UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH IN ALBERTA, 1942-1992: THE ETHIC OF DISPERSION

BY

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **The Bahá'í Faith in Alberta, 1942-1992: The Ethic of Dispersion** submitted by Andrew Pemberton-Pigott in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The Bahá'í Faith is a religion with a strong commitment to world unity, and has spread rapidly around the globe in the last 150 years. Today, more than five million members reside in virtually every country and territory on the face of the planet. This thesis examines the arrival and subsequent expansion of the Bahá'í Faith in the province of Alberta, Canada. In the last fifty years their membership has grown from a few isolated individuals to approximately 3,000 Bahá'ís in more than 170 different locations, with strong links to local, regional, national and international networks of administration. The conclusion of the thesis is that the presence and distribution of the Bahá'ís has been determined primarily by their strong commitment to propagation and diffusion. It is this drive to disperse rather than build up large or ideal communities which is the hallmark of Bahá'í activity, and has been their primary measurement of success. For Bahá'ís it is as much an article of faith as it is a means of expansion.

The initial presence and subsequent dispersion of Bahá'ís in the province was the result of concerted continental efforts to establish the first local elected councils, to carry the religion into unfamiliar cultures, and to deliberately move to cities, towns, villages and outlying districts all across the province. These efforts resulted in two sizable waves of new native and youth members. The response of these two groups to Bahá'í propagation efforts fulfilled expansion and dispersion goals set by Bahá'í international and national administrative bodies. A similar achievement was obtained through an influx of Iranian Bahá'í refugees in the 1980s.

Youth and Iranians were quickly integrated into the overriding ethic of dispersion, but native members were not. Although Indians make up approximately one third of the provincial membership, there is often little contact today between natives and non-natives. The reserve system acts as a block to the usual Bahá'í technique of "pioneering" to form new localities and establish stable administrative units. The resulting cultural and administrative gap is likely to remain unless both native and non-native Bahá'ís find another means to create productive and sustained contact and collaboration.

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GUIDE TO ABBREVIATIONS

LSA	Local Spiritual Assembly
NSA	National Spiritual Assembly
NTC	National Teaching Committee
RTC	Regional Teaching Committee
NAGC	Northern Alberta Goals Committee (later Northern Alberta Regional Goals Committee)
SAGC	Southern Alberta Goals Committee (later Southern Alberta Regional Goals Committee)

Archival sources:

NSAA	Archives of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada; Thornhill, Ontario.
EBA	Archives of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Edmonton; Edmonton, Alberta.
AA	Personal archives of Ted and Joan Anderson; Red Deer, Alberta.

NOTE: The word Bahá'í is correctly written with accents over the last two vowels (pronounced BA-HAA-EE). In many of the works cited in this thesis, particularly the earlier ones, accents were not added to Bahá'í, Bábí and individual names such as Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, etc. For the sake of simplicity I have standardized these references in all quotes and citations.

INTRODUCTION

Much of the history of religion in Canada has been concerned with the role of the larger Christian churches in national events. In Eastern and central Canada, four large and "official" churches -- Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist/United -- have been identified as influential and, at times, powerful institutions which helped to shape the nature of early Canada and the attitudes of early European Canadians.[1] The religious history of western Canada has often focused on the role of the missions which these churches sent out from their centres in Eastern Canada, British Columbia, and Europe.[2]

A rather different approach has been to stress the importance of the frontier environment, characterized by variations in common church practice, the rapid rise and fall of numerous schisms and sects, and the alternative presence of large numbers of immigrants from other Christian traditions.[3] Some of these latter groups have drawn attention from historians and sociologists because they established communities which perpetuated older traditions in the midst of widespread modernization. Certain groups such as the Mennonites have been more prominent in the academic literature if they combined 'differentness' with accessibility.[4]

The problem with both of these two approaches to history is the tendency to see all unconventional Christian groups in the West as variations or deviations from the mainstream churches, and to ignore all non-Christian religions entirely. The emphasis has often been placed on schisms or behaviour considered bizarre, such as that of the Sons of Freedom Doukhobors.[5] In certain cases where these smaller groups were considered

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1. Many of these works were published by Ryerson Press of Toronto after the mid-1950s: for example H.H. Walsh, The Christian Church in Canada (1956); John Webster Grant, ed., The Churches and the Canadian Experience: A Faith and Order Study of the Christian Tradition (1963); John S. Moir, The Cross in Canada (1966). See also the three-part series A History of the Christian Church in Canada, edited by John Webster Grant, particularly his volume The Church in the Canadian Era (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972).

2. For example H.H. Montgomery, The Church on the Prairie, 4th ed. (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1912); John S. Moir, Church and State in Canada West, 1841-1867 (University of Toronto, 1959). See also the relevant sections of John Webster Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (University of Toronto, 1984).

3. For example Benjamin G. Smillie, ed., Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies (Edmonton: NeWest, 1983); Smillie, Beyond the Social Gospel: Church Protest on the Prairies (Toronto: United Church Publishing House / Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1991); A.W. Rasporich, "Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada 1880 - 1914," in The Canadian West: Social Change and Economic Development, ed. H. Klassen (University of Calgary, 1977: 37-62). The most extreme example of the frontier approach in Canadian history of religion is Edmund H. Oliver, The Winning of the Frontier (Toronto: Ryerson / United Church Publishing House, 1930. Oliver claimed that the whole history of Canada and the history of the churches was "in large measure the story of the expansion and winning of the Frontier" (v). See N. Keith Clifford's critique of Oliver's frontier thesis as it pertains to the United Church, in "Church Union and western Canada," in Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West, eds. Dennis L. Butcher, et al (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1985), pp. 283-295.

4. Note the contrast between the wealth of history available on Mennonites, much of it by educated and articulate members, versus the scarcity of material on groups such as the Old Believers which are less involved in wider society and less cooperative with outside analysis.

5. The literature on this group often tends toward sensationalism and prurience with dramatic tales of house-burnings and nudity.

to be influential in politics, study was done primarily from a perspective of historical sociology. The classic example for this province is W.E. Mann's Sect, Cult and Church in Alberta, part of a series intended to examine provincial differences in western political history.[6]

The study of religion in the last twenty years has generally become less judgemental and thus more useful in depicting the experiences and worldviews of the communities under study.[7] The post-1960s arrival in North America of many non-Christian religions has also helped to broaden the field of vision, usually by focusing on the religions of immigrant groups or to survey the spread of smaller conversion-oriented groups generally defined as sects or cults.[8] But historians of religion in Canada have focused almost exclusively on Christian groups, ignoring the presence of Jews, Muslims and other world religions.[9] In the last two decades, historians and sociologists in the U.S. have passed well beyond the limitations of Max Weber's and Ernst Troeltsch's church-sect-cult typology.[10] Much work remains to be done in the study of Canadian religion, and in particular with an awareness of diversity.[11]

One group in western Canada that has not so far been studied in any detail is the Bahá'í Faith, a religion originating in Persia in the mid-nineteenth century. Dispersion is one of the hallmarks of this religion; today there are more than 5 million members world-wide, distributed in every country and major territory. Recent figures show that the Bahá'í Faith is now the second most widely distributed religion in the world after

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6. (University of Toronto, 1955). See also S.D. Clark, Church and Sect in Canada (University of Toronto, 1948).

7. The term worldview is here rather loosely defined as the way in which the members of these groups believe the universe operates, (including all physical and spiritual realms), and thus is crucial in understanding the reasons for their attitudes and actions. See Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Culture (New York: Basic, 1973) and Ninian Smart, Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983).

8. An example of the former is Howard and Tamara Palmer, eds., Peoples of Alberta (Saskatoon: Western Producer, 1985); of the latter, David A. Nock, "Cult, sect and church in Canada: a re-examination of Stark and Bainbridge," Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology 24, 4 (1987): 514-525.

9. See for example such surveys such as Arthur Lower, "Religion and Religious Institutions," in Canada, ed. George W. Brown (University of Toronto, 1950); N. Keith Clifford, "Religion and the Development of Canadian Society: An Historiographical Analysis," Church History 38, 4 (Dec 1969): 506-523; Richard Allen, ed., Religion and Society in the Prairie West (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1974); John Webster Grant, "Religion and the Quest for a National Identity: the Background in Canadian History", Religion and Culture in Canada ed. Peter Slater (n.p.: Canadian Corporations for Studies in Religion, 1977: 8-21; N. Keith Clifford, "History of Religion in Canada," The Ecumenist 18, 5 (July-Aug 1980): 65-69. A rare exception is Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, Alberta: A New History (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990).

10. See for example works by Sydney Ahlstrom, Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., Martin E. Marty, Donald Stone, Robert Bellah, Jacob Needleman and Bryan Wilson.

11. Two preliminary regional studies which examined both recent and more established religions were David J. Goa, ed., Traditions in Transition: World Religions in the Context of Western Canada (Edmonton: Alberta Culture / Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1982; and Margaret Lindsay Holton, ed., Spirit of Toronto: 1834-1984 (Toronto: Image, 1983). The latter book presents brief outlines of six religions present in Toronto before 1850, fifteen more between 1850 and 1950 (including Bahá'ís), and ten more after 1950.

Christianity.[12] In Alberta there are approximately 3,000 members in over 200 separate locations across the province. It is a religion which has had significantly different experiences from the larger religions of western Canada. The Bahá'ís have not come to Alberta in large numbers and thus have no history of block settlement or major immigration. And, except for the very recent arrival of Iranian Bahá'ís in the 1980s, they have not been fleeing religious persecution elsewhere in the world. Nor are the Bahá'ís members of a spontaneous frontier movement, for their presence in the province is primarily the result of deliberately planned and executed expansion efforts directed from centres in Israel, the United States and, in the last half-century, Toronto. In addition, one of their strongest principles is the avoidance of partisan politics and political advocacy. Thus, the reasons for overlooking the Bahá'í Faith are obvious: it is a group outside the Christian denominations, small, politically innocuous and not linked to any identifiable national/ethnic immigration or frontier trends.

Despite such limitations on historical curiosity, there are four worthwhile reasons for studying the Bahá'í Faith. The first, and least, of these is to explore a relatively unknown area. After the work of orientalist E.G. Browne around the turn of the century, little scholarly study of the Bahá'í Faith was performed: most published works were by Bahá'ís themselves or by hostile opponents.[13] For 60 years few independent studies appeared. The last decade has seen the production of a number of books, articles and theses due to increased numbers of Bahá'í academics, the wider interest in non-Christian religions, and the higher global profile of this expanding faith -- particularly after the notorious persecutions in Iran after the 1979 revolution.[14] Of course there are inherent limitations in regional denominational histories, a form which "continues to attract many amateurs and thesis writers." [15] The study of the Bahá'í Faith in Alberta is, however, valuable enough as a contribution to a still growing field of study.

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12. Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook 1991, 299. Bahá'ís are recorded in 205 of 252 countries, second only to Christianity at 252. The next closest is Islam, in 172. Even the number 205 may well be out of date: the opening of Eastern Europe since these estimates were made (1990) has allowed Bahá'ís to penetrate into a score more countries.

13. In Europe and North America these latter writers have primarily been Christian clergymen, often former Middle East missionaries. See for example the annotations on Easton, Elder, Miller, Richards, Wilson and others in William P. Collins, Bibliography of English-Language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths 1844-1985 (Oxford: George Ronald, 1991) or the bibliography in Moojan Momen, ed., Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: Kalimat, 1982). For an excellent critique of the motives and methods of one of these (William M. Miller), see J. Douglas Martin, "The Missionary as Historian: William Miller and the Bahá'í Faith," World Order 10,3 (1976): 43-63. The Islamic world, for similar reasons of religious hostility, has its own sizable corpus of anti-Bahá'í works: see Heshmat Moayyad, "The Historical Interrelationship of Islam and the Bahá'í Faith", in The Bahá'í Faith and Islam, ed. Heshmat Moayyad (Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1990), 73-91.

14. See J. Douglas Martin's survey in "The Bahá'í Faith in Its Second Century," in The Bahá'í Faith and Islam, ed. Heshmat Moayyad (Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1990), pp. 57-61. By far the best bibliography to date is that by William P. Collins (see previous footnote). A much smaller but more easily available survey is included in Peter Smith, The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion (Cambridge University, 1987). Notable studies before the 1980s were two Ph.D theses: Peter L. Berger, "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Bahá'í Movement," (New School of Social Research, [New York], 1954) and Vernon Elvin Johnson, "An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Bahá'í World Faith" (1974). A few other Ph.D theses in the 1970s focused on Bahá'ís in India and rural southern U.S. (see Smith, Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 237-8).

15. N. Keith Clifford, "History of Religion in Canada", 65.

The second reason is simply to broaden our understanding of religious diversity -- not only since the 1960s but throughout Canadian history. In his 1974 survey of American history of religion, John A. Wilson noted that diverse religions and groups have generally been recognized but that "certainly there has not been effective explanation of them as religious phenomena." A good stimulus for the historian, he felt, would be to recognize the contemporary "richness and variety" of religious groups and then to be on the lookout for "similar religious diversity in the periods he studies." [16] A better historical attention to religious diversity would help to curb the assumption, recently emphasized by sociologist Reginald Bibby, that modernization and secularization go hand in hand and that secularization results in the loss of religion.[17] Other observers point out that the forms of religion are changing, but that religious belief and participation have remained remarkably consistent. In Martin E. Marty's phrase, "[r]eligion was not disappearing, it was relocating." [18] Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge's analyses of twentieth-century North American data, including the Bahá'ís, has shown that "sects" (schisms from mainstream religions) flourish in areas of highest religious affiliation, and "cults" (groups based outside the mainstream) arise in areas of highest secularization.

> Most observers have noted correctly that major Christian-Judaic organizations are failing, but they have not seen or appreciated the vigor of religion in less "respectable" quarters. . . . it is myopic to note only the weakening of once-potent religious organizations while dismissing the significance of the rise of hundreds of new religions. [19]

A closer examination of this diversity would mitigate the lamentable stereotype of sects, cults and 'minor' religious groups as ephemeral and unstable deviations. Stark and Bainbridge's work has shown remarkable persistence and recognizable patterns of receptivity for the larger groups. Their conclusion was that diverse religious groups are not "residues of the radical 1960s" but "a vital aspect of American religion, and their distribution offers a sensitive indicator of the sacred in a supposedly secular age." [20] Using this approach, a study of the Bahá'í Faith would be useful in three ways: as an example of contemporary religious diversity, as an example of religious diversity in Canada throughout the twentieth century, and as a stimulus to examine western religious diversity in ways other than the traditional themes of church and sect, the social gospel,

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16. John A. Wilson, "Historical Study of Marginal Religious Movements," in Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone, eds., Religious Movements in Contemporary America (New Jersey, Princeton University, 1974), 596, 606 and 607.

17. Reginald Bibby, Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada (Toronto: Irwin, 1987), and "Religion and Modernity: The Canadian Case," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 18, 1 (1979): 1-17.

18. Martin E. Marty, "Religion in America since Mid-Century," in Religion and America: Spiritual Life in a Secular Age, eds. Mary Douglas and Steven Tipton (Boston: Beacon, 1983), 278.

19. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation (Berkeley: University of California, 1985), 430-1. David A. Nock reconfirmed their conclusions for Canada using Canadian census data in "Cult, sect and church in Canada." Both works include Bahá'í statistics by province, two of the very few mentions of the religion in western Canada of which I am aware.

20. Future of Religion, 262. Larger groups are defined as those with membership over 1000 by 1926 (237).

western religious/political movements and post-war secularism. The Bahá'í Faith is neither part of the Judeo-Christian mainstream nor based in ethnic immigration, and serves as a reminder of diverse forms and development of religion in the province.

A third reason to examine the Bahá'í Faith in a western province is because studies of religious change and diversity have usually assumed that the rise of alternative religious movements is linked to conditions of social disorganization and rapid change, or that participants are suffering from economic and social deprivation. This approach is exemplified in Mann's Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta. In spite of his generally successful attempt to proceed "with an attitude of sympathy for the viewpoint and driving motivation of each of the new groups", Mann's premise and conclusion were that these new forms of religion reflected the "basic interests of marginal groups among both the rural and urban lower classes" and "the instabilities of urban society." His approach is in part due to sociological paradigms in the 1950s, and in part due to his own religious background and position within the Anglican administration in Toronto.[21] Mann did not mention the Bahá'í Faith in his study, although he was well aware of its existence in Alberta: his research assistant Yvonne Frank attended some meetings in Calgary and soon became a member.[22]

Changes in the study of religion during and after the 1960s challenged the assumption that alternative religions reflected social instabilities. Virginia Hine concluded that these factors "should be considered facilitating rather than causal conditions". A better causal explanation of conversion to various movements, says Hine, is found in recruitment patterns rather than social situations and pressures.[23] Stark and Bainbridge note that the distribution of small groups are especially affected by recruitment patterns: "the decision of one relatively effective missionary to go to a particular place can have decisive implications. . . . We must always remember that social movements are composed of individuals." [24]

Of course individual missionaries are often more influenced by encouragement and direction from distant centres than the surrounding 'frontier' environment. Harry Hiller described many small Canadian religious groups as operating like a kind of northern 'branch office' of U.S. organizations. Hiller noted important factors like the head office, publishing and educational facilities, travelling speakers, and inspirational examples of

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21. Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta, 8, 155, and 158. When the book came out in 1955 he was working as executive secretary of the Toronto Diocesan Council for Social Service.

22. She later married noted Canadian Bahá'í Rowland Estall. (Estall, interview with the author, Scarborough, Ontario, 9 Oct. 1990.)

23. Virginia H. Hine, "The Deprivation and Disorganization Theories of Social Movements," in Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone, eds., Religious Movements in Contemporary America (New Jersey: Princeton University, 1974), 660. See also Luther P. Gerlach and Virginia Hine, "Five factors crucial to the growth and spread of a modern religious movement," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religions 7 (1968): 23-40.

24. Future of Religion, p.244.

larger communities.[25] These considerations of expansion are important in the case of the Bahá'í faith: the fact of its rapid growth in all areas of the world, and in all political, economic and cultural environments, challenges the simple notion that 'sects flourish on the frontier' or that 'cults arise during times of change'. This does not mean that the arrival and growth of the Bahá'í religion in Alberta was inevitable, nor that its growth was unaffected by social changes. But it is clear that the presence and distribution of Bahá'ís in the province are the result of planning and support from centres outside the province, a strong ethic of expansion, and a notable level of dedication amongst the membership, rather than local conditions.

Fourth, the Bahá'í Faith is a unique example of a religion which has been seeking to scatter the seeds of a "new world order" rather than the more usual goals of salvation, cultural and liturgical continuity, congregational and financial strength, or political reform. Conversion and expansion are not, of course, unique to the Bahá'í Faith: expansion and diffusion can be traced in the histories of a number of religious groups active in the prairies and supported from outside headquarters. But, while sharing certain similarities of intent or experience, the Bahá'í Faith differs significantly from these groups. Although the Bahá'í vision of the future involves the popular idea of a reformed society or "New Jerusalem", it involves neither the sense of a "return" to the idealized religion of the early days of an old tradition, nor the popular expectations of a messianic return or physical end of the world. Bahá'ís believe that the 'return' has already occurred, and that the 'end of the world' refers to the end of absolute rule by nobility, clergy and the military, and the end of international disharmony. As a result, the main intent of the Bahá'ís has not been to establish ideal communities, build up large congregations or gain influence in politics. This group, like so many, has been steadily active in promotional and conversion campaigns but, significantly, has consistently followed an ethic of dispersion rather than conversion and agglomeration. Bahá'ís rather naturally welcome increased numbers and increased attention, but they have judged success by the number of places in which Bahá'ís live as much as the total number of followers. Understanding this basic and unusual premise is crucial to understanding the history of their successes and failures, their rapid growth, and their current situation.

