; and the land shall be properly surveyed hereafter. It is understood,

however, that the land itself, with these small exceptions, becomes the entire property of the white people for ever; it is also understood that we are at liberty to hunt over the unoccupied lands, and to carry on our fisheries as formerly.[11]

Any western lawyer would object to such formulation of benefits, "for ever" or not, which includes a diminishing resource in hunting over "unoccupied" land. It is clear that the Lekwungen could have no idea of just how many "white people" would come and how little land would eventually be left. It was not communicated to them. So many would come that soon nothing would be left "to hunt over".

   The dice were heavily loaded against the First Nations. Speaking of "small exceptions", for instance, can easily be used to reduce the size of reserves later on; after all, small is relative. What is clear is that "the content of that treaty is not at all clear".[12] What makes matters worse is that the treaty above was only agreed on orally, together with most other ones on Vancouver Island. Douglas collected the signatures and marks of the chiefs on a *blank sheet of paper* and, after consultation with London a few months later, filled in the sheet post hoc (*ibid*.: 5). Any lawyer at the time would have argued that a people cannot sign away their land with a *carte blanche*, an empty slate of conditions, to be filled in post hoc unilaterally by only one party. Clearly, informed consent was not given.

Languages, Cultures, and Reconciliation

Recent research at the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law states that what the First Nations thought they'd signed was a sharing agreement, not a treaty handing over land in perpetuity; the former is fully in line with traditional practices and Indigenous lines of thought. Such misunderstanding had profound consequences; as it was both culturally and linguistically caused, it calls for reconciliation. The First Nations evidence is clear. The oral traditions of the five participating First Nations on 30 April 1850, in combination,

provide a strong denial of the cession or surrender of their land in favour of the HBC [Hudson's Bay Company] or the Crown. The pieces of the puzzle contributed by each account add up to a convincing argument that the oral agreements included the following terms: compensation for land already occupied and resources previously harvested by non-First Nation residents; continuation of the terms of their existing joint occupation and enjoyment of land and resources; and, agreement to negotiate expansion of non-First Nation establishments and activities, provided it did not interfere with the existing way of life of the First Nations. In sum, the First Nation negotiators likely agreed to share, not surrender, their land and its resources. (Vallance 2015: 361)

While the Lekwungen and others came to sign a sharing and joint occupation contract with the Hudson's Bay Company for the benefit of all – the typical

win-win that is so deeply rooted in First Nations culture – the Crown considered James Douglas to be signing a treaty and they probably thought, in line with early capitalist culture, that they'd won.

What is beyond doubt is that two very different cultures signed a contract in very concise English, laying out neither western assumptions, rights, and obligations nor Lekwungen assumptions, rights, and obligations. At that time, the First Nations were still more powerful than the settlers, yet they agreed to share a part of the land in exchange for some goods and services. As they were soon to find out, the "contract" would come to haunt them, with their original intention distorted and interpreted to their disadvantage. We can see what western culture brought to the table. The story about pretty much all of Oak Bay – with the exception of Tl-chess – is the sad story of how western legal traditions exploited the trust of First Nations in British Columbia and in Canada more generally.

The English language as used in Canada has enshrined many western misunderstandings of both the land and the culture the colonizers had burst into. It begins with the naming. Virtually all First Nation names known today, for places, flora, fauna, and people, have been replaced with western names. Take, for instance, Chatham and Discovery Islands, which are in reality not two islands but just one. What happened? They were named in 1846, when the western portions of the Canadian–US border were finalized, in honour of colonial explorer George Vancouver, who had sailed these waters briefly half a century earlier. The surveyors who named them saw what they thought were two islands. What they didn't know was that they saw two parts of one and the same island at high tide. (You can see it in the foreground of this book's cover, with Willows Beach behind it and towards the left.) We can safely assume that they were so busy surveying in the name of colonization and exploitation that they just didn't care to ask any First Nations member, who would have told them that they were looking at one and the same island.