But growth in numbers and locations has not been steady. After a small but important ripple of "pioneers" from B.C. and the U.S. in the early 1940s, the growth pattern of the Bahá'í Faith in Alberta is characterized by a series of peaks corresponding to the conclusions of the directed expansion plans, punctuated by three relatively large waves which swelled its ranks much faster than usual. The first two waves were the result of directed and dedicated propagation efforts: native Indians in the early 1960s, and youth during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The arrival of Iranian refugees in the 1980s was the result of Iranian politics and federal Canadian immigration policies rather than local efforts but they, too, were quickly absorbed into the existing expansionary programs.

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25. Harry W. Hiller, "Continentalism and the Third Force in Religion," Canadian Journal of Sociology (1978): 192.

An examination of these three relatively large influxes reveals a regional attempt to adapt to global changes in Bahá'í expansion and dispersion. In its diffusion out from its Persian roots, a strong administrative network was first established in Europe and North America, and then carried to the rest of the world where today the majority of Bahá'ís are found. The religion has thus experienced a change of orientation from Irano-centric to Euro-American to indigenous peoples of the 'Third World'.[26] By the time Bahá'ís entered Alberta in the mid-1940s their faith was well into the second of these stages. And within twenty years they experienced a large influx of indigenous people, the third stage of development. Their conversion methods and the response of natives on the prairies and in the North were similar to the global indigenous influx beginning in the late 1950s and early 1960s. "Canada's first glimpse of the mass conversion already experienced among the aboriginal peoples of Africa and the South Pacific has been the spectacular (for us) response among the Indians of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Yukon Territory." [27] But the required shift to an indigenous focus was difficult for the small, Euro-American Bahá'í communities of Alberta. And within another decade, the attention of North American Bahá'ís returned to Euro-Americans, this time the large influx of youth members. A decade later the arrival of significant numbers of Iranian refugees introduced a powerful Irano-centric element. The Alberta Bahá'ís have to some degree managed to incorporate these last two waves into the overarching ethic of dispersion, but for the most part Alberta's natives have not been well integrated into expansion/dispersion plans or the process of community development.

Lastly, outside observers of the Bahá'í Faith have indicated that this religion may show not only an alternative form of religious development in the past and present, but foreshadow future forms as well. "All observers will note new religions once they have waxed powerful," Stark and Bainbridge point out, "but our theory tells us to look for the beginnings of such movements in the form of early stirrings".[28] Despite any successes or failures according to their own criteria over the last half-century, the dispersion of the Bahá'ís in Alberta is a clear example of how their faith is "outstripping other new religions in the extent of diffusion, if not in numbers" around the world.[29] By any standard their numbers and dispersion are a notable phenomenon, particularly for such a young religion. Bahá'ís and outside observers alike have identified the Bahá'í administration as the key to its coherent expansion and continued existence.[30] According to Denis MacEoin, the Bahá'í attention to planned growth and the conscious

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26. J. Douglas Martin, "The Bahá'í Faith in Its Second Century", 69.

27. Canadian Bahá'í News (special issue Apr. 1963), 2.

28. Future of Religion, 476.

29. Denis MacEoin, "Bahá'ism," in A Handbook of Living Religions, ed. John R. Hinnells (London: Penguin, 1984), 493.

30. Paul M. Bujold, "The Development of A Community Through the Religious Covenant: A Bahá'í Case History," (MA thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, 1983); Ivan Ruff, "Bahá'í - the Invisible Community," New Society 21,823 (12 Sept. 1974): 665-668. Ruff noted inhibitory factors such as distance, small numbers and cultural differences and stated: "the small size is most convincing testimony to the organisational efficiency of the Bahá'í[s]. Just to keep it going is an achievement." (667)

development of a distinct, reified administrative system are new phenomena in world religions. The development of the Bahá'í Faith, he states, "may prove to be an important paradigm for future trends in the religious sphere." [31]

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Readers should note that the author is himself a Bahá'í, and aware of the dangers of attempting to recount the history of one's own culture or religion. In taking this risk I have been encouraged by the comments of two scholars of religion. The first is Peter Smith, a Bahá'í and a British sociologist, who stated: "I am both a Bahá'í and a humanistically inclined social scientist-cum-historian. I trust that my account is relatively free from such biases as may arise from either of these positions." The second is Donald Stone, who argues that the viewpoint of a believer is one of many legitimate and useful perspectives. Any study of religion, he states, "is always an interpretation, influenced by the personal preferences, attitudes, and states of consciousness that the researcher (and the reader) brings to the study. There are no immaculate perceptions." [32] Hopefully any bias or overenthusiasm is balanced by an insight into internal motivations as well as external manifestations. This approach does not stem as much from personal religious beliefs as personal methodological beliefs. If historians studying religion do not grant equal attention to the physiology and anatomy of a religious group,[33] they should at least try to explain how belief and conviction have been translated into recorded actions.

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31. MacEoin, "Bahá'ism," 475.

32. Peter Smith, introduction to The Bahá'í Religion: A Short Introduction to its History and Teachings (Oxford: George Ronald, 1988); Donald Stone, "On Knowing How We Know About the New Religions," in Understanding the New Religions, eds. Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury, 1978), 141.

33. A paraphrase of Henri Desroche, Jacob and the Angel: An Essay in Sociologies of Religion, trans. John K. Savacool (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts, 1973), 14.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

The Bahá'í religion originated in Persia in the mid-nineteenth century. Its founder was Mírzá Husayn-'Ali (1817-1892), known as Bahá'u'lláh, meaning "The Glory of God" in Arabic. Bahá'u'lláh first claimed to be an independent prophet or "Manifestation of God" in 1863. Bahá'ís, however, consider this new revelation to be intimately bound up with the Bábí religion founded nineteen years earlier, and always date the beginnings of their religion to 1844.[1]

In that year a young merchant named Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad (1819-1850) took the title of Báb (Arabic: Gate).[2] This claim was linked to the return of the hidden twelfth Imám, whom the Shi'ah Muslims of Persia considered to be the last of the authorized successors of Muhammad, and who had disappeared in 941 A.D. Such a claim was a great threat to the rulers of Persia who, even to the clerical government of Iran today, acknowledged that they were ruling only in the absence of the twelfth Imám. According to tradition the returned Imám would establish a divinely-sanctioned rule of true justice which would spread over all lands.[3] It gradually became clear to the Báb's followers that this would not be accomplished by Him[4] alone. Many of the Báb's later verses refer to a greater prophet to follow: "He whom God shall make manifest" (man yuzhiruhu'llah). The Báb's announcement and subsequent writings were the cause of much excitement in Persia. Thousands of people rallied to his faith, including some eminent Shi'ah clergy. Opposition from the state and the majority of the clergy was quick to follow. The Bábís

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1. There are many introductory and apologetic works by Bahá'ís, all of which begin their chronology with the Báb. One work from the early twentieth century is J.E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era [1923], 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980). More recent works are William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984); and Peter Smith, The Bahá'í Religion: A Short Introduction to its History and Teachings (Oxford: George Ronald, 1988).

Non-Bahá'í introductory works are few, and often too hostile to be useful (see footnote 13 in Introduction, above). An introductory essay by a former Bahá'í is Denis MacEoin, "Bahá'ism," in A Handbook of Living Religions, ed. John R. Hinnells (London: Penguin, 1984), pp. 475-499. MacEoin criticized what he considered to be a retroactive "wholesale conflation of Bábism and Bahá'ísm" (488), an opinion which he argued in an increasingly antagonistic debate with two Bahá'í authors in Religion, vols. 12 (1982), 13 (1983), 15 (1985) and 16 (1986).

2. After E. G. Browne's early researches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was little independent study of the Báb and Bábism for many years. For an assessment of Browne's methods and motives, see H.M. Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith (London: George Ronald, 1970). Two Bahá'í histories of the Bábí period are Nabíl-i-A'zam [Mulla Muhammad-i-Zarandí], The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi [1932] (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970); and H.M. Balyuzi, The Báb: The Herald of the Day of Days (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973). The last decade has seen a large body of studies: see works by Moojan Momen, Peter Smith, Alessandro Bausani, Juan Ricardo Cole, Denis MacEoin, and Abbas Amanat.

3. Both Sunní and Shí'ah Muslims possessed a strong millenarian motif in the messianic figure of the Mahdí ("Directed One" or "Guided One"). According to tradition he will appear before the Day of Judgement. For the Shí'ites, the return of the twelfth Imám was linked to literal and figurative millenarian fulfillment. He was appointed in the year 260 of the Muslim calendar; 1000 lunar years after this (1260) corresponded to 1844 A.D. Millenarian expectations were a particular feature of the Shaykhí sect of Shí'ah Islam. Whether his rule would eliminate or support the existing royal and clerical hierarchies was a matter of some dispute. For Bábí-Bahá'í interpretations, see Peter Smith, "Millenarianism in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions", Millenialism and Charisma, ed. Roy Wallis (Belfast: Queen's University, 1982): 231-283.

4. As a sign of respect Bahá'ís capitalize pronouns referring to the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

were denounced in the mosques and subjected to persecution and violent mob attacks throughout Persia. The Báb was imprisoned, tried on charges of heresy, and executed in 1850.[5]

Bahá'u'lláh, the son of a minister to the Shah, responded immediately upon hearing of this new faith in 1844 and became one of its noted leaders.[6] Some of His family also joined, notably half-brother Mirza Yahya (c.1830-1912), entitled Subh-i-Azal (Morn of Eternity). Two years after the execution of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned during a wave of persecutions and experienced a vision of His future role as a prophet of God.[7] He did not, however, share this experience with anyone for another ten years. Bahá'u'lláh and Subh-i-Azal were dispossessed and exiled from Persia. They moved across the border to Baghdad, then part of the Ottoman territories. Bahá'u'lláh gradually came to prominence among the Bábís, in part due to Subh-i-Azal's policy of virtual seclusion.[8] In 1863, disturbed by Bahá'u'lláh's growing influence, the Iranian government requested that the Ottomans move Him elsewhere. His family and a small group of Bábís were thus further exiled via Constantinople to Adrianople for five years. Before leaving Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh claimed before His followers the station of "Him whom God shall make manifest".

In Adrianople, Bahá'u'lláh publicly proclaimed to be the fulfillment of all earlier religious prophecies and possessing the authority to reveal new laws and guidance. This action provoked a split with Subh-i-Azal who remained head of a smaller group of Bábís. In 1868 the Ottoman authorities again exiled the two, Subh-i-Azal to Cyprus and Bahá'u'lláh to the prison city of Akka in Palestine. Here Bahá'u'lláh directed and shaped the new Bahá'í religion through thousands of letters and books, and a network of messengers and pilgrims to and from Persia.[9] He clearly distinguished the Bahá'í religion from both Islam and Bábism. The Báb had already claimed to have introduced a new revelation superseding the laws and teachings of Muhammad and the authority of the Islamic hierarchy. Bahá'u'lláh reaffirmed this break, and His claim to be the Báb's prophesied successor necessarily assumed a separate development from Bábism as well.

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5. Reports by European diplomats and travellers of these agitations are collected in Moojan Momen, ed., The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1944-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981).

6. Nabíl-i-A'zam, Dawn-Breakers, 106-7. The two best histories of Bahá'u'lláh are both written by Bahá'ís: H.M. Balyuzi, Bahá'u'lláh: The King of Glory (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980); and Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, 4 vols. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1974-1987). See also authors listed above.

7. See Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By (1944) (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), 101-3.

8. Bahá'u'lláh also withdrew to the mountains of Kurdistan for two years (1854-6).

9. Bahá'u'lláh wrote in Arabic and Persian, the earliest extant writings dating from the Baghdad period. Most of his major works have been translated into English, with the exception of his book of laws (Kitab-i-Aqdas: Most Holy Book) which is due in 1992. For a historical overview and summation of his writings, see Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh outlined a religion which incorporated common Judeo-Christian-Islamic themes of monotheism, guidance from divine messengers, and obedience to the will of God. His social principles stressed individual autonomy and non-violence, disavowed all forms of discrimination including religious, ethnic, class, and gender, and emphasized education, consultation, cooperation and international federalism.[10] Bahá'u'lláh's stated purpose was to unite the world, a goal which He said was impossible without first establishing justice. To this end He issued a series of letters which advised and admonished the civil rulers "to dedicate themselves to whatever will promote the highest interests of the whole of humanity." [11] For the administration of Bahá'í affairs He proposed a system of democratically elected "Houses of Justice" in every locality and an international "Universal House of Justice".[12]

Bahá'í doctrines and laws consist of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and ordinances (some drawn from those of the Báb) and a large amount of additional explanation and interpretation contributed by His son and great-grandson. Their collective teachings have been summarized by one Bahá'í author as follows:

1. God the Creator, an infinite Being, is unknowable to man, a finite being, except in so far as His attributes are revealed to man through a series of Divine Messengers, such figures as Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

2. The purpose of these Divine Messengers is to guide mankind towards spiritual and social advancement and evolution, their succession being likened to successive teachers of a child, and their messages to successive chapters of a book. Thus the station of such Divine Messengers as Moses, Christ, Muhammad and others is fully recognized and the authority and sanctity of such Holy Books as the Bible and the Qur'án are acknowledged.

3. Therefore the fundamental aims and purposes of the religions of the world are one, and their principal differences are due to the different needs and requirements of the ages and areas in which they appeared.

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10. Bahá'u'lláh's clear separation from Islam and Bábism, combined with such principles, extremely radical for that place and time, differentiate Bahá'ís from groups such as Sufis, Ahmaddiyahs, and the Subud movement, which remain within the Islamic fold. Earlier observers commonly described Bahá'í as a sect of Islam, though its own claim to be an independent religion is increasingly recognized by religious scholars and Muslim courts and civil bodies. This is not to imply that there is no connection: the concept of revealed divine laws which cover all aspects of social and religious life is a strong Islamic theme. Other minor Islamic forms were continued, such as an annual fasting period, greatly simplified daily obligatory prayer, and the high station of pilgrimage. On the similarities and differences, see Heshmat Moayyad, "The Historical Interrelationship of Islam and the Bahá'í Faith," in The Bahá'í Faith and Islam, ed. Heshmat Moayyad (Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1990), esp. 82-5.
Bahá'u'lláh's social teachings are still often characterized as a syncretism of Western ideas (e.g. Denis MacEoin, "Bahá'ism", 488). Bahá'ís resist this idea because it runs counter to Bahá'u'lláh's concept of religious progress through the revelations of successive 'Manifestations of God'. This dispute is not necessarily unbridgeable. Michael M.J. Fischer has pointed out that the word syncretism "need not, and normally does not" mean that religious synthesis and development are solely human activities ("Social Change and the Mirrors of Tradition," in The Bahá'í Faith and Islam, 26 n.2. Nor does the presence of both Eastern and Western concepts in the Bahá'í Faith contradict Bahá'u'lláh's own statement that "[i]n every instance" the Messengers of God "have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion." (Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, trans. Shoghi Effendi, rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1952), 56).

11. Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, 218.

12. See diagram in Appendix 2a.

4. The soul of man is immortal; it survives physical death. The goal of the individual during his life should be to develop those spiritual qualities and attributes which will enhance the soul in its eternal journey. Heaven is thus interpreted as the state of possessing those qualities and Hell as being bereft of them.

5. The social goal of mankind in this age is the unification of the world, summarized in Bahá'u'lláh's statement, 'The earth is one country and mankind its citizens.' This unification is the culmination of centuries of man's social evolution on the earth, and at the same time the starting point for future progress and development. In the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi may be found an outline of those institutions which would bring about this unification. The Bahá'í administrative order, which was developed by Shoghi Effendi, is the rudimentary form of some of those institutions, and thus the Bahá'í world community may be seen as the embryonic form of the future world civilization.

6. The social principles on which the unification of the world depends were expounded in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in particular. They include:
   a) The condemnation of all forms of prejudice, including racial, national, religious and sexual.
   b) The equality of rights, opportunities and privileges for men and women.
   c) Compulsory education.
   d) The elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty.
   e) The balance between religion and science as the two most powerful instruments for mankind's progress.
   f) The development of an international language and script, as well as a universal system of currency, weights and measures, etc.
   g) The safeguarding of the freedom and initiative of the individual.[13]

During Bahá'u'lláh's nine years in Akka His restrictions were gradually eased and He was permitted to live outside the city for the last years of his life. Since the Adrianople years He had given ever-greater responsibility for administering and protecting the Bahá'í community to His eldest son Abbas (1844-1921), entitled 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Servant of Glory).[14] After Bahá'u'lláh's passing in 1892, His will appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá as central authority of the religion and sole interpreter of His teachings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's letters and recorded talks are considered to be an integral part of Bahá'í scriptures. "[W]hile not regarded by Bahá'ís as revelation, [they] carry the same authority in the life of the Bahá'í community, an authority explicitly conferred in Bahá'u'lláh's own statements".[15] Despite attempts by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's younger brother to divide the Bahá'ís, His authority was maintained until His death in 1921.

In 1893 Bahá'u'lláh and His message of unity were mentioned by a Christian clergyman at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, held in association with the World's

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13. Moojan Momen, ed., The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), xxiv-xxv.

14. See H.M. Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh (London: George Ronald, 1971).

15. J. Douglas Martin, "The Bahá'í Faith in its Second Century", The Bahá'í Faith and Islam, 61.

Fair.[16] The first Western Bahá'ís joined within a year of this event, and soon there were small groups in Chicago, New York and other scattered cities. The first Bahá'ís in Canada became members in 1893 through family contacts in Chicago.[17] 'Abdu'l-Bahá sent noted Bahá'ís to North America to give instruction to the first Western Bahá'í converts. In the late 1890s a few were able to visit Akka, and returned with glowing reports of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's personality and beliefs. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was released in 1908 after the Young Turk revolution and quickly set out for extended visits to Europe and North America, during which He attracted much attention and publicity.[18] He returned to Haifa in 1912 and remained there through the first World War. In 1916 and 1917 He wrote a series of letters known as the Tablets of the Divine Plan which directed the North American Bahá'ís to undertake a vast global expansion of their religion.[19] As we shall see, these letters were crucial for later geographic diffusion and institutional development all over the world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was knighted by the British government in 1920 for His important humanitarian relief work in Palestine during World War 1.

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death in 1921, His will appointed His eldest grandson Shoghi Effendi [Rabbani] to the position of "guardian of the Cause of God" and central authority,[20] as well as giving guidance on the establishment of national Houses of Justice and the supreme Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi's own voluminous writings are not considered to be scripture, but rather authoritative interpretation and commentary of Bahá'í scripture. In the initial years he was much concerned with ensuring the continued establishment and proper functioning of annually elected Bahá'í councils known as Local Spiritual Assemblies [LSAs]. These, he said, were the embryonic beginnings of

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16. Rev. Henry Jessup, who recounted Bahá'u'lláh's words as reported by Cambridge scholar Edward Granville Brown, the only Westerner to meet Bahá'u'lláh. Sydney E. Ahlstrom noted that the Parliament gave a "formative impetus to organized Hindu and Bahá'í movements, which endured." ("From Sinai to the Golden Gate: The Liberation of Religion in the Occident," in Understanding the New Religions, eds. Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury, 1978), 19.)

17. The first two Canadian members were women in London, Ontario: Anne Magee, wife of a U.S. consul, her two sisters, and her two daughters. Anne's daughter visited her uncle, Guy Magee, city editor of the Chicago Tribune, and amateur student of religion. Mrs. Magee and her daughters moved to the U.S. in the early 1900s. (See article in Canadian Bahá'í News 200 (Sept 1966), also repr. in Bahá'í Canada 2,2 (June 1979).)

18. Most of his talks on these tours are recorded in 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Canada ([Toronto]: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1962); 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Edinburgh (London: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles, 1963); 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London (Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Society, 1921); Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911 (1912) (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969); and The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912 (2 vols., 1922-1925), 2nd ed., (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982). For descriptions of his travels in North America see 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Canada and Allan L. Ward, 239 Days: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey in America (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979).

19. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976). Possible reasons for the selection of the North American community might include its rapid growth, wealth, administrative capabilities, and a cultural environment which allowed religious freedom and high mobility. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated while in the U.S. that "[t]he American people are indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Great Peace, and proclaim the oneness of mankind. . . . For America hath developed powers and capacities greater and more wonderful than other nations. . . . The American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history" (quoted in Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice (1938) (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), 72.)

20. Printed as the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1921) (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1968). On Shoghi Effendi see Ugo Giachery, Shoghi Effendi, Recollections (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973) and biography by his wife Rúhíyyih Khanum (Rabbani), The Priceless Pearl (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969).

Bahá'u'lláh's "Houses of Justice".[21] As LSAs and numbers increased in different countries or regions of the world, Shoghi Effendi arranged for the formation of National Spiritual Assemblies [NSAs] along the same lines. Under his direction the scattered Bahá'í communities began to organize their administration and cooperate more fully in regional, national and international matters. There was notable development in the areas of systematic planning, finances, publishing and translation, conferences and property acquisitions.

Propagation efforts were primarily conducted at the local and personal levels. But beginning in 1937 Shoghi Effendi inaugurated a series of international campaigns of expansion based upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan.[22] The first of these, the Seven Year Plan (1937-1944) resulted in a Bahá'í LSA in every state and province. It was during this plan that the first Bahá'í administrative body was formed in Alberta. During the second Plan (1946-1953) the Canadian community elected its own National Spiritual Assembly in 1948.[23] In 1951 Shoghi Effendi began to set up the elected and appointed institutions of international Bahá'í administration which had been envisioned in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The first of these was the International Bahá'í Council, at first appointed and later elected, which he said would develop into the worldwide, nine-member elected council known as the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi also appointed special assistants known as Hands of the Cause whose duties were to stimulate Bahá'í propagation efforts and protect their faith from attack.[24] By 1953 National Spiritual Assemblies were established in twelve countries. At this time Shoghi Effendi initiated the Ten Year Crusade which was designed to carry the religion to more than one hundred countries and territories around the world, in addition to continued expansion in areas where the Bahá'í Faith had been previously established. It was during this plan that large numbers of natives joined in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Shoghi Effendi died unexpectedly midway through the Ten Year Crusade, leaving no successor. For the first time since Bahá'u'lláh's announcement in 1863, the Bahá'í community was without a central point of leadership. The Hands, acting in accordance with the will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, called for the election of the international legislative body called for by Bahá'u'lláh, the Universal House of Justice, in 1963 at the conclusion of

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21. See Shoghi Effendi's directives from 1922 to 1932, collected in Bahá'í Administration, 6th rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974).

22. See Appendix 1 for dates and major objectives.

23. Canada had previously been part of the NSA of the United States and Canada. "National" Assemblies have often covered many separate countries (e.g. the NSAs of South America or South and West Africa) or, conversely, been established in separate geographical regions of one country (e.g. today's NSAs of Alaska and Hawaii).

24. Individuals had previously been designated Hands of the Cause by both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, usually posthumously. Shoghi Effendi appointed nineteen in 1951, followed by a second contingent of eight in 1957. Between these groups he also replaced five Hands who had died, making a total of thirty-two. Names, appointment dates, and other developments at the world centre in Haifa are described in Eunice Braun, From Strength to Strength: The First Half Century of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Era (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1978); and relevant volumes of Bahá'í World. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's will stated that the role of the Hands was "to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men. . ." (Will and Testament, 13).

this major Plan.[25] In keeping with the Hands' understanding of their appointed, consultative role, they disqualified themselves from election. Since then the Universal House of Justice has administered the global activities of the Bahá'ís from its centre in Haifa, Israel, and is re-elected every five years.[26] As no more Hands of the Cause have been appointed since Shoghi Effendi's passing, their role has been carried out by "Continental Counsellors" appointed by the Universal House of Justice, and the Counsellors' subsidiary assistants. These have no authority within the religion, acting rather through consultation with local and national Assemblies.

Briefly, then, the Bahá'í Faith is administered today by a hierarchical system of elected councils. At the local level, their jurisdictions correspond to civil administrative boundaries. They are elected yearly on April 21st, corresponding to Bahá'u'lláh's announcement of His mission in 1863. All adult members in good standing can vote, and all are similarly eligible to serve. Officially, Bahá'ís are children until the age of 15. Children can attend all meetings and are not required to follow the laws of prayer or fasting. After age 15, children must decide whether or not to declare themselves as Bahá'ís; if they do they can attend meetings, must follow all Bahá'í laws, and are eligible to serve on committees. Until age 21, however, they cannot vote for or serve on Assemblies. Voting is carried out by secret ballot without any campaigns or nominations. Voters are urged to consider without prejudice their fellow members and vote for those who demonstrate appropriate qualities of loyalty, selflessness and capacity. Great emphasis is placed upon frank and disinterested consultation in all matters, within the Assemblies, between Assemblies and appointed assistants, and between the Assemblies and their local membership.[27]

Bahá'í worship meetings are known as "feasts", and held every nineteen days according to the Bábí-Bahá'í calendar of nineteen months of nineteen days.[28] According to Bahá'u'lláh's instructions, feasts consist of three parts: prayers and scripture readings; business and consultation; and socializing. Other than this bare outline, there is no ritual or ceremony to be followed. The birth and passing of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and other significant events of Bahá'í history, are commemorated annually on the appropriate

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25. On the guardianship, and the Universal House of Justice's understanding of its relationship to Shoghi Effendi through his written advice, see Universal House of Justice, ed., Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968 (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), 11, 44-56 and 81-91. On the matter of appointed assistants, see ibid, 40-3.

26. Haifa is situated across the Bay of Haifa from 'Akká. 'Abdu'l-Bahá moved there after His release from prison, as did many of the Bahá'ís in Palestine. The remains of the Báb, hidden by the Iranian Bahá'ís for many decades, were brought to Haifa and placed in a shrine building in Haifa on the slopes of Mount Carmel. The Universal House of Justice and much of its support staff currently occupies a large and impressive headquarters near the Shrine of the Báb.

27. Guidelines for the establishment and procedure of local and national Assemblies were provided in letters of Shoghi Effendi collected in Bahá'í Administration, and a compilation by the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, Principles of Bahá'í Administration: A Compilation (1950), 4th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976). Many letters of Shoghi Effendi, letters written on his behalf, and letters from the Universal House of Justice are compiled in Helen Hornby, ed., Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File, 2nd rev. ed., (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988).

28. The four remaining days (five in leap years) are called Intercalary Days (Ayyám-i-Há) and are celebrated February 26th to March 1st as a time of festivities, gift-giving, and visiting family and friends.

day, emphasizing prayer and scriptural readings. Contributions to Bahá'í funds, following Bahá'u'lláh's instructions, are strictly limited to Bahá'ís only. Outside funding can be accepted only for social or economic development projects such as schools, radio stations or agricultural improvements which are sponsored by Bahá'ís and open to all. Sacrificial giving is considered to be a duty for Bahá'ís, but there are no collections during worship or tithing, and contributing individuals or individual amounts are never revealed. It is worth noting that the expansion activities of the Bahá'ís discussed below have been completely self-supporting.

At the root of all Bahá'í doctrines and activities is the idea of justice, which Bahá'u'lláh stated was the "best-beloved of all things in My sight".[29] His stated purpose was to bring divine justice to the world through laws and teachings which are suited to the problems and capacities of humanity: "the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men".[30] Thus Bahá'ís see the purpose of their religion as twofold: individual enlightenment and spiritual progress; and collective participation in laying the foundations of an eventual "new world order".[31] This new order is believed to be nothing less than the 'Golden Age' promised by the religions and philosophers of the past. It is the "Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth" and the "new Jerusalem" descending from heaven in a spiritual sense rather than a sudden divine transformation. The New Jerusalem is not expected at this time or in any particular place but everywhere on earth in the future. "Soon will the present-day order be rolled up," wrote Bahá'u'lláh, "an a new one spread out in its stead."[32]

This new order is believed to be the alternative Bahá'í global administrative system which will at some point in the future replace rather than reform the social structures and norms of the present. For Bahá'ís this is as much an article of faith as it is of action: "It is this building process, slow and unobtrusive, to which the life of the world-wide Bahá'í Community is wholly consecrated, that constitutes the one hope of a stricken society."[33] An early editorial in the Canadian Bahá'í newsletter stated that the founder of the religion has asked Bahá'ís "to go to the corners of the earth, away from friends and familiar faces. Why? Because only if we apply His remedy, ALL of his remedy, can we achieve peace. Only in this way can we make of this world the Kingdom of God on earth."[34]

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29. Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh (1932), trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), 4.

30. Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, 175. See also ibid on the role of the 'Manifestation' as the 'Divine Physician', 40, 80-81, 213 and 255.

31. A term used by Shoghi Effendi long before its recent popularity in the aftermath of the Cold War.

32. Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, 7.

33. Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), 195.

34. Canadian Bahá'í News 39 (Mar. 1953), 2.

The envisioned path toward the New Jerusalem is not, however, a smooth one. Bahá'ís believe that the world today is in transition between the old and the new order, and suffering from intense warfare, hatred, material inequity and all forms of injustice precisely because of humanity's slow acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's guidance. The sufferings will end, they state, if the peoples of the world voluntarily act in accordance with the teachings of God's new revelation. Failure to do so, whether out of choice or ignorance, will cause the current calamities to deepen. Only the adoption of Bahá'í principles -- whether or not through conversion -- will bring about global unity in which "all nations and kindreds . . . will become a single nation. Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among the nations, will be eliminated. . . . All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself." [35]

This vision of a voluntary hastening of a new day of unity explains much of the attraction of the Bahá'í Faith. Humanity is depicted as neither passive nor alone, but offered the opportunity of working to assist the inevitable plan of God and alleviate the ills of the world. The Bahá'í worldview offers an explanation of current events, the reassurance of divine aid, a vision of global harmony, and a path of service to both mankind and God. Peter Smith noted the encouragement this worldview has given to Bahá'í propagation efforts and other forms of sacrifice:

> The idea that the present world sufferings are part of a general process of retribution and cleansing and will be succeeded by something even worse, **which can be mitigated** by the actions of wise governments and determined Bahá'ís, provides both an explanatory schema by which such sufferings can be understood, and thereby to some extent accommodated, and also a goad to "sacrificial efforts" on the part of the Bahá'ís. Thus, repeatedly, in the messages of both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice (1963-), the Bahá'ís have been assured that the fate of humanity in large measure depends upon their efforts, that time is short, and that sacrificial efforts to teach the Faith, or raise its institutions are called for. Such appeals have been particularly linked to the achievement of the goals of the specific seven, ten, nine or five-year plans which have been such a characteristic part of Bahá'í endeavour since the nineteen-thirties. [36]

Thus, a strong expansionist drive has been present in the Bahá'í Faith since its very beginnings. Numerous and explicit directives were given by Bahá'u'lláh, who urged all members to "spread it abroad on the earth with high resolve". Refusing to set up or permit any type of clergy, Bahá'u'lláh instead "decreed and imposed upon every one the obligation to teach this cause". In addition, all conversion efforts had to be carried out without force or unwanted persistence. "If any one should refuse it", wrote Bahá'u'lláh, "leave him unto himself and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly

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35. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, trans. Laura Clifford Barney (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), 65.

36. Peter Smith, "Millenarianism in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions," in Millenialism and Charisma, ed. Roy Wallis (Belfast: Queen's University, 1982), 267.

with him." [37] 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi also stressed this steady yet circumspect approach to propagation. In hundreds of letters, cables and other messages to the Bahá'ís of North America they advised a threefold course of action: speaking directly when the opportunity provided, taking a personal, gradualist approach when necessary, and keeping to the highest moral standards at all times to serve as a good example.[38]

This gentle approach to propagation is reinforced by Bahá'í beliefs about life after death and "progressive revelation" of religion. Bahá'ís believe that individual souls after death are subject to the good or evil consequences of their faith and deeds, but never to everlasting torment: spiritual progress is always possible. And because of their principle of the equality and unfolding of religions, Bahá'ís do not consider themselves to be inherently superior or more holy than a sincere Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, or other believer. They believe rather that a committed Bahá'í receives spiritual blessings from recognizing God's new messenger, and moral guidance appropriate to this new divine era. Individuals who accept Bahá'u'lláh as a messenger of God are responsible for following His laws to the best of their ability, supporting His administrative system, and sharing their belief with others.

Bahá'ís thus do not seek to convert others so much as encourage them to become part of the renewed faith of God as it works toward global unity.[39] Bahá'ís almost universally refer to their propagation activities as "teaching". Seekers from another religion must accept all major religions as based upon legitimate revelations from God, rather than think that they are denying their previous faith. Similarly, becoming a Bahá'í does not grant salvation, but rather an assistance to spiritual growth. Shoghi Effendi had instructed the North American Bahá'ís to be "slow to accept and reluctant to remove" new members. He prescribed a gradualist program, urging the Assemblies "to desist from insisting too rigidly on the minor observances and beliefs, which might prove a stumbling block" to a sincere enquirer. The standard was to ensure "fundamental qualifications" and then through patience, love, tact and wisdom to win the newcomer "gradually to the unreserved acceptance of whatever has been ordained in the teachings." [40]

The other side of the 'conversion' dialogue is more difficult to explain. Individuals have become Bahá'ís for many combinations of reasons which are not easily unravelled after the fact. Various studies have claimed various reasons for conversion to the Bahá'í

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37. Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, 314, 201 and 289.

38. See collected references to teaching in The Universal House of Justice, ed., The Individual and Teaching (Thornhill, Ont: Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1977). A classic example of this kind of advice from Shoghi Effendi can be found in Advent of Divine Justice, 41-44, partly repr. in ibid, 16-17.

39. I have reluctantly used the words "convert" and "conversion" below for lack of better alternatives, but "conversion" to the Bahá'í Faith should not be understood in the manner of evangelical Christian salvation.

40. Shoghi Effendi to NSA of U.S. and Canada, 11 Apr. 1933 and 30 Jan. 1938, repr. in Messages to America 1932-1946 (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1947), 2 and 11.

Faith: for example to "gain access to a kind of masonic network of communities throughout the world"; because of "chronic character difficulties"; "world-weary" attraction to its "mildly puritanical disciplines"; or as an individualistic "aid in search of the self".[41] These 'explanations', besides their contradictory conclusions, are clearly inadequate when applied to the Bahá'í Faith in Alberta in the last fifty years. None of them can explain the responses of middle-class AngloSaxons and the two influxes of natives and youth. They would be even more inadequate if applied to the worldwide expansion in all cultures and classes. Most of these 'explanations' only serve to support Sydney E. Ahlstrom's comment that "[b]lanket 'explanations' of deeply personal conversions, if we may call them that, are inevitably gross." [42]

A better approach to understanding 'conversion' is to consider the Bahá'í worldview described above: a vision of world unity and human harmony, and the claim that any individual can assist God's plan to bring this vision into being. One of the early Edmonton members was deeply moved to find that her long-held belief in the unity of races and religions "held a grain of truth, and had been put in writing by someone of tremendous authority".[43] At the risk of weaving yet another inadequate blanket explanation, I suggest that three types of people have become Bahá'ís. The first group is common to all religions; those who joined because of the need for a supportive community or because their peers were doing so. No doubt many of these individuals were involved in the waves of natives and youth and the subsequent high numbers of dropouts. The second group was those who belonged to another religion, and who have been sufficiently convinced by the vision of unity, or Bahá'í interpretations of prophecy. These factors have probably been particularly important among Indians, whose religion contains many prophecies and expectations that there would come a time of unity and cooperation among all peoples. In many areas of North America native Bahá'ís expressed their conviction that this was the time and the Bahá'í Faith the vehicle.[44] The third group was those without much religious belief, but strongly attracted to the idea and principles of unity, and who were sufficiently convinced that religion -- in particular the Bahá'í religion -- was the means to attain this. Naturally all these reasons and more may have been factors for any particular individual or group. The growth of any religious movement, Robert S. Ellwood Jr. reminds us, involves the articulation of many individual worldviews and the desire for transformation:

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41. These few examples are from Ivan Ruff, "Bahá'í - the Invisible Community," New Society 21,623 (12 Sept. 1974): 665-668; Chana Ullman, "Psychological Well-being among Converts in Traditional and Nontraditional Religious Groups", Psychiatry 51,3 (Aug. 1988): 312-322; Martin E. Marty, Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America (Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 453; and June R. Wyman, "Becoming a Bahá'í: Discourse and Social Networks in an American Religious Movement", (Ph.d thesis, Catholic University of America, 1985). I have only seen the abstract of Wyman's thesis.

42. Ahlstrom, "From Sinai to the Golden Gate", 19.

43. Kathl[illegible] Rimell, "Awakening", World Order 9,5 (Aug. 1943): 177.

44. See for example Melissa Clark (Pahuskal, a Tejas Indian, in Bahá'í Canada 2,3 (July-Aug 1979), 12.

> [A] movement, in other words, is not a Troeltschean response to a dominant church, nor just a 'crisis' response to a particular historical situation, but, whatever, its particular trigger, becomes a response by which people articulate their attitude to the entire world and cosmos, and do so in many ways melded together: doctrine, worship, organization, lifestyle. What all movements have in common is a rejection of the goals of the general culture, and a desire to transform themselves religiously into something different from its ideal. [45]

The key to Bahá'í expansion and distribution, however, lies in its focus on deliberate geographic expansion, rather than sheer numerical growth. This ethic was drawn directly from its scriptures. "Issue forth from your cities, O peoples of the West and aid God", wrote the Báb.[46] Bahá'u'lláh had repeatedly counselled the Bahá'ís to travel everywhere to spread the new religion:

> Be unrestrained as the wind, while carrying the Message . . . Consider, how the wind, faithful to that which God hath ordained, bloweth upon all the regions of the earth, be they inhabited or desolate. . . So should be every true one that claimeth to be a lover of the one true God. [47]

In the early twentieth century, more specific geographic goals were assigned. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets of the Divine Plan became the central textual reference for subsequent missionary goals and activities for the Bahá'ís of North America - both within their own continent and in foreign countries around the world.[48] The authority of these letters was constantly invoked by Shoghi Effendi in his comprehensive expansion Plans, and the 120 nations and territories listed therein became the specific missionary goals assigned to the American and Canadian NSAs. Each following Plan then built upon the gains of the ones before, all focusing on geographical expansion rather than raw increases in membership.

In particular, the emphasis on the establishment of Local Spiritual Assemblies has had profound influence on propagation activities. Bahá'ís have had a rather natural and understandable desire to see their religion spread, but this is not out of a desire for political power or the immediate creation of ideal communities. Bahá'ís see the growth of individuals and Assemblies as the seeds of new world order and, therefore, these seeds are needed in every community. It is dispersion rather than sheer numbers that is the key to bringing about the Golden Age. This is markedly different from the more usual aspirations on the prairies of the New Jerusalem "as a political reality; as a heavenly

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45. Robert S. Ellwood, Jr., "Emergent Religion in America: An Historical Perspective," in Understanding the New Religions, eds. Jacob Needleman and George Baker (New York: Seabury, 1978), 278.

46. The Universal House of Justice, ed., Selections from the Writings of the Báb (Haifa: Universal House of Justice, 1976), 56.

47. Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, 335.

48. These letters were printed for many years in the U.S. under the title America's Spiritual Mission.

city; as a centre of worship; and as a gift from God." [49] Bahá'ís have as yet no desire for any kind of block or hamlet pattern of settlement. The ideal practice (and often the actual practice) is rather to disperse when numbers in a community reach fifteen or more. This is considered enough to maintain an Assembly and have reserves in case members must move away or are inspired to "pioneer" to yet another place in Canada or overseas. The Bahá'í concept of the New Jerusalem is at this point not an immediate reality but a metaphor which serves to give inspiration, strength and unity to its members.[50]

Bahá'ís thus exhibit three basic differences from common religious objectives in Alberta. First, they have no sense of "return" to an ideal religion or tradition of the past. They have rather a sense of a new revelation which has renewed the ideal religions of the past -- particularly those identified as authentic "revelations" -- and which has moved beyond to new teachings and forms appropriate to the present age. Second, Bahá'ís have rarely held any motive of economic prosperity in their relocations. It has usually been the reverse; the sacrifice of a good job and stability in order to 'open up' a new locality. Third, there has been little attempt to create ideal communities or build up large congregations. The current need is considered to be a wide, growing network rather than sizable concentrations. The present large communities of a few hundred in Edmonton and Calgary have grown more by accident than by design.

It is this urge to disperse that in large part distinguishes Bahá'í conversion efforts from superficially similar approaches by other religious groups. The ideal goal of evangelical Christian missionaries, healing groups, Asian teachers or new age guides is a large congregation of believers who would otherwise be lost. The ideal goal for Bahá'ís is a large number of centres where believers practice, otherwise the world will be lost. In Shoghi Effendi's words: "It is this building process, slow and unobtrusive, to which the life of the world-wide Bahá'í Community is wholly consecrated, that constitutes the one hope of a stricken society." [51] Diversity of membership, however, is much desired. The enrollment of people from **all** different religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds is believed to be an indication of the coming fulfillment of the unity of all humanity. Global membership is seen as the only lasting solution to global problems; the membership of representatives of the world's peoples would thus represent a kind of living evidence for the religion's power and progress. This has caused Bahá'ís in Alberta to deliberately and repeatedly strive to find converts in many other groups, notably Muslims and blacks in the 1940s, natives since the 1950s, and Chinese today. Other markers of growth include legal incorporation of local and national bodies, property acquisition,

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49. Benjamin G. Smillie, ed., Visions of the New Jerusalem: Religious Settlement on the Prairies (Edmonton: NeWest, 1983), 3.

50. See Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key (New York: Scribners / London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1953), 189. Other identifiable Bahá'í metaphors are the Most Great Peace, Unity in Diversity, the Oneness of Mankind, and Crisis and Victory (which assumes both great difficulties and eventual victory).

51. Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, 195.

attention and recognition from governments and scholars, translations of literature, and numbers of racial and ethnic groups represented.[52]

As we might expect, progress of the Bahá'í Faith in Canada is marked in part by the total numbers of adherents. But equally important - perhaps even more important - is the number of places where Bahá'ís live, and particularly in which an Assembly of nine adults has been formed. For example, a recent bulletin contained a feature entitled "Chart Our Progress" which made no mention of total membership or any increase in numbers. Progress was instead tracked in each province towards a goal of a fifteen percent increase in localities. Similarly, the Canadian Bahá'í newsletter from the same month showed "Goals At A Glance" noting specific goals of Assemblies, localities, and pioneers to other countries. The number of new enrollments to date was noted, but as an "Actual" achievement with no set goal to reach.[53] The focus on localities and institutions has led to notable expansion and dispersion, although at times at the expense of community development. Hand of the Cause William Sears said in 1963 that "[i]n the West we tend to struggle to form an LSA as though that were the end of our goals." [54]

"The corner-stone of the foundation of all Bahá'í activity", the Universal House of Justice stated, "is teaching the Cause." [55] The tools of teaching are gentle ones: example, invitation and persuasion. As Peter Smith described it, Bahá'ís are engaged in "the peaceful establishment of a worldwide kingdom of God with democratic elements". The primary objective is not individual salvation but the education of all: "working to construct a future theocracy dominates their activity." [56] Their basic pattern of expansion is the continuous selection of specific cities as goals in which to establish a Bahá'í presence through immigration or propagation. As Bahá'í communities have increased, the focus has turned to smaller locations -- towns, villages and isolated areas -- or to more distant locations. 50 years ago, however, the province of Alberta itself was the goal, and the next chapter examines these early beginnings.

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52. These are noted in the volumes of Bahá'í World.

53. Administrative Bulletin #7 (July 1991), 7; Canadian Bahá'í News vol 4 #3 (July 1991), 13.

54. Quoted in Canadian Bahá'í News 166 (Nov 1963), 9.

55. Universal House of Justice to all NSAs, 3 Mar. 1977.

56. Peter Smith, "Motif Research: Peter Berger and the Bahá'í Faith," Religion 8,2 (Autumn 1978), 216 and 226.

CHAPTER TWO

RIPPLES: THE FIRST BAHA'IS IN ALBERTA

Before Shoghi Effendi's first teaching Plan (1937-1944), the Bahá'í Faith had been represented in Alberta by only two women.[1] The first of these was a Mrs. Esther E. Rennels who lived in Edmonton from 1912 until 1917 or 1918.[2] Information on Mrs. Rennels is limited: she is recorded on a 1913 U.S. membership list, and her activities in the province or elsewhere are not known. It is probable that she came to Edmonton not for deliberate reasons of opening up a virgin territory but to stay with relatives after the death of her husband.[3]

For ten years after this there appears to have been no Bahá'ís in the province. The next individual was Mabel Pine (1882-1982), who had first arrived in Edmonton approximately 1912.[4] During a brief move to Armstrong, B.C. in 1925, she met some Bahá'ís and joined quickly. Returning with her family to Alberta, she lived in Scollard 1926-7, visited England 1927-8, and returned to live in Vermilion from 1928 until 1941. Here, although known as a Bahá'í, she was able to teach at a United Church Sunday school and serve in the WCTU. With the closest Bahá'ís in Vancouver, her contact was limited to correspondence from the NSA headquarters in the U.S. Even this was eventually lost, and by 1939 the NSA's National Teaching Committee no longer knew if she was still a Bahá'í or even still in the province. The only other Bahá'í activity in these years was visits in the spring and fall of 1934 to Calgary, where two Bahá'ís had spoken to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.[5] One Bahá'í is recorded as

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1. See Appendix 3 on Bahá'ís in Alberta from 1912 to 1944.

2. She is listed in most volumes of Henderson's Greater Edmonton Directory covering 1912-1917. There was no directory printed for 1918, and she does not appear afterwards.

3. Esther Rennels is listed in the directory as the widow of S.M. Rennels, and residing with Walter T. Parsons in 1912, 1914 and 1917. Possibly she was moving to and from Parson's home at this time, or perhaps the compilers did not list her every year. Parsons moved houses in 1913, so Rennels was either missed in the move or returned to Parsons' new address in 1914. Loy Rennels is listed at Parsons' house in 1913 and one block away in 1914. Loy Rennels is not found after 1914; Esther Rennels and Parsons not after 1917. It seems likely that the three are relatives and moved out of the city near the end of World War I, destination unknown.

4. This and the following information taken from her daughter Allison Stecyk, "Mabel Harriet Pine" [n.p., Edmonton, 1984]. Mrs. Pine was married in 1918 to John Marshall Pine, a former chauffeur of Alex Taylor. After a failed homestead in Pilbroch, they lived in Strome, Gartly, Scollard, Grutwell [Saskatchewan] and Sedgewick before 1925. John Pine was working as a grain buyer for various companies.

5. May Maxwell, mother of Shoghi Effendi's wife Rúhíyyih Khanum (Mary Maxwell), and Rowland Estall (Estall to Kathleen (Kay) Rimell, 31 Jan. 1944 [Edmonton Bahá'í Archives (EBA)].) It is possible that Margery McCormick became a Bahá'í before she left Edmonton sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s: see The Universal House of Justice, ed., The Bahá'í World vol. XIV [1963-1968] (Haifa: Universal House of Justice, 1974), 363.

living in Warner from 1937 to 1939, and another in Lethbridge in 1939,[6] but neither of these appear to have been known to the NSA or its committees.[7]

During this period Shoghi Effendi had sent a series of long, complex letters outlining the nature and purpose of the developing Bahá'í administrative system and painting a vision of "the relation between the Bahá'í community and the entire process of social evolution".[8] It is these letters which can be fairly said to have begun the transformation of the North American community from a network of small scattered groups into an organized movement picturing itself as possessing the sole solution to the world's problems, and committed to dispersion and conversion. One young Bahá'í at the time wrote later:

> Each letter came as a separate gem and we studied it avidly. Each letter made it clear that only the agency of Bahá'í institutions would bring about the realization of the oneness of mankind through the establishment of that unity which Bahá'u'lláh pointed out could only be achieved through the channel of His divinely-created Institutions. [9]

As early as May 1936 Shoghi Effendi called for the North American community to expand into all states and provinces as well as the countries of Latin America.[10] These goals were more firmly specified during the Seven-Year Plan (1937-1944). At first, his goal was to place at least one Bahá'í in each province and state in North America. In 1941 he increased this to one Local Spiritual Assembly (LSA) in each.[11] Shoghi Effendi and the NSA portrayed this expansion as a dramatic campaign. They consistently drew on the imagery and terminology of European settlement of the West, calling for 'settlers' and 'pioneers' in 'virgin territories', and often used military terminology such as crusade, cohorts, and warriors.

> The American believers, standard-bearers of the world-wide community . . . have girt up their loins, unfurled their banners and stepped into the arena of service. Their Plan has been formulated. Their

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6. Will van den Hoonard, University of New Brunswick, letter to the author, 16 Dec. 1990; U.S. Bahá'í News 129 (Sept. 1937), 6.

7. Doris Skinner, taped interview 2 May 1980 [Anderson Archives, Red Deer, Alberta (AA)]. Skinner states that neither she nor anyone else in Vancouver knew of any Bahá'ís in Alberta before her arrival in 1939. The National Teaching Committee asked her to try and track down Mrs. Pine: "they didn't know if she was dead or alive -- hadn't heard from her in years". Pine met with Skinner in Calgary and "sort of got reactivated . . . and did a great deal".

8. Written between 1929 and 1936, and collected in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh [1938], 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974). Quote from Horace Holley's introduction, v.

9. Rowland Estall, unedited draft transcript of taped autobiography, [n.p., 1977], 27, kindly provided during interview with the author, Scarborough, Ontario, 9 Oct. 1990. Estall remarked that the total Bahá'í community in Canada at this time was less than 40 persons: "How precocious this all sounded, and yet how utterly convinced we were of the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's words and now of the Guardian's world vision". Estall states that the younger Bahá'ís in particular studied the letters intensely. (ibid, 72.)

10. See Shoghi Effendi, Messages to America 1932-1946, 6 and 7.

11. See Appendix 1: Expansion Plans of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice.

> forces are mobilized. They are steadfastly marching towards their goal. . . . Through their initial victories they have provided the impulse that must now surge and, with relentless force sweep over their sister communities and eventually overpower the entire human race. [12]

Responsibility for expansion in Alberta fell to the National Teaching Committee [NTC] based in California and the nearest Regional Teaching Committee [RTC] which covered lower B.C. and the northwest U.S. The situation was a daunting one. Due to the Depression, jobs and financial resources were scarce, and in 1937 there was only one known Bahá'í in all of the prairie provinces.[13] The Vancouver community responded to Shoghi Effendi's challenge with five "pioneers": one woman to Calgary in April 1939, another became the first in Manitoba upon his move to Winnipeg one month later, and within two years there were three more Vancouver Bahá'ís in Calgary.[14] The outbreak of war reinforced the link to Vancouver. Because of Canadian restrictions on exchange and travel a new RTC was based there to cover the four western provinces.[15]

At this time the preferred means of introducing the Bahá'í Faith to others was through comparative religion study groups. The first Bahá'í in Calgary soon organized a small circle, reportedly composed of individuals from "Christian Science, Unity, Theosophy, Buddhist, Catholic and British Israel".[16] After two conversions in Calgary the RTC naturally expected that it would become the site of the first LSA. Surprisingly, it was not in Calgary but Edmonton where the goal was reached. In 1941 Mrs. Pine moved to that city while her daughter attended teacher's college for one year. Meanwhile, on a park bench in Victoria, a Vancouver Bahá'í met a visitor from Edmonton who belonged to another weekly women's comparative religion study group. Some of these women were reported to have been Theosophists and members of Unity Truth, religions already

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12. 5 July 1938, Messages to America 1932-1946, 14. Such martial language had precedent in the Bahá'í texts and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks, but was not used much by Shoghi Effendi until the late 1930s, increasing during and after World War II. Jehovah's Witnesses use the term pioneer to designate their full-time missionaries. This is probably a coincidental use of popular imagery rather than a direct link, but I have not traced the first dates of usage in either religion.

13. See note on Mrs. Pine, above. Another Bahá'í was rumoured to be in Saskatchewan, but could not be found (Estall, unedited tape transcript, 67). To have one isolated member in a province for 11 years was not uncommon for the time. Many states and provinces had one or no Bahá'ís until the 1940s. Similarly, a Norwegian woman was the only one in that country from 1927 until 1946, when pioneers from the U.S. arrived. (U.S. Bahá'í News 378 (Sept 1962), 7).

14. Information on these years comes from brief histories of Edmonton (1944, 1949 and 1951, [EBA]), U.S. Bahá'í News and various interviews. Rowland Estall had been inspired to pioneer at the 1938 summer school in Geyserville, California. He wrote to Shoghi Effendi for advice on locations; he suggested one of the open Canadian provinces. The NTC recommended Manitoba, and Estall arrived in Winnipeg in May 1939. He tried to contact Bahá'ís rumoured to be in Saskatoon, but was unable to find them (interview, 9 Oct. 1990). Thomas P. Socknat cites a letter which reported "Bahá'ísts" active in a peace group of about 30 members in Saskatoon circa 1937 (Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945 (University of Toronto, 1987), 179).

15. In 1942 this was split to make one RTC for Manitoba - Saskatchewan and another for Alberta - B.C. A year later Alberta was instructed to form its own RTC. Except for a brief experiment with a Prairies RTC and two years during the 1980s in which there were no RTCs in Canada, Alberta has been a separate provincial branch of the National Teaching Committee. Its boundaries have been flexible; during the 1970s the southwestern corner of Alberta was joined with the eastern Kootenay region, and the current teaching committee is still responsible for northeastern B.C. as well. See Appendix 2b for geographical regions of the ten current Bahá'í Teaching Committees.

16. U.S. Bahá'í News 132 (Jan. 1940), 6.

open to the concepts of religious toleration and post-Christian revelation.[17] Contact between Pine and this group was quickly established, and Rowland Estall came from Winnipeg as the first guest speaker. Two women Bahá'ís from Vancouver made extended teaching visits during the next year. After Pine moved to Ardmore in July 1942, the NTC arranged for Marcia Atwater, a dynamic young woman who had been teaching the Bahá'í Faith in Chile, to visit for three months. Atwater made a notable impact in the city: the first Edmonton resident to become a Bahá'í joined in September, followed through the autumn by four more.[18]

By late fall Atwater had returned to the U.S. and the Calgary Bahá'ís were taking turns for monthly visits to educate the new Edmonton members and speak to other interested people at meetings. The NTC arranged for Anita Ioas, the daughter of an NSA member, to move to Edmonton in December 1942 to assist the young group. The secretary of the RTC felt that Ioas would be a valuable resource for them, describing her as "one of our most hardworking young people" and stating "I don't doubt that Anita knows just what there is to do." [19] Within two months of her arrival three more women joined, making nine, and they were able to form the first LSA in the province on April 20th, 1943.

All nine Edmonton Bahá'ís were women of AngloSaxon background, as were their two predecessors, their initial Bahá'í teachers, and the majority of their visitors and contacts in the NTC and RTC. This same population predominated in the ten "cults" and New Thought groups studied by Mann, who observed that at least seven of the ten "were led by women." [20] The Edmonton LSA considered this gender imbalance to be a serious impediment to expansion. In a letter to the NTC one member wrote that it was "a very great drawback to any forward movement, because the question of why we have no men in the Group is often asked". But if the NTC could send a male Bahá'í to "establish a men's study class, our difficulties would be solved." [21] One problem was the mobility of young servicemen in the city, some of whom would attend Bahá'í study classes but be replaced three months later.[22] The problem remained for the next two years. One

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17. Stecyk, "Mabel Harriet Pine". Unity Truth followed doctrines similar in many ways to Christian Science and other Christian "New Thought" groups, with belief in reincarnation and other Eastern/Theosophist ideas and a strong emphasis on metaphysical healing. Mann estimates that in 1946 there were 60 members in Calgary and Edmonton, with possibly 1,000 in the province (Sect, Cult, and Church in Alberta (University of Toronto, 1955), 21 and 39). A statement in each issue of Unity magazine declared that Unity Truth was a "religious educational institution" rather than a separate Christian denomination.

18. One Bahá'í's account of meeting Atwater and her subsequent conversion is Kathleen (Kay) Rimell, "Awakening", World Order 9,5 (Aug. 1943): 176-177. Rimell heard about Atwater through a Catholic friend, and responded eagerly to the ideas of "the unity of races and creeds . . . [and] the equality of the Prophets. You see, these had been unformed ideas in my own mind since my adolescent days. They had caused me considerably worry and misery because they didn't line up with the orthodox teachings with which I had been plied since childhood. To find that they held a grain of truth, and had been put in writing by someone of tremendous authority . . ."

19. Kathy Moscrop to Kay Rimell, 15 Dec. 1942 and 13 Apr. 1943 [EBA].

20. Sect, Cult and Church, 40. Mann's speculation that cult members suffered from "neurosis and neurasthenia" and "menopausal stresses" is less dependable.

21. Lyda Roche to Charlotte Linfoot, NTC, 5 July 1944 [EBA].

22. Anne McGee to the author, 28 Mar. 1988.

couple moved to Edmonton in late 1943, but the husband was reportedly away most of the time "in a far northern point"; possibly on the Alaska Highway or other military project.[23] This couple left in the summer of 1945, and there was no resident male Bahá'í until the arrival of another couple in April 1946.[24] Calgary had had one resident male Bahá'í since February 1943, and another joined in 1944.

In addition to their efforts to add men to the small group, the Edmonton group also attempted to enroll members of other ethnic groups. Edmonton Bahá'ís participated in a local "Unity Council" composed of women from varied backgrounds, and sponsored a large Race Unity meeting in November 1943, attended by Muslims, Jews, Ukrainians and one Chinese.[25] Remarkably, despite long-standing Muslim persecutions in the Middle East, relations with the local Muslim community were reportedly quite friendly, to the point where the Bahá'ís were offered the use of the local mosque! No conversions occurred on either side, despite the propagation visit of an American Bahá'í of Syrian background.[26] The Calgary Bahá'ís later organized an International Group in 1948 and invited different racial organizations to participate. Soon after this a presentation was made to "a group composed of seven nationalities", but no new members were added from this.[27]

In 1944, the last year of the Seven Year Plan, the priority goals for western Canada were to achieve an LSA in Saskatchewan and to maintain the Edmonton LSA. The Regina LSA was formed in March 1944, in part due to visits from Alberta Bahá'ís and the move of one member from Calgary.[28] When one of the original LSA members had to move to Calgary, one of the Calgary Bahá'ís reciprocated to keep the number of adults at nine.[29] One of the most important resources for all of these small and isolated early groups was an established practice of utilizing visiting Bahá'ís for public talks and personal classes. These visits were often part of extensive tours organized by regional or national committees; some aligned with business trips and some on personal time.

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23. Austin Collin (Armstrong, B.C.) to Kay Rimell 12 Nov. 1943; Rimell to NSA 25 Feb. 1944 (EBA).

24. NSA to Rimell 7 Aug. 1945; Gwen Clarke to NSA 25 Mar. 1946 and NSA to Clarke 22 April 1946 (EBA). The woman of this couple, Anne McGee, had been in Calgary in the early 1940s, in Edmonton from mid-1943 until December 1945, left to join her husband in Vancouver after his discharge, and then both came to Edmonton to support its LSA.

25. Helen Linges, My Olympic Torch for World Justice, Unity and Peace, 3rd ed. (Edmonton: Co-op Press, 1980), 15-16; Rimell to NSA 17 Nov. 1943 (EBA).

26. Milwyn Davies, "Brief History of the Edmonton Bahá'í Community" (n.p., 1949), 3 (EBA).

27. EBA; Canadian Bahá'í News 3 (Nov 1948), 7, and 5 (Feb 1949), 5.

28. Dorothy Sheets, the first to join in Calgary in 1939. The Regina, Charlottetown and Moncton LSAs all formed in the same month, the last three goal regions in North America (Moncton had had a previous LSA). Six other women also pioneered to Regina, two from Ontario, and five from the U.S. (one a youth). Six local declarations made a total adult community of 12 (Annual Bahá'í Reports 1943-1944, 34).

29. Edmonton also gained one from Vancouver in the summer of 1943 and lost one to the same city in February 1944. Three young women, two of them the daughters of one LSA member, joined in 1943-4 but were unable to serve on the LSA as all three were under the age of 21.

Visitors helped to keep up morale and provided a new face and occasion for inviting possible contacts. In 1944 the Alberta Regional Teaching Committee stressed the importance of these visits, stating that "much more could be accomplished if public speakers were available more often." [30]

The small and somewhat isolated Edmonton group was repeatedly reminded of its links to the global network and its momentous spiritual implications. The direct personal assistance from eastern cities, Calgary, Vancouver and California was reinforced by a newsletter which kept them informed about the North American situation and often reprinted letters and cables from Shoghi Effendi. They also received encouraging letters from the secretaries of the NSA, NTC and RTC. The NTC praised them for "the completion of your historic task" of "laying this spiritual cornerstone for the establishment of the New World Order". The RTC stated that their response "has given a great urge forward to the work in Canada, and you may be sure that you have not yet been able to realize the contribution you have all made to our Cause." Muriel Warnicker, who had helped in Edmonton in the summer and fall of 1942, wrote with a similar theme:

> . . . we have a part, even if ever so small a part, in the building of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth -- our little work & efforts & struggles of the moment are the foundations literally of the better world for future generations. We are too close to the inception of the Faith to realize it, but we are making history . . . for we are today -- now -- literally building the New World. [31]

Shoghi Effendi portrayed the Assemblies across North America as the seeds of a vital network for the future: "The structural basis of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has . . . been firmly laid". Harkening, as always, to the Tablets of the Divine Plan, he stated that these achievements would "assure the ultimate victory, of the remaining stages of the Plan conceived, a quarter of a century ago, by 'Abdu'l-Bahá".[32] At the conclusion of the Seven Year Plan in 1944, celebrating the first century of the Bahá'í Faith, he effusively praised the individuals and institutions involved in winning the goals:

> The brilliant achievements of the heroic pioneers, the itinerant teachers, the indefatigable administrators of Bahá'í teaching activities whether local, regional or national, set the seal of total victory on the Seven Year Plan . . . My heart is filled with joy, love, pride and gratitude at the contemplation of the

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30. Dorothy Sheets, RTC secretary, in National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, ed., Annual Bahá'í Reports (Wilmette, Illinois: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada, [1944]), 33. All local histories, and all Annual Reports through the 1940s and 1950s stress the number of visitors, most often naming the individuals involved.

31. Charlotte Linfoot, NTC to Rimell, 14 Apr. 1943; Katherine Moscrop to Rimell, 15 Dec. 1942; Muriel Warnicker to 'Bahá'í Community' 14 Dec. 1943 [EBA].

32. 15 Apr. 1944; Messages to America, 1932 - 1946, 69 and 70.

> stupendous shining deeds immortalizing the valiant prosecutors of the greatest collective enterprise ever launched in the course of the history of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.[33]

The details of all these activities in and near Alberta reveal a basic and long-standing pattern established by the Bahá'ís during the Seven Year Plan: expansion plans from the Bahá'í world centre in Israel, institutional organization and support from the national and regional administrative bodies, reliance on public meetings, visiting speakers and study classes, much attention paid to forming and maintaining LSAs, and a highly mobile membership. This pattern remained unchanged throughout the 1940s and 1950s, and explains both the continued existence, distribution and the continued small numbers of Bahá'ís in the province.

After the completion of the Seven Year Plan there was a two-year period in which the North American Bahá'ís concentrated on maintaining their localities and, after the war, assisting the devastated European communities. In 1946 Shoghi Effendi initiated a second Seven Year Plan for North America. One of its major goals was the formation of a Canadian National Spiritual Assembly in 1948. Canada was then given its own Five Year Plan which concluded in 1953, the centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's vision in the prison of Tehran. Canada's assigned goals were 15 LSAs and 100 localities, a sizable task for a community numbering just over 400.[34]

Despite the teaching efforts in Alberta, slow increases in membership and high mobility kept the number of Bahá'ís below 30 until the late 1950s. Edmonton helped Calgary to form an LSA in 1949 which, despite particularly high turnover and a few resignations there, was maintained every year afterwards except 1954. Edmonton also chose Leduc as an extension goal, although this did not result in a new LSA until the early 1970s. Alberta finished the Five Year Plan with two LSAs and a few localities, much the same as in 1949.

1953 saw the opening of a Ten Year Crusade, designed to spread the faith across the world. 120 territories and islands were assigned as goal areas to be opened, and Shoghi Effendi called on the North American Bahá'ís to supply the majority of required international pioneers.[35]

> Now is the hour to demonstrate to the entire Bahá'í World those qualities which the heroes of God, unfurling in the Western Hemisphere their banners of a world Crusade destined to be carried over the

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33. 2 Apr. 1944; Messages to America 1932 - 1946, 69. See similar letters and cables throughout.

34. The incorporation of the Canadian NSA in 1949 required a "registration of believers". Some did not wish to remain members and their names were removed from the lists. This left 407 adults and 10 youth (NSA Annual Report 1950-1951) [NSAA].

35. By 1963, 131 territories had resident Bahá'ís. Ten specific places not reached were all communist countries, closed due to their restricted borders and religious repression. The last of these territories, Sakhalin Island, was opened last year immediately after Gorbachev's relaxation of access.

> entire surface of the globe, must possess in order to accomplish their exalted Mission. The Canadian Bahá'í Community must stand in the vanguard of the conquering army of Bahá'u'lláh. [36]

Canada was assigned territories in the 'outer' areas of the country such as Labrador, Cape Breton, the islands in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the North, and the Queen Charlotte Islands, as well as overseas goals in Samoa, the Marquesas and Greenland. Alberta's two LSAs chose the goals of LSAs in Red Deer and Lethbridge.[37] At least ten Alberta Bahá'ís attended a large conference and dedication of the Wilmette Temple near Chicago; one immediate result was the decision of one couple to pioneer to Cape Breton.

Shoghi Effendi's unexpected death in 1957 shook the Bahá'í world, which had operated on the assumption that there would continue to be a Guardian.[38] The Hands of the Cause, continued to direct the Ten Year Crusade from Haifa operating under Shoghi Effendi's designation of them as the "Chief Stewards" of the faith. There were a few resignations reported in Calgary around this time, and it is possible that Shoghi Effendi's sudden death was a factor.[39] For most, however, this event was a spur to even greater efforts to complete his Plan. The result, described in the next chapter, was the first solid expansion of the religion beyond its AngloSaxon and urban base.

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s the ethic of dispersion was extremely strong in Alberta. Between 1944 and 1953 a large percentage of the Alberta membership had moved to Saskatchewan, B.C. and other parts of Canada. Besides the common transfers of B.C. and Alberta members, the first two Bahá'ís in Calgary had pioneered to Newfoundland in 1949, two more to pioneer localities in the north, and two from Edmonton had moved to assist in the formation of an LSA in Saskatoon.[40] Near the end of the first Five Year Plan the NTC had sent out 190 letters to everyone residing in communities with more than nine members, urging them to consider pioneering to win the LSA goals.[41] But already two-thirds of the nine original Edmonton Assembly members had moved away: four to B.C., one to Calgary, and one to Winnipeg. One local history described the pattern as "an interesting jig-saw of people coming and leaving, and of new ones stepping in, only to migrate for other parts and new fields of endeavour." [42]

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36. 20 June 1953, Messages to Canada, 42.

37. NSA Annual Report 1953, 17; Canadian Bahá'í News 43 (Aug 1953), 4.

38. See Shoghi Effendi, World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, 147-8.

39. Bill Carr, interview with the author, Edmonton, 18 Apr. 1991.

40. Dorothy Sheets and Doris Skinner; Bill Carr and Joyce Carter; Cynthia Davis and Corol Found.

41. Canadian Bahá'í News 28 (April 1952), 3.

42. Kay Rimell and Lyda S. Roche, "Bahá'í World Faith: Edmonton - Alberta" (n.p., [1951]), 3 (EBA).

This Bahá'í mobility was not the kind of itinerancy exemplified by early Buddhist monks, who demonstrated independence and the impermanence of all things, nor of the Christian disciples with their message of "unbrokered egalitarianism". Bahá'í mobility had as its immediate goal the establishment of egalitarian institutions which were clearly a part of an international system.[43] With the exception of the early focus on Alberta's first Assembly, there was no strong sense of Alberta as a separate jurisdiction. Instead, Bahá'ís had a strong sense of connection to their fellow believers both as a local community and as a global family engaged in a great venture. One early member of the Calgary and Edmonton groups later reported:

> The nature and feeling . . . in those days was one of closeness and great camaraderie. We got along very well, and had a lot of fun and laughter along with the more serious effort to become deepened in our knowledge, and to interest others in this, what was to us, new Faith. We felt connected to Bahá'ís all over Canada as there were so few of us really, like one family, being guided by a loving and caring NSA, being inspired by the Guardian thru' his letters and plans always spreading before us the goals of the next stage to be accomplished. [44]

Despite the disruptions that the ethic of dispersion must have caused on the local level, it seemed to increase the sense of 'family' everywhere, keeping in touch through letters, visits, reports from travelling speakers, and news of accomplishments in the U.S. and Canadian newsletters. Beginning in 1942 the Bahá'ís held summer schools almost every year for the prairie region. These were important occasions for visiting as well as studying with guest teachers (usually from the U.S. or eastern Canada). For many years they met at the Banff School of Fine Arts, moving in 1967 to a newly-developed property on Sylvan Lake. On occasion the schools and conferences were used as a good means of publicity in goal areas. The 1943 summer school took place in Saskatchewan "to assist with the teaching work in Regina", and ten years later a teaching conference was held in the goal city of Saskatoon "as Conferences had proved so successful".[45]

There were other -- perhaps unintentional -- benefits from constant dispersion. One result of dedicated Bahá'ís pioneering elsewhere was that the communities were often unable to rely on particularly dynamic or charismatic individuals. Thus dispersion reinforced one of Shoghi Effendi's cardinal principles of administration, namely that "personalities should not be made centres around which the community may revolve but that they should be subordinated under all conditions and however great their merits to the properly constituted Assemblies." [46] In addition, almost every single community

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43. Quote on Christian itinerancy from noted Christian scholar John Dominick Crossan's lecture "Jesus the Peasant", University of Alberta, Edmonton, 23 Oct. 1991.

44. Anne McGee to the author 26 Mar. 1988. Allison (Pine) Stecyk remembered that "they weren't sweet, sickly individuals like religious people are supposed to be . . . they were real characters!" (interview with the author, Sherwood Park Alberta, 3 Mar. 1988.

45. NSA Annual Report 1943-1944, 33; NSA Annual Report 1952-1953, 11 and 16 (NSAA).

46. Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932, 6th rev. ed. (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust,

member had to develop administrative knowledge and experience as other Assembly members moved away. New Bahá'ís, unless isolated individuals, were required to either replace others in established LSAs or to learn 'on the job' in newly formed Assemblies in goal areas. Two common patterns of Assemblies developed: either one or more experienced individuals or couples provided a stable nucleus for new Bahá'ís, or all members were relatively inexperienced and learned together. A member of the first Alberta LSA recalled how different it was from previous experiences in "church groups and lay organizations . . . Here there was no room for personal ambition. Here, the keynote was self-effacement and the rule was the wish of the majority." [47]

One might also speculate that dispersion kept the communities small and thus more intimate. While this must have on occasion resulted in tension and overfamiliarity, there was possibly enough movement to counteract this. The LSAs were not required to deal with the other type of problems that come with administering large groups. They were also spared the complexities of the full range of administrative duties and administration of justice which all Assemblies are prophesied to handle in the distant future. Obviously the small and scattered groups of new Bahá'ís could in no sense be responsible for "those powers, duties and prerogatives" associated with a future "State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power".[48] Such difficulties could be postponed; Bahá'í administrative procedures could for the time being be enacted among small, supportive and eager groups.

This is not to say that the Bahá'ís ignored the implications of a world-wide religion and a global community, as their efforts to increase their racial diversity indicate. Their desire was "to be truly Bahá'í and to make it an international group." [49] The results, however, were negligible. Only Noel Wuttunee, an Indian living in Calgary (and later, Banff) was a member of any non-European background. This lack of diversity during the 1940s and 1950s was in part due to their practice of avoiding any hint of proselytizing or coercion. A Greek woman, who was quite interested in Bahá'í ideas and principles but never joined, wrote in her memoirs that "[n]o pressure whatever was ever in evidence although we attended for many years . . . the gain was all on our side with all the kindnesses that were freely given." [50] The Bahá'ís of that time emphasized presentation and study of Bahá'í principles, and hoped for voluntary expressions of interest and willingness to enroll. Another factor was that the Bahá'ís presented their

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1974), 58; see also 19.

47. Davies, "Brief History" [1949], 1 [EBA].

48. Shoghi Effendi, in The Bahá'í World vol. III, 108; quoted in Helen Hornby, ed., Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File, rev. ed. (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), 3.

49. Davies, "Brief History" [1949], 3 [EBA]. At this time two Bahá'í authors had collected over 100 Bahá'í passages on racial, ethnic and religious unity and 174 excerpts from various other sources (Maye Harvey Gift and Alice Simmons Cox, eds., Race and Man (Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1943). At least one Edmonton member is known to have possessed a copy, now in the LSA library.

50. Helen Lingas, Olympic Torch, 17. I am grateful to Chrissi Doherty for bringing this passage to my attention.

religion in a very intellectual way, placing heavy reliance on newspaper advertisements, books in libraries, public meetings and visiting speakers. Bahá'ís often spent years teaching individuals, and at this time much study was generally required in order to join. Not only were Bahá'ís not looking for quick conversion, but in some cases refused to accept it; Bahá'ís who joined in Alberta later spoke of having to read and study books and be questioned by local Assemblies on their understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and the succession of authority. The NSA of the U.S. and Canada gave instructions to the new Edmonton LSA that those interested in joining had to appear before the Assembly, answer "the questions asked by the chairman" and demonstrate "sufficient knowledge".[51] This procedure was perhaps necessary after the looser style and diverse understandings of earlier decades:

> During the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi, the Bahá'ís had to be weaned away from their dual identity as Bahá'í Theosophists, Unitarians, Masons, et. al., in order for a new Bahá'í identity to be formed. The eclecticism of the Bahá'ís of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's time was replaced by Shoghi Effendi's purposive creation of the structured, cohesive administrative organization we have today. [52]

In the late 1950s, however, the slow growth and the lack of racial diversity were ended by a wave of conversions among native Indians on the prairies, brought in by teaching methods more flexible and less intellectual. The sheer size of the increase and the different culture of the new members resulted in a long struggle to consolidate these new members and integrate them into the ethic of dispersion, and permanently changed the nature of the national Bahá'í community.

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51. George O. Latimer, NSA chairman, to secretary of the Edmonton LSA 17 July 1944 [EBA].

52. Geoffrey Nash, "Religion and the Dynamics of Change," Dialogue 1,4 (Winter/Spring 1987), 44.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FIRST WAVE: INDIANS

> It is now 30 years since the first Canadian Indians have enrolled under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh. During the intervening years the Canadian Bahá'í community has been inextricably involved in a dynamic process that has cycled from euphoric highs to spirit numbing lows. Those Bahá'ís who have laboured in this field have had, from time to time, the opportunity to glimpse the tantalizing spiritual potential of these people which for the most part remains unrealized. It is this latent potential first brought to our attention by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that encourages us on in this difficult work. [1]

Contact with natives was driven by a three-stage missionary impulse on the part of Canadian Bahá'ís. To begin with, they possessed a strong desire to spread their religion to everyone. As noted in the previous chapter, the absence of clergy or paid missionaries meant that each member was urged to take on the responsibility of propagation. Second, ethnic teaching began to receive special attention in the late 1940s. After the first few footholds in the major cities of North America had been achieved, Shoghi Effendi emphasized the instructions contained in the Tablets of the Divine Plan and laid out goals of expansion into new geographical and cultural worlds. Immediately after its formation in 1948 the Canadian NSA formed committees to address propagation efforts with Indians and Eskimos, later adding French, Ukrainian and Polish.[2]

Third, out of all ethnic or racial groups, the Bahá'ís had a particular interest in North American Indians. The Tablets of the Divine Plan were crucial in the stimulation of missionary efforts among native Indians because they contained the only specific racial prophecy in all of the Bahá'í scriptures:

> You must give great importance to teaching the Indians, that is, the aborigines of America. For these souls are like the ancient inhabitants of Peninsular Arabia, who previous to the Manifestation of His Holiness Muhammad were treated as savages. But when the Muhammadic light shone forth in their midst, they became so illumined that they brightened the world. **Likewise, should these Indians and aborigines be educated and obtain guidance, there is no doubt that through the divine teachings, they will become so enlightened as in turn to shed light to all regions.** [3]

This passage has been repeated and reprinted in almost all subsequent Bahá'í meetings and materials concerning North American Indians. It constitutes what is known as an Ur-text: a scripture which becomes the central historical authority and current guide for religious acts. Its importance lies not only in its encouragement to "give great impor-

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1. National Indian Desk, National Bahá'í Centre [Thornhill, Ont], "Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada", 31 Oct. 1986, 1 [EBA].

2. NSA Annual Reports 1948-9 and ff. [NSAA].

f 3. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan [1916-1917] (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), 10, emphasis added. Its racial uniqueness is confirmed by a letter from Rúhíyyih Khanum [Rabbani] to NSA of Canada 28 Oct. 1986, 1 [NSAA].

tance" to native teaching, but in the way that Bahá'ís have understood its prediction that native Bahá'ís will eventually become a potent source of enlightenment for the world. Because of the importance placed on this passage, Bahá'ís in Alberta have put forth much effort to bring natives into their faith, and have eagerly searched for hints of an "enlightened" response which would "shed light to all regions." Individual Bahá'ís who experienced resistance or apathy from the natives could take courage and solace from the Ur-text's promise that their efforts would have far-reaching global effects in the future. This fits their general worldview discussed earlier, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá's specific reference to Indians lent a special flavour and impetus to native teaching on the prairies. Except in rare cases the Bahá'ís have been unable to use their reliable method of "pioneering", sending out members to establish and strengthen native groups and Assemblies. Their hopes for the fulfillment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prophecy have thus been placed on independent and dynamic action from native Bahá'ís. Bahá'ís have often interpreted this passage in the light of their own priorities of dispersion. A white Bahá'í, married to a native woman and who had been involved in U.S. native teaching and the Alberta campaigns in 1963, wrote afterwards that "We 'white middle-class Presbyterian' Bahá'ís" had attracted only 1500 in 50 years:

> We should have paid more attention when 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that the Indian would be the one to spread the Faith in North America. With this in mind I think we can safely predict that for every Indian we can sign up today, there will be a thousand Bahá'ís a few decades from now. [4]

Of course 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not say that natives would "spread the Faith in North America". That this Ur-prediction should be so interpreted is not surprising, given the general Bahá'í orientation to propagation and the particularly intense focus near the end of the Ten Year Crusade. But it clearly shows the expectation that Indians would rise up and bring in thousands more; and it helps to explain the disappointment which followed when natives not only 'failed' to do so but even began to fall away or fall dormant in large numbers. Although at times the native response has appeared promising, a sense of failure and confusion has followed when the majority of native converts did not 'spread the Faith'. The Bahá'í-native experience in Alberta has been a roller-coaster of hope and despair, activity and quiescence, enrollment and withdrawal, maintained throughout by a few stalwart native and non-native members.

Before 1948, the Bahá'í Faith was administered by a joint Canadian - U.S. National Spiritual Assembly. The focus was on raising local Assemblies (LSAs) in the major cities of Canada, and there was little Indian teaching activity. Shoghi Effendi encouraged native teaching as early as 1938, and in 1947 he commended U.S. Bahá'ís for their work among the Cherokee and Oneida tribes.[5] But contact between native Indians and the predominantly white middle-class Bahá'ís was probably extremely limited. In 1948,

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4. Canadian Bahá'í News 166 (Nov 1963), 3.

5. Shoghi Effendi to the North American Bahá'ís 25 Dec. 1938 and 5 June 1947, repr. in The National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, ed., A Special Measure of Love (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974), 1 and 3.

however, the new Canadian NSA received from Shoghi Effendi a Five Year Plan which included the familiar numerical goal of established LSAs (32) and localities (100), and for the first time "the participation of Eskimos and Red Indians in membership to share administrative privileges in local institutions of the Faith in Canada". From this point until his death in 1957 Shoghi Effendi, in almost every letter, strongly encouraged Canada to bring "both the Indian and Eskimo races into the life of the community." [6]

The first native to become a Bahá'í in Canada was Noel Wuttunee of Calgary in 1948, whose wife was already a member. The next were Jim and Melba Loft, who had joined while in Detroit. In 1949, encouraged by Shoghi Effendi, the Lofts moved back to the Tyendinaga reserve in Ontario.[7] The NSA's Indian Committee believed that these two families would "render invaluable help in showing us the way to approach our Indian brothers."

In the 1940s and 1950s Bahá'ís took a slow approach to native conversion. All sources stressed the need to gradually make contact with Indians wherever possible and establish friendship before mentioning religion. In a few isolated cases Bahá'ís were able to at least establish some contact with aboriginal peoples. Bahá'ís were active in starting the first native friendship centres in Calgary and Whitehorse, and involved in similar organizations in other cities.[8] One individual moved to the Arctic in 1950, and two others found work in Manitoba and Northern Ontario.[9] Reception among the natives varied according to who was teaching and in what environment: a white Bahá'í in Ontario found that natives attended meetings but "do not ask questions"; the Lofts encountered suspicion and hostility on their own reserve; Noel Wuttunee and his wife, living in Calgary and, later, in Banff, reportedly had "no problem of association [and] are welcomed wherever there are Indians." [10] Their contacts with Indians on the Stoney reserve resulted in the enrollment of Judea Beaver, the second native Bahá'í in the province.

In general, contact remained scattered in the early 1950s due to the small number of Bahá'ís in Canada, the cultural and physical isolation of native reserves, and the contin-

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6. 18 Apr. 1948 and 11 Apr. 1948; Shoghi Effendi, Messages to Canada ([Thornhill, Ont: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1965), 8 and 11.

7. See The Universal House of Justice, ed., The Bahá'í World vol XVI (1973-6) (Haifa: Universal House of Justice, 1978), 514-6; and later issues of Bahá'í Canada. They were not, as is sometimes reported, the first native Bahá'ís in Canada although Mrs. Loft became the first Canadian Indian Bahá'í in the late 1930s while living in Michigan.

8. On the Native Friendship Club of Calgary (ca.1958), see Lily-Ann Irwin, interview with the author, Edmonton, 27 Oct. 1989; and The Universal House of Justice, ed., The Bahá'í World vol. XIV (1963-8) (Haifa: Universal House of Justice, 1974), 357-8. On the Yukon Indian Advancement Association (1957) see Ted Anderson "Brief History of Yukon Indian Advancement Association" (n.p., 1964) (AA). Bahá'ís had also been involved in the Friends of the Indians Society chapters in Whitehorse and Edmonton, but were wary of both its political agenda and its policy of admitting natives as non-voting associate members only.

9. Shoghi Effendi, Messages to Canada, 73, n.9 and n.10; NSA Annual Reports 1950-1, 18 (NSAA).

10. Lofts, Bahá'í World vol XVI p.515; other two references NSA Annual Reports 1950-1, 18 (NSAA). One white and one native family became Bahá'ís within a year and a half of the Lofts' arrival, but subsequent conversions were slow.

uing focus on establishing urban localities and LSAs. Some of this was due in part to Shoghi Effendi's priorities: in the last year of the Five Year Plan he felt that "the immediate objectives have been practically attained", and the remaining months were to be dedicated to increasing "at whatever cost" the numbers of localities and Assemblies.[11] Another reason was the constant reorganization of national committees for native teaching and the high turnover of their membership. The first committee formed in 1948 had four members, all from Alberta. Two years later the NSA formed three Indian committees: Ontario and Quebec; the Prairies; and B.C. Two years after that there was again only one national committee; all members were from the east and all but one were newly appointed. By this time the Five Year Plan had concluded, and their report noted wistfully: "Though we realize our inexperience, we hope that this year's work will prove a foundation for future years within the Ten Year Plan." [12] The committee for the following year again had an entirely new membership.

The shift of Indian Committee membership to eastern Canada in 1950 probably reflected the fact that most activity was happening in Ontario; the Prairie and B.C. committees both noted in 1951 that "here organized teaching work has not proved possible." [13] The situation in Alberta changed in 1953 when a Bahá'í family much interested in native work moved into Edmonton. Arthur and Lily-Ann Irwin had been inspired to involve themselves in native teaching by three things: Shoghi Effendi's 1948 message to Canada; a personal letter three years later from his wife which encouraged them to find "receptive souls . . . especially amongst the Indians"; and their recent pioneer experience in Yellowknife from 1950 to 1953.[14] The Irwins joined the Friends of the Indians Society in Edmonton and began to compile information on Indian tribes in Canada.

In 1954 they were both appointed to the new national Indian Teaching Committee and had a great influence on its activities for the remainder of the decade. One of the main priorities of the committee was general encouragement of native activities. It started a bulletin on native activities and provided reports of the few current projects to the national newsletter in order to stimulate interest among the Canadian members. Another committee task was to collect the little information available on Canadian natives and send it to interested Bahá'í communities.[15] Such help was effective: by 1956 it reported that "Indians of the various tribes living across Canada have been contacted by

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11. 23 June 1951, Messages to Canada, 30. See also previous letters 3 Jan. 1951 and 30 Oct. 1951.

12. NSA Annual Reports 1952-3, 14 [NSAA].

13. NSA Annual Reports 1950-1, 18 [NSAA].

14. 31 Oct. 1951, quoted in Arthur B. Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada" (n.p., 1983), 2. Following information on the Irwins drawn from Lily-Ann Irwin interview, 27 Oct. 1989, and Arthur Irwin, taped interview 15 July 1983 [AA].

15. For example, in 1957 the committee prepared a map of native locations in Canada, and in its Indian Teaching Bulletin #4 (10 Mar. 1957) listed 36 native reserves which lay close to 30 Bahá'í Assemblies or groups. Such information was rare in the 1950s. Arthur Irwin later reported that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development used the Bahá'í map "as a pattern for the government map published in 1967." ["Early Native Teaching in Canada", 3.]

individuals this past year." [16] It also supervised the creation of appropriate teaching material. Shoghi Effendi had assigned to the U.S. and Canada the goal of translating Bahá'í literature into Indian languages; Canada to handle Mohawk and Blackfoot. By 1954 the committee had produced a pamphlet in Mohawk, and a booklet in Blackfoot in 1955, languages which indicate Bahá'í connections with natives in Quebec and southern Alberta.[17] Further publications followed through the late 1950s.

In 1956 the Irwins moved to Calgary. Arthur Irwin, a geologist, had obtained a position with the Department of Indian Affairs managing the burgeoning petroleum and mineral development on reserves in Western Canada.[18] At this time Shoghi Effendi was encouraging the Canadian Bahá'ís to "make a special effort to get jobs in the reservations or amongst Indian people, so that they can carry to them the Message of Bahá'u'lláh." [19] He also stressed the importance at this time of native teaching, in addition to the usual goals of pioneering, expansion and LSA formation.

> Of equal importance is the strenuous yet highly meritorious obligation to add, steadily and rapidly, to the number of the American Indian and Eskimo adherents of the Faith, and to ensure their active participation in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Bahá'í activity - a task so clearly emphasized by the Pen of ['Abdu'l-Bahá], and in the consummation of which the Canadian Bahá'í Community is destined to play so conspicuous a part. [20]

That year Allan Prairie Chicken, a native from the Peigan reserve, whom Arthur had met through his work, invited the Irwins to visit his house and tell him and his friends more about this new faith. The Irwins were eager to do so and, as was usual for Bahá'ís, gained permission from the Peigan council to visit and speak about religion.[21] Once or twice a month for the next five years the Irwins made the 250-mile round trip from Calgary to Peigan and back. These trips reveal not only the dedication of the Bahá'ís to bringing in native converts but the methods used at this time.

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16. NSA Annual Reports 1955-6 [NSAA].

17. The Alberta Provincial Museum and Archives possesses a copy of The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, ed., Oki! Nitsítapee: A Message to the Blackfeet Indians (Toronto: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, n.d. [1955].

18. Productive oil wells had been drilled on the Stoney, Sturgeon Lake, Samson and Blood reserves during 1950-1952, and more leases were being developed in the other prairie provinces. By 1959 there were 90 producing wells on Alberta reserves. Arthur Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada", 5; Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Indians of the Prairie Provinces: An Historical Review (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1967), 22 and 24.

19. Rúhíyyih Khanum on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 26 June 1956, in Messages to Canada, 58. The Irwins had written to Shoghi Effendi in 1955 for his advice on Arthur's job, which he strongly approved.

20. Shoghi Effendi to NSA of Canada 26 June 1956, Messages to Canada, 61.

21. Lily-Ann Irwin, "Report on Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyih Khanum's Visit to Peigan Indian Reserve May 21, 1960" (n.p., n.d.), 3 [AA]; NSA Annual Report 1957-8 [NSAA]. The Annual Report notes that in Ontario a Bahá'í "has received permission to live on the Six Nations reserve, and is allowed to teach the Faith."

> Typically we would leave home at 7.00 A.M., arrive at the appointed time, say 10.30, to find the host family having breakfast or occasionally absent from their home - we had to adjust to any eventuality. Pickups at various homes on the reserve would often take two hours. Then the gatherings for prayers, readings, talks and discussions would last until late afternoon. Then we would rush home for our Sunday evening fireside in Calgary! [22]

Other Alberta Bahá'ís were also involved in native teaching, driven by Shoghi Effendi's repeated injunctions to bring natives into the fold. In what proved to be his last direct communication to Canada, he stated that the conversion of Indians (and other ethnic groups) was long overdue. They must, he said become the focus of such an effort as would "astonish and stimulate the members of all Bahá'í communities throughout the length and breadth of the Western Hemisphere." [23] But to become a Bahá'í in the 1950s required a good deal of study, especially the wills of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá (in which they appointed their successors) and some of Shoghi Effendi's difficult essays and letters.[24] Arthur Irwin recounted how he tried to adapt these to the simpler education and different culture of his contacts: "I reviewed and paraphrased the Teachings in these publications and spent many hours attempting to instruct the ready souls in the meanings. None of the Indian seekers could qualify." [25]

In what proved to be a major shift in expansion practices, the Peigan reserve was visited in 1958 by John Robarts, a former member of the Canadian NSA who had pioneered to Africa where he had been appointed a Hand of the Cause. By now well experienced with teaching in aboriginal cultures, he accompanied the Irwins to one of their meetings and directly invited the natives present to join. One couple, Allan and Maggie Prairie Chicken responded and became the first native Bahá'ís in the province since Noel Wuttunee and Judea Beaver. Robarts was also responsible for changing the requirements expected of potential Bahá'ís in Canada. Later that same year Robarts consulted with the NSA of Canada on membership qualifications. The NSA subsequently changed its policy "to allow for enrollment of those who simply accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the Messenger of God for this age, and were prepared to obey His teachings." [26]

Bahá'ís had always followed a gradualist approach, deliberately seeking points of agreement and only later introducing issues and laws more difficult for the inquirer. Even after joining, Bahá'í laws such as avoidance of alcohol were gradually enforced over a

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22. Arthur Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada", 8.

23. 18 July 1957; Messages to Canada, 69.

24. See previous chapter.

25. "Early Native Teaching in Canada", 5.

26. Arthur Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada", 5.

long time, with the emphasis placed on gentle consultation and warnings.[27] Now, based upon expansion activities in the developing world, gradualism came to be applied to knowledge as well as actions. Just one year earlier Shoghi Effendi had instructed the NSA of South and West Africa, where Robarts was serving, that the essential requirement was that the seeker "believe in his heart in the truth of Bahá'u'lláh. . . . When the spark of faith exists the essential Message is there, and gradually everything else can be added unto it." [28]

With this shift away from intellectual understanding and study, and with the example and assistance of Allan and Maggie Prairie Chicken, more conversions quickly followed. Three more natives became Bahá'ís, and were joined by a white pioneer in 1959 and the conversion of one of the white teachers at the Anglican School in January 1960. A return visit by John Robarts in April 1960 was followed by the notable visit a month later of Shoghi Effendi's widow Rúhíyyíh Khanum Rabbani, who met with the chief and five members of the Peigan council. Rúhíyyíh Khanum was well received by those present, and given the Blackfoot name "Our Blessed Mother". She included in her remarks 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ur-text concerning the future of the native people, and invited them to contribute to the Bahá'í goals of global unity and peace:

> We need the help of all the people in the world to bring about peace. If Indian people would come forward and mix with us, they would contribute much to our civilization, because they would share their qualities with their fellow citizens. . . . you must come forward and give what you have to the world. The world needs you. [29]

At that point there were seven adult Bahá'ís on the reserve, a large proportion of the approximately 20 natives in all of Canada.[30] One year later there were 15 on Peigan and it became one the first three LSAs on native reserves in Canada formed in April 1961. The other two were on the Pasqua and Piapot reserves in Saskatchewan, where even greater numbers of natives were enrolling. Two Bahá'ís from that province, a native and a white, had attended a teaching conference in Calgary in 1960, and visited the Peigan reserve. Inspired by their experiences, they began the same form of teaching

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27. "The Assemblies must be wise and gentle in dealing with such cases, but at the same time must not tolerate a prolonged and flagrant disregard of the Bahá'í Teachings as regards alcohol." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 26 June 1956, Messages to Canada, 60) Similar guidance was given on other matters, for example homosexuality. Gradualism in applying Bahá'í law has been constant in the West. Abstinence, although a cardinal law of Bahá'u'lláh's, was applied by Shoghi Effendi only in the late 1920s. Many Bahá'í laws still are not in force in the West; a synopsis of Bahá'u'lláh's book of laws (the Kitab-i-Aqdas) has been published in English, but the book itself will not be translated and published until 1992.

28. Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 9 July 1957, quoted in The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, ed., A Special Measure of Love, 18.

29. As reported in Lily-Ann Irwin, "A Report on Amatu'l-Bahá Rúhíyyíh Khanum's Visit", 2 [AA].

30. Three others in Alberta were Judea Beaver on the Stoney reserve, and Joseph and Dorothy Francis, Salteaux Indians from Manitoba who had moved into Calgary. By this time Noel Wuttunee was in Winnipeg.

trips to reserves in Saskatchewan, which resulted in hundreds of conversions on a dozen reserves by 1963.[31]

The new native Bahá'ís became the focus of much attention from the Canadian community: enthusiastic reports were published in the Canadian and U.S. Bahá'í newsletters, and at least four NSA members visited the Peigan reserve. Other contacts and native conversion projects took place in the Calgary area. Calgary Bahá'ís had been instrumental in forming the Native Friendship Club which held meetings and celebrations in the city and on the Sarcee, Stoney and Blackfoot reserves. Two others involved with founding this association became the first Bahá'ís on Blackfoot.[32] By May 1962 there were fourteen adults and one youth on this reserve, and by March 1963 twenty-six adults and eight youth. The Blackfoot members elected an assembly in 1962, but held no meetings "owing to transportation and distance problems".[33] Mabel Robinson, a pioneer to the Calgary extension goal of Lethbridge in October 1962, offered to visit Blackfoot reserve, and was financially supported in a move to Gleichen in early 1963, where she remained for many years.[34]

On the Stoney reserve there were nine adults and two youth in 1962, but this area proved to be more difficult to develop. Arthur Irwin reported that no LSA could be formed here because of internal disunity.[35] The RTC had to deal with a shortage of outside visitors and the ambivalence of some of the new members, exacerbated by either a misunderstanding or deliberate misrepresentation of the nature of their religion by the Stoney council:

> An investigation revealed that most wanted to resign, but subsequent visits have revealed a desire to remain. Difficulties include finding believers not home on many occasions, despite previous written notice. In September, a delegation from Calgary went to the reserve to discuss allegations made regarding Communism. . . . there were over 50 in attendance. However, most of the councillors did not attend. Other efforts on Stony reserve have been hampered by the lack of available teachers. [36]

Such ambivalence was not uncommon on Alberta reserves. It may well have been due to reluctance or regret on the part of recent converts, as well as the result of pressures from family, community and the churches. Opposition was also encountered on the Blackfoot reserve where Bahá'ís were refused permission to use the band hall and were

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31. Tape transcript of interview with Angus Cowan, 27 Sept. 1978, Invermere B.C. My appreciation to Pat Verge, Cochrane, for making this transcript available.

32. See memorial articles on Ed and Jean Many Bears in The Bahá'í World vol. XIV (1963-8), 357-8. Ed was a member of the Blackfoot council and one of the native societies, and later the first director of the Indian Friendship Centre in Calgary.

33. Southern Alberta RTC report in NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 13 [NSAA].

34. NTC minutes 5 Mar. 1963; NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 14 [NSAA].

35. "Early Native Teaching in Canada", 13.

36. Southern Alberta RTC report in NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 14 [NSAA].

the target of criticism from the Catholic church in the form of two circulated bulletins and one public meeting. It was reported that the Bahá'ís were defended at this meeting by two Catholic natives who held that they "were good people who did not criticize other religions." [37] Although a Bahá'í group was established on the Samson reserve, strong opposition from church and council continued here for the next two decades.

Initial visits were also made to the Sunchild and O'Chiese reserves near Rocky Mountain House, and two converts were made on the Blood reserve in southern Alberta. The Edmonton and Calgary Bahá'ís actively cooperated on teaching activities on the four Hobbema reserves. In all of these ventures the Bahá'ís were greatly aided by the enthusiastic participation of certain new native converts: in particular the Knowltons on Peigan, the Many Bears on Blackfoot, the Little Shields on Blood, and Baptiste Shortneck from Louis Bull in the Hobbema area. A pattern of native-white travelling teams developed, and these individuals were essential for advice, identifying likely converts in their own territories, translation, and providing legitimacy to white Bahá'ís by their very presence.

The last years of the Ten Year Crusade saw intensive activities on the prairies. During 1962 and early 1963 'Operation Snowball' was carried out on native reserves in Saskatchewan and Alberta. The project was in response to a request for mass conversion from the Hands in Haifa. The NTC deliberately focused on the natives of the prairies "where there seemed the greatest possibility for realizing mass conversion in Canada." [38] The name Snowball clearly indicated the project's expectations of ever-increasing conversions and subsequent participation by native Bahá'ís. In addition to Bahá'ís living close to native reserves, the Snowball project involved at least fifteen travelling teachers. Two of these visitors came from the United States; Ken Jeffers, a white Bahá'í from the continental U.S. and Jim Walton, a native from Alaska. By the end of the Snowball project, there were hundreds of new native members, and 21 reserves in Saskatchewan had at least one native Bahá'í convert. A large percentage of the Pasqua and Poorman residents joined.[39]

In Alberta there were lesser but still significant successes. Edmonton Bahá'ís continued their visits to Wabamun, Pigeon Lake and the four Hobbema-area reserves. Jeffers reported 50 declarations in "northern" Alberta by late February 1963, and 99 by early March. If funds were available, he claimed, "there could be several hundred to a thousand" native converts by March 21st.[40] 43 of these northern Alberta members were

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37. Southern Alberta RTC report in NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 13 [NSAA]. The Annual Reports also note that 15-year old David Kabloonak, the first Canadian Inuit Bahá'í, "has withstood many tests directed his way both by his father and a church in the area." [New Territories Committee report in ibid, 15].

38. NTC report in NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 7 [NSAA].

39. NTC minutes 9 Apr. 1963 [NSAA]. Eventually all but one family on Poorman became Bahá'ís.

40. NTC minutes 25 Feb. 1963 and 12 Mar. 1963 [NSAA].

in the Hobbema area. Around Calgary the efforts were deliberately concentrated on the Blackfoot and Stoney reserves.[41] The Southern Alberta RTC was, of course, well aware of the efforts on Peigan, but believed that the potential for the new conversion methods appeared poor on Peigan and the nearby Blood reserve. In March 1963 the RTC reported "mass conversion prospects in So. Alberta nil". The NTC could only recommend that the SARTC try to follow up on the successful work on Blackfoot, where seventeen new members had joined.[42]

Many individuals offered to spend time on native reserves in the early months of 1963 as the Ten Year Crusade drew to a close. From Ontario the National Teaching Committee coordinated a rush of visiting teachers, conversion reports, funding requests, and travel plans, trying to keep in touch with the Regional Teaching Committees of the west. There were also Indian conversions on two reserves in Ontario and one in Quebec, but nothing like the numbers or activity in the west. Over 250 natives were enrolled in Alberta and Saskatchewan by the end of the campaign.

At the conclusion of the Ten Year Crusade, the Canadian provinces had formed 63 LSAs, three more than Shoghi Effendi's original goal. Nine of these were on native reserves, three in Alberta and six in Saskatchewan. In addition there were nineteen groups on reserves in Saskatchewan (ten) and Alberta (four), plus ten groups in the predominantly Indian and Eskimo centres of Yukon and the N.W.T.[43] Clearly, the wave of native Bahá'ís had made it possible for the Canadian community to win its assigned goals. Alberta now had one more Assembly and two fewer groups on reserves than in the cities and towns. The NSA stated that the Canadian Bahá'í community was "entering a new era", a shift from its primarily white, urban and Eastern character.

> [O]ne quarter of its number is now composed of Indian believers, and 50 per cent of the entire community lives west of Lake Superior. . . . the standards of the Faith which have in the past been applied only to the urban communities [are] being amplified in relation to their bearing on the conduct of the Indian believers. [44]

The potential change hinted at in this assessment would have greatly changed the nature of the Bahá'í Faith in the urban areas of Alberta. One can imagine the clash or synthesis which would have resulted from the interaction of the two cultures: one intellectual,

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41. Southern Alberta RTC report in NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 13 (NSAA).

42. NTC minutes 5 Mar. 1963 and 12 Mar. 1963 (NSAA). Higher priority was again given to the Blackfoot reserve in 1967, despite Samson Knowlton's recommendation that the Bahá'ís send someone to Fort Macleod to help with the Blood reserve. (Ted Anderson to NSA 7 Nov. 1967 (AA).)

43. Figures from Canadian Bahá'í News, The Bahá'í World vol. XIV, and The Hands of the Cause, eds., The Bahá'í Faith 1844-1963: Information Statistical and Comparative ([Haifa, 1963]). Statistical goals were listed separately for Yukon and the N.W.T.; the whole of Canada thus had 67 LSAs, 88 groups, and 76 isolated Bahá'ís (see Appendix 6).

44. NSA Annual Reports 1962-3, 8-9 (NSAA).

administratively focused, deliberately non-ritualistic and heavily dependent upon books and study classes; the other non-intellectual and kin-focused in which ritual, ceremony and the oral tradition figured prominently in religious practice and community life. Such an encounter, however, failed to develop during the roller-coaster activities which took place after 1963.

The crucial problem lay in consolidating the relatively huge numbers of native converts, most of whom had only a very limited knowledge of their new religion's doctrines, principles or laws. One white Bahá'í with good experience on Alberta reserves expressed concern in early 1963 to the NTC that natives were being admitted without an adequate understanding of the religion. As noted above, this was a deliberate change from earlier approaches. The NSA had asked that Assemblies and RTCs "make every effort to assist with easier enrollment" by allowing for cultural differences and avoiding "unimportant details at this time." The idea was that "regular follow-up teaching to confirm and consolidate new recruits" would follow.[45] Shoghi Effendi (and later the Universal House of Justice) repeatedly stressed that expansion and consolidation were necessary and "inseparable" parts of proper growth.[46] Bahá'ís were warned that if follow-up 'deepening' work was neglected through concentration on outward growth, the results would not endure.

This prediction came to pass in Alberta; problems of cultural differences, physical distance, apathy and exhaustion after the intensity of 1963 led to loss of contact with new native converts. This was not surprising after so many quick enrollments had been handled primarily by visiting individuals on distant reserves. Even identifying and finding the new members was a difficult task. One member who lived in Calgary at that time recalled that the natives were eager for visits, but there were too few Bahá'ís available; many worked on Saturdays and had little time to spend after the intense teaching campaigns were concluded.[47] In addition, those who continued visiting the reserves to 'deepen' the natives were not clergy or paid missionaries but lay members with jobs and families, and they were usually serving on other Bahá'í institutions as well.

Many individuals tell stories of travelling to native reserves despite difficult personal and climatic conditions, but the larger communities as a whole were unwilling or unable to respond creatively to the pool of actual and potential new Bahá'ís. On the other hand, those who did undertake the heavy responsibilities of consolidation universally reported that it was impossible to establish any continuous contact with Indian Bahá'ís. Some of the natives, as noted above, were ambivalent about their membership; however even self-defined and dedicated native Bahá'ís lived by different schedules and were often unavail-

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45. NTC minutes 12 Mar. 1963; NSA Annual Reports 1962-3 (NSAA).

46. See for example Shoghi Effendi to NSA of Canada 26 June 1956, Messages to Canada, 62; and the Universal House of Justice annual message April 1966, Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968 (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), 77.

47. Sylvia Demers, phone interview with the author, Wetaskiwin, Alberta, 19 Jan. 1991.

able. Assemblies functioned rarely, if at all, and the native members were unwilling or unable to meet or generate their own plans of expansion and consolidation. In the absence of meaningful contact and activities, natives understandably continued in their previous religious activities, traditional and/or Christian.[48]

In the 1960s the picture of native teaching was a background of steady visits and consolidation by a few dedicated individuals, overlaid with sporadic campaigns to bring in more natives, often built around the availability of travelling Bahá'ís.[49] Such tours both exemplified and exacerbated the existing problem: more enrollments, but little manpower and attention given to followup. But the dream that the Indian Bahá'ís would someday "shed light to all regions"continued, and they were believed to be the key to the growth and development of the Canadian membership. In 1968 the NSA restated that "mass conversion" of natives must be "a basic and continuing objective" of the Canadian Bahá'ís, despite difficulties of organizing and educating large numbers. Indeed, the hoped-for influx was seen as a possible "catalyst or trigger" of mass enrollments from other peoples, as well as having a "redemptive" effect on the national membership.[50]

John Sargent, a Métis Bahá'í with much experience on the prairies, stated that "natives knew little about the Faith but wanted to be a pa t of it . . . we got addicted to the quick success: sign them up and move on". In this way Bahá'ís failed to develop viable native communities. Sargent believes that the real spiritual leaders were missed, ignored, or left behind in the hasty campaigns: "the result has been the growth of a dependent community" and the Bahá'í institutions have come to expect non-participation from native believers.[51] More than twenty years later the National Indian Desk concluded:

> It is difficult to deny that Canada's record in systematically and competently pursuing this area of teaching is checkered. As a result opportunities have been irretrievably lost and much time has passed and the results are well below their potential. The non-Native Canadian Bahá'í community was young and inexperienced; the understanding of the dynamics of interaction between the two cultures only vaguely understood; and the resources both human and physical, were limited. [52]

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48. One example here must suffice: one new Bahá'í on Peigan, a shaman and council member, was previously a lay reader in the Anglican church and remained active in its organization. "He may not be yet fully aware of the need to resign from the Anglican Church." (Ted Anderson to NSA 7 Nov. 1967 [AA].)

49. See for example "Indian Teaching Teams in Alberta", Canadian Bahá'í News 205 (Feb 1967), 1ff.

50. NSA to National Convention May 31-June 2 1968. This "trigger" idea was first stated in a letter from Rúhíyyih Khanum to the NSAs of Canada and the U.S. in 1961 after her visit (see above) to Peigan and other North American reserves. (Canadian Bahá'í News supplement, Apr 1961, 4 pp.)

51. John Sargent, interview with the author, Thornhill, Ontario, 10 Oct. 1990. An identical assessment was made by an Alberta Bahá'í active in native teaching since the 1950s (Sylvia Demers phone interview, 19 Jan. 1992.)

52. "Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada" October 1986, 1 [NSAA].

Sporadic teaching campaigns and yearly trips to reform Assemblies were able to keep up statistical numbers of individuals, localities and Assemblies, but did not lead to stable native Bahá'í communities or the mutual cross-cultural understanding of spirituality which might have developed.[53] In essence, what transpired was that the natives remained on the reserves and the administration remained in the white urban communities.

Due to less mobility of natives there were still Bahá'ís and LSAs on the Alberta reserves, but the attention and effort they had received in the early 1960s was fading, partly due to chronic financial stringencies,[54] and partly due to the various difficulties encountered in trying to reach and 'deepen' hundreds of native members. Compounding these problems was the natural loss of expansion goals established during the crisis of winning the Ten Year Crusade. Through the mid-1960s, as had happened in earlier Plans, there was a notable decline of Assemblies and localities in all areas of Canada. But another factor was the new and exciting developments among urban youth in the late 1960s. As youth enrollments began to flow in increasing numbers, the overall attention of the Canadian Bahá'í community inevitably shifted from the difficult and often unrewarding arena of native work to the promising and exciting wave of youth converts which was approaching.

At the end of the Ten Year Crusade the many native enrollments had helped Alberta and Canada win their locality goals. Similar efforts occurred near the end of the Nine Year Plan in 1972-3 and the Five Year Plan in 1978-9 when, once again, large and hurried campaigns were carried out among native peoples. This was possible not only due to crisis response, but because the Bahá'ís were able to weld their enthusiastic youth to the strong ethic of expansion, producing a remarkable surge of membership in both native and non-native communities, and an unparalleled wave of locality goals and Assembly formations.

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53. See "The Native Bahá'í Community: (A Right to an Identity)", (n.p.: NTC report to NSA 24 Mar. 1978) [EBA]; National Indian Desk, "Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada", 31 Oct. 1986 [EBA]; and John Sergent, "Development of the Native Teaching Structure" (n.p.: address to meeting of the National Native Desk 1989) [NSAA].

54. One rare exceptional was in 1967, during which contributions to the NSA funds doubled, enabling the NSA to "make great breakthroughs in Arctic and Indian development." (Bahá'í Canada 222 (Aug 1968), 10) Other than this there were constant shortfalls and appeals after the completion of the Ten Year Plan in 1963.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND WAVE: YOUTH

By the end of the Ten Year Crusade in 1963 the Canadian Bahá'ís had reached new heights of enrollments and Assembly formations. 1963 was also the year of the first election of the nine-member Universal House of Justice, based in Haifa, Israel. During the subsequent twelve months, Bahá'ís around the world commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's announcement in 1863 and the Universal House of Justice made preparations for a new Nine Year Plan, unveiled in 1964. By this time, however, a familiar Canadian pattern had reappeared as the numbers of LSAs and the rate of new members had begun to drop. Annual enrollments reached a low of 125 in 1965. Following this was an equally familiar pattern of recovery. LSAs increased to 72 in 1967, and enrollments were up to 259. But in the late 1960s and early 1970s the community experienced a surge of numbers and localities that went far beyond mere recovery. The Canadian Bahá'ís achieved their locality and LSA goals (750 and 150, respectively) two years early in 1971, and continued to grow in all areas. Enrollments increased steadily to hit a new peak of over 2600 in 1971, followed by more than 1700 in 1972 and 1900 in 1973.[1] At the end of the Nine Year Plan in 1973, there were 10,543 members, 200 LSAs and 950 localities.

This surge was the direct result of an unprecedented response among young Canadians. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Bahá'í Faith, like many religions, received a large influx of young believers. This change stemmed from a combination of factors: large numbers of 'baby boom' teenagers, more diverse immigration into North America, a relaxation of church membership expectation, and an increasing awareness and tolerance of "eastern" religions. Bahá'í principles of unity and equality appealed to youth eager to hear about alternative and "modern" religions. In contrast to the usual non-native pattern of sparse receptivity, lengthy study and slow rates of conversion, youth were often quick to become Bahá'ís and did so in large numbers. By 1971-2 over half of the Canadian membership was "youth who have been in the Faith only a short time." Some of these were the maturing children of Bahá'í parents, but most were recent converts from other backgrounds.[2]

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1. See appendices 4, 5 and 6. Alberta rates through this period are not available, though probably slightly less than the national average. In 1972 approximately 7% of the approximately 2,000 new members were reported to have come from Alberta, and in April 1973 there were 484 adults in the province (9.78%), compared with 4,950 in all of Canada [NSAA].

2. Canadian Bahá'í News 255 (Dec-Jan 1972), 12. "Youth" here is probably used according to the common Bahá'í meaning of teenagers and those in their early twenties. Officially, Bahá'ís between the age of 15 and 21 are youth. Membership statistics from April 1973 show 4,950 adults and 2,674 youth under 21 in Canada [NSAA], and thus youth made up just over a third of total membership. The more general and inclusive meaning of "youth" explains the claim of 50% in 1972, and how "youth" could form new Assemblies.

Another possibility is that a large number of the '50%' mentioned in 1972 had turned 21 by April 1973 and were therefore now eligible to serve on LSAs. The Bahá'í emphasis on LSA formation and eligibility meant that until the late 1970s youth 15-21 and children were rarely recorded in published membership lists. The official age limitation of 15-21 makes it difficult to find provincial and national youth statistics before the late 1980s. Their statistical near-invisibility is a sign of the priority of Bahá'ís to establish and monitor LSAs.

Youth had always been a recognized group in Bahá'í life. There had been committees and activities for North American youth even before Alberta's first LSA in 1943. Like adult Bahá'ís, youth were encouraged to involve themselves in multi-racial and multi-ethnic activities. One North American Bahá'í youth group was encouraged by Shoghi Effendi in 1945 to associate with other groups of youth, "particularly of a different race or minority nationality, for such association will demonstrate your complete conviction of the oneness of mankind". [3] But before the 1960s and 1970s young Bahá'ís were few in number and widely scattered. In the 1950s, new members in Alberta were primarily over 21, and joined at the rate of two, four or five per year. Natives had entered in large numbers in the early 1960s, but conversions in the "white" towns and cities still came slowly. This began to change in the early 1970s with an influx of youth. This surge came to Alberta a few years later than in the United States and eastern Canada. One woman recalled that in 1968 she knew of only three active young Bahá'ís in Edmonton, and she became a member of a provincial youth committee almost by default.[4]

Like the wave of native conversions a decade earlier, youth soon constituted an extremely high percentage of the membership. And, like natives, youth were to some degree part of a different culture which required adjustment by the existing membership. But compared with the native influx, the wave of youth made much more of an impact on the Canadian community. First, youth were not living on distant reserves but in the cities and towns, enthusiastically involved in all Bahá'í activities. Second, they were quickly incorporated into the Bahá'í ethic of dispersion in a way that natives never were. Most of the new localities and Assemblies formed in the final years of the Nine Year Plan were established by young Bahá'ís in their early twenties, despite their inexperience and lack of resources. At the end of the subsequent Five Year Plan (1974-1979), the goals would be won by youth -- now older and more experienced in propagation -- actively teaching on the 'unopened' native reserves across Canada. In Alberta, most of the Bahá'í activity during the 1970s involved the presence of youth and their enthusiastic response to dispersion and propagation efforts across the whole province.

The new young members were generally more mobile than their older coreligionists and often eager to make a contribution to the establishment of new localities and new Assemblies. In this arena, the ever-present needs and established practices of the main Bahá'í community meshed well with a general ethic of young people at the time that they could (and would) change the world. For many Bahá'í youth, the expansion of their religion was the means to bring about world peace and a new and just system of world government. They enthusiastically participated in propagation activities, travelling, and summer schools. Many moved to specific towns in order to 'open' a new locality, help form a

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3. Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 14 Oct. 1945, repr. in The Universal House of Justice, ed., The Individual and Teaching (Thornhill, Ont: Bahá'í Community of Canada, 1977), 26.

4. Amy Singh, interview with the author, Bluesky, Alberta, 20 Mar. 1992.

new LSA, or maintain an existing LSA in a community where the membership had fallen below nine.[5]

The rush of new LSAs and new Bahá'ís required new means of administrative direction and monitoring. Regional Teaching Committees, a feature of North American administration since the first Seven Year Plan of Shoghi Effendi, were strengthened. Alberta was divided into Southern and Northern Alberta Goals Committees (SAGC and NAGC).[6] In 1972 the NSA formed the Assembly Resource Team whose aim was to "greatly heighten the community's awareness of the station and functions of the local Spiritual Assembly." [7] A National Youth Committee was set up in 1975, a move which the NSA announced as "something of a departure for the administration of the Faith here in Canada." [8] One of the committee's first tasks was a national youth conference held in Calgary in December 1975.[9]

Youth changed the nature of the Canadian and Albertan Bahá'í communities by their very numbers, the direct approach they took to teaching, and their enthusiastic response to the ethic of expansion. In the same way that youth were changing the Christian churches, Bahá'í youth were seeking different approaches to worship. In Red Deer, for example, there were numerous all-night prayer sessions, sometimes while driving around the city.[10] A 1972 conference at Sylvan Lake, Alberta entitled 'Towards a New Aesthetic' examined new and more personalized ways to change the atmosphere at the community Feasts. Youth returned to Calgary and hosted the next meeting, using music, candles, flowers, fruit, and a closing group hug to music. A year later St. Albert was also searching for ways to make Feasts "more creative".[11] In many cases, youth helped to establish or maintain the link between Bahá'ís of different races. For example in 1970 Enoch Olinga, a black Bahá'í from Africa and a Hand of the Cause, visited Cardston and the Blood reserve. The Cardston group later reported that the meeting began awkwardly, "with everyone a bit shy and not knowing how to get started. Fortunately the Lethbridge youth broke the ice with music . . ." [12] One young Bahá'í living in High River in the

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5. New LSAs can form at any time. Existing LSAs are re-elected in April of each year, and their mandate continues for one year. Thus an LSA can exist on a temporary basis until the following April, even if the number of members over 21 drops below the minimum of 9. They do, however, require a quorum of 5 to meet.

6. After 1974 the name of the Goals Committees was changed to Regional Goals Committees . "Regional" has been omitted below for the sake of simplicity.

7. NSA to Assembly Resource Team members, 28 Mar. 1975 [NSAA]. In 1975 this team developed into the Assembly and Community Development Committee, which functions today under the name of the Assembly Development Committee.

8. NSA letter to all LSAs 13 Aug. 1975.

9. NAGC Rising Star #8 (Jan 1976) [AA].

10. Dave and Pam Sherwin, interview with the author, Red Deer, Alberta, 20 Jan. 1991.

11. Canadian Bahá'í News 259 (June-July 1972) and 260 (August 1972); LSA of St. Albert to Ted Anderson, 6 June 1973 [AA].

12. Canadian Bahá'í News 244 (Nov 1970), 2.

mid-1970s recalled that a dozen or more new Bahá'í youth participated in many activities with the native community on the Eden Valley reserve. "For a while the feeling was really good -- young and old, white and native -- despite our unsureness of what exactly to do." [13]

To bring their religion to the attention of others, youth used methods which had not been seen in Alberta outside native reserves. Their enthusiastic teaching challenged the usual Canadian reticence and strong aversion among North American Bahá'ís to any hints of proselytizing. "[I]mpenetrable barriers have been broken or overpassed by eager teams of young Bahá'ís . . . presenting the Divine Message in ways acceptable to their own generation" wrote the Universal House of Justice in 1973.[14] Urban 'white' communities were beginning to experience the mass teaching efforts which had brought many converts among South American Indians, blacks of the southern U.S., and natives in Alaska. These projects were similar in some ways to the less stringent standards of knowledge expected in native teaching during the 1950s and 1960s. But "direct teaching", as it came to be called, was now primarily aimed at youth who were "directly invited" to join during public meetings.

In Alberta, information about the Bahá'í Faith was presented by youth in an atmosphere of emotion, warmth, music and energy. Artistic materials such as posters, films, and slides were commonly used. In 1969 an Edmonton Bahá'í wrote to Ted Anderson in Whitehorse, asking if he would send a copy of a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at age 25. "[W]e feel it would have an appeal to the youth who may look at it, especially because of the beautiful flowing hair and beard." The picture was intended for use in the Bahá'í booth during Exhibition Week.[15] Newspaper coverage of Bahá'í weddings proved to be a good means of publicity as increasing numbers of youth married.[16] T-shirts and lapel buttons were popular, and other visual techniques were attempted.[17] In 1973 a group of seven young Bahá'ís formed a drama group, relocated to Lethbridge, and presented a Bahá'í play in a short tour that summer.[18]

Youth-oriented music was another important feature of direct teaching. Music, particularly when used in worship, was encouraged by the central Bahá'í figures, but as usual

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13. Duncan Hedley, interview with the author, Beaumont, Alberta, 20 Feb 1992.

14. Annual message, Canadian Bahá'í News 269 (May 1973), 3.

15. Carol Found to Ted Anderson, 12 Nov. 1969 [AA].

16. The Prairies Youth Committee stated that "It looks like 1968 is going to be a big year for Bahá'í marriages." [Bahá'íway, 7th edition (26 Feb 1968) [AA]. The Lethbridge Herald (4 Sept 1968), for example, gave much space and a photo of an interracial (black and white) wedding in the city.

17. One young Bahá'í in Grande Prairie painted a nine-pointed star and the word Bahá'í on the sides of his car, reported by John Higgins, interview with the author, Leduc, Alberta, 8 Dec. 1991.

18. Jonathan Dixon, interview with the author, Edmonton, Alberta, 20 Oct. 1992.

they prescribed no standardized or ritual forms. Chanting prayers was the common style of Iranians, and the early western communities often borrowed or adapted Christian hymns or wrote songs in similar styles. However, by the mid-twentieth century, the use of music in Bahá'í functions was slowly declining as LSAs drew further away from church forms. The revitalization of music by youth of the 1960s and 1970s in Bahá'í gatherings and teaching events was thus not only a change in usual practice but at times a cultural shock as well. Performances and recorded music were used almost everywhere that Bahá'í youth were present. Some events were closely tied to tours by Bahá'í musicians, notably professionals such as Seals and Croft, and a cross-Canada tour by amateur groups such as Synergy in 1971 and Jalál in 1972. A number of older Bahá'ís had doubts about the dignity of presentation and performance in youth music. It was not long before the Universal House of Justice released a short compilation of Bahá'í texts on music in order to provide both encouragement and guidance "[i]n these days when music and singing are playing such an important and effective part in the teaching work".[19]

The NSA at this time was trying to broaden the technique and the tolerance of propagation in urban Canada. Direct teaching in the cities was a departure from the usual practice of long investigation through home 'firesides' and intellectual study. An editorial in Bahá'í Canada noted this background and stated that, as a result, "many of us have developed a feeling that a respectable period of study is the normal or proper way to accept the Message of Bahá'u'lláh. We suspect quick declarations." The writer pointed out Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice's approval of mass conversion in which "very large numbers of people accept the Faith on contact. It is clear that we will have to make radical changes in our approach to those we teach, and perhaps also to our teaching methods".[20] While the NSA recommended appropriate consideration of the convert's understanding, "there exist certain persons who are . . . ready to accept the Faith immediately upon hearing of it, without have to be convinced of its truth through discussions, meetings, etc." The ideal was to find the balance between "undue reticence and ill-advised action."[21] Such programs had been carried out for over ten years on Alberta reserves and rural areas of the underdeveloped world. Now this approach was entering urban Canadian communities for the first time, and aimed at an age group rather than ethnic or racial groups.

In some areas of the country such approaches were quite successful. More than a thousand new Bahá'ís joined during a campaign in Quebec. Many urban Alberta Bahá'ís,

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19. The Universal House of Justice, ed., quoted in introduction to Bahá'í Writings on Music (Oakham, England: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, n.d. [1973]), iii. The desired balance was sought in Bahá'u'lláh's statement that music was "a ladder by which souls may ascend to the realm on high. Change it not into wings for self and passion." (Kitab-i-Aqdas, quoted in Bahá'í Writings on Music, 1).

20. Bahá'í Canada 245 (Dec 1970), 2. The whole issue is on direct teaching, including reports of a campaign in the Yukon. The new members list shows more than 200 from this project.

21. "Policy Statement on Direct Teaching in Canada," October 1971, 1. This was printed in both the May and June-July 1972 issues of Canadian Bahá'í News.

however, were not comfortable with direct teaching. Concerns began to surface during and after the 1972 national convention held in Edmonton. Teams of youth, primarily from Manitoba, took the name the 'Army of Light'. These teams were involved in active promotion, including handing out invitations on the street and door-to-door, and holding the type of public meetings described above. Such campaigns brought new members quickly but many Bahá'ís, invoking long-established advice from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi against proselytizing or giving offence, rejected this approach. The LSAs of Edmonton and Red Deer temporarily halted any such activity in their jurisdictions. The NSA replied that Canada and the U.S. were "experimenting under closely supervised conditions" with new proclamation techniques which should in all cases be supervised by a Bahá'í institution. Proselytization, they argued, must be considered on its appropriateness to the particular locality, age group or ethnic group.[22]

In 1972-3 a group of youth known as the "Five Cities" Team carried out a direct teaching campaign across the prairies, reaching Alberta in February 1974. Edmonton, like the other cities, established a temporary "Action Center". Here coordinators kept track of the team's activities and held meetings for new Bahá'ís and those interested in investigating further. The team also worked in the surrounding communities of St. Albert, Sherwood Park and Leduc. A report in a Bahá'í newsletter summarized the goals and methods of the Five Cities project:

> (1) Humanity is made up of two groups; the informed and the un-informed, we are the informed and our duty is to teach. (2) Believers in Bahá'u'lláh are like postmen; their only duty is to deliver the message, but Bahá'ís must also invite. (3) The Faith must be simple and taught from the heart. (4) If for a second you believe someone will not become a Bahá'í, then surely they will not. (5) Teaching must be short and sweet. (6) We should not regret if someone does not respond to the invitation, for the sake of God we accept the response. (7) We are obligated by Bahá'u'lláh to teach and to invite the contacts to become Bahá'ís. [23]

These seven points highlight attitudes prevalent among Alberta Bahá'ís since the 1940s: belief in the 'rightness' of their faith, the universal obligation to teach others, and the rejection of pressure or inducement for potential converts. But the direct teaching approach introduced the controversial idea of an obligation to directly invite seekers to join. This had been a part of the successes on native reserves a decade ago, and was being used in other areas of the world at this time.[24] But the idea of invitation was a notable change from a long-standing practice of waiting until an individual voluntarily

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22. LSA of Edmonton to NSA (received 29 May 1972); LSA of Red Deer to NSA 6 June 1972; NSA to LSA of Edmonton 13 June 1972 and 14 June 1972 (all NSAA).

23. NAGC Bulletin #10 (n.d.: Feb 1974), no page numbers (AA).

24. Direct teaching methods by youth in Alberta cities was strikingly similar to propagation methods used by a team of six American Bahá'ís in Jamaica, reported in Canadian Bahá'í News 250 (Apr 1971). The team travelled to a selected town and "went from house to house, and spoke to everyone they met in the streets." Meetings held in the evenings brought people "to see a slide program on the Faith, to discuss further . . . and to sing Bahá'í songs". The result was 50 enrollments on the first day, and around 25 at each evening meeting. In four days the team brought in 200 new Bahá'ís, and then moved on to surrounding villages.

expressed a desire to join. Invitation, to some, crossed into proselytization. The work of the Five Cities team in Edmonton and Calgary resulted in a number of quick conversions and the same ambivalent reaction from the community at large. One participant later recalled: "We blew the lid off so many conventionalities. We proved to the communities that they could teach -- if they were sincere, if they went about it with dedication and devotion. And in every city we proved that." [25]

As with native converts in the early 1960s, followup and continuity were a problem. The NSA had originally hoped that the percentage of dropouts after direct teaching campaigns would be no more than "with the traditional teaching methods." By 1973, however, they were aware that the higher number of enrollments was being followed by a higher number of resignations.[26] These losses may reflect a natural youthful curiosity and subsequent change of interest, or indicate difficulties with Bahá'í prohibitions against alcohol, recreational drug use, and sex outside marriage. More likely it stemmed from the common religious phenomenon of 'backsliding' after emotional conversion campaigns. Bahá'í membership losses in Canada have been greatest among all groups who entered quickly in large waves: natives, Quebecois, and youth.

Since the 1970s, direct teaching has not been used often by Alberta Bahá'ís. Occasional urban campaigns have been tried with some success, opposition has arisen, and activity has subsided. In general, this kind of propagation has been more acceptable to urban Bahá'ís when used on native reserves. Urban projects on the whole remain muted and circumspect.[27] In this instance, encouragement from the centres of the religion was not fully accepted by the Alberta members. In the area of dispersion, however, the Alberta youth were integrated into existing methods of expansion. In 1971, there were twelve LSAs, fourteen groups between one and nine members, and 24 isolated members, a total of 50 localities. By 1978 these had increased to 27 LSAs, 55 groups, and 70 isolated Bahá'ís, a total of 152 localities.[28] Many of the urban LSAs and groups had been founded and maintained by a shifting population of young Bahá'ís in their early twenties, and a very high proportion of the new native localities had been established through travelling teams of youth with a few older mentors.

As always, the end of Plans in 1973 and 1979 were times of much activity and effort, with particular attention paid to making sure new or small communities had at least nine adult members present by April of each year. At the end of the Nine Year Plan in 1973

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25. Jonathon Dixon interview, 20 Oct. 1991.

26. Canadian Bahá'í News 261 (Sept 1972), 3; NSA to all LSAs 23 Oct. 1973 (NSAA).

27. The author attended a concert by the Jalál group in Ontario in 1972 and notes the contrast to recent concert tours by Bahá'í musicians in Edmonton (a young group called Groundwork at the University of Alberta in 1989, and Seals and Crofts at the Jubilee auditorium in 1990). Those present were quietly invited to talk afterwards with the musicians, but no direct or indirect invitations to join were made. To my knowledge, no one expressed a wish to join at either of these latter events.

28. Five of the "isolated" localities may have had more than one resident Bahá'í; exact status is unknown. See Appendix 11.

the priority in Canada was to maintain the number of 200 LSAs achieved two years earlier. In February 1973 the Northern Alberta Goals Committee noted that 60 of these Canadian LSAs were endangered, and called on Alberta Bahá'ís to teach and/or relocate.[29] Many of those who did so were in their early twenties; mobile, willing to sacrifice for a cause, and old enough to serve on Bahá'í Assemblies. It is not surprising, therefore, that a list at the NSA office dated June 1973 recorded not only the number of adults in each region of the country, but also the numbers of youth who would turn 21 before April 1974 and thus be eligible to serve on LSAs in the next year. The NSA very likely shared this information with LSAs and Goals Committees across Canada. Five months later the NAGC newsletter published the names of twelve of these youth in the northern Alberta area.[30]

For 1973-4 the NAGC's goals were to return Leduc and Red Deer to at least nine members by April 1974, to try to get nine in Grande Prairie (then at four) and Hinton (one), and to establish at least one Bahá'í in Wainwright, St. Paul, and Whitecourt.[31] The first three of these goals were achieved by young members who relocated. After a year of consolidation and planning, the Universal House of Justice's Five Year Plan (1974-1979) called for 300 LSAs and 1500 localities. The northern Alberta region alone was assigned 67 localities. The NAGC stated that the Bahá'í Faith was obviously entering a new stage of development:

> Until the present day, Bahá'ís, generally speaking, have had only footholds in the cities and centres of major population. It is now necessary to move out of the cities to the smaller rural towns and areas; meeting the needs of a new stratum of society. Areas will have to be opened beyond commuting distances from cities, and new job areas will have to be explored. [32]

The Southern Alberta Goals Committee's priorities were maintaining the LSAs of Cardston and Lethbridge, establishing groups in Fort MacLeod and Medicine Hat, and localities wherever possible. The NSA assigned locality and LSA goals to each of the five non-native LSAs in northern Alberta.[33] Mobile youth were a great asset for these widespread goals. St. Albert assisted one of its young members to move to its goal of Westlock, where he remained for three years until the end of the Plan despite tremendous isolation and difficulties in being accepted by the townspeople. Another youth moved from Dawson Creek, B.C. to Grande Prairie to Swan Hills to Leduc between December

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29. NAGC Bulletin #10 (n.d.: Feb 1973) [AA].

30. List from NSAA; NAGC Bulletin [n.d.: mailed 2 Dec 1973] [AA].

31. Southern Albe ta: [AA]. Northern Alberta: NAGC