This little example is a good illustration of how colonial eyes, and with it English and Canadian English, often construct the world differently from those who really know.[13] This upsetting legacy is part of the history of every (former) colonial language and needs to be dealt with. We will address this difficult aspect of linguistic "baggage" throughout, but with more focus in Chapter 8. It would be wrong to say that colonialism is a thing of the past, as its legacy is everywhere in one form or another. Consider the two totem poles in Figure 5, both found in Victoria and both commissioned by non-Indigenous people.

In terms of awareness of the colonial processes, the plaques indicate some progress between 1966 and 1997, when the two poles were erected. It is striking that in the 1966 plaque (left), the donor of the log was given ample space and acknowledgement: "Log donated by Macmillan, Bloedel and Powell

Figure 5 Two totem poles in Victoria, and their plaques
(Photos: S. Dollinger, 2018)

River, Limited" – a company that in effect took the pole from lands seized from the First Nations. The 1997 plaque does much better, using Native names and Lekwungen language, but offers no contextualization, which, however, might have been a deliberate choice.[14] Today, more than twenty years after the second pole was erected, we might be in the position to offer more than symbolic improvements, which means legal settlement of the illegal Canadian land grab from one or two centuries ago.
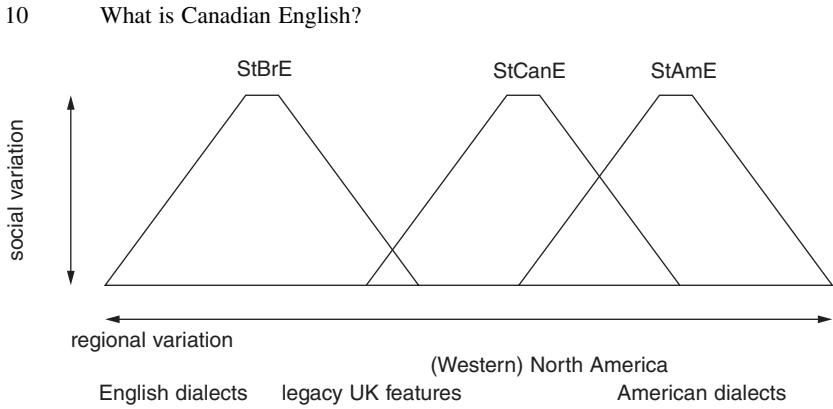
Figure 6 Pluricentric English (standard varieties and feature overlap)
(Dollinger in press: fig. 1)

Canadian English in the Slow Cooker

There are different types of Canadian English. There is Standard Canadian English, the type we teach in schools and the equivalent to Standard British English,[15] Standard American English, Standard Australian English, and so forth. A long time ago there was only one "standard English", but since about 1800, beginning with the political independence of the United States, the idea of just one standard in the language is a thing of the past. English has since been a "pluricentric language" (Clyne 1992), meaning that there is more than one linguistic centre and standard.

Language is co-determined by a host of social and regional (= location) features. The relationship between the standard varieties of English can be illustrated by expanding a classic pyramid that schematizes social and regional variation in language. The pyramid was originally published in 1974 by Peter Trudgill, one of the most famous linguists today. In Trudgill (1974: 42), the situation for English society is visualized, which has served as a direct input for Standard British English (StBrE) depicted in Figure 6 on the left. As a rule of thumb, the socially upwardly mobile and higher social strata speak the standard variety – in this context, Standard British English – while lower classes often speak more regional varieties. Note that *standard* refers to phonology/phonetics (the sounds of the language) as well as all other levels: syntax and morphology (often called grammar when combined), pragmatics (how language is used in concrete contexts), and more, such as spelling, etc. But there is more than standard and non-standard, as linguistically very interesting, intermediate, mixed forms exist. Do you know the Naked Chef? How does Jamie Oliver, the Naked Chef, speak, precisely? Standard or not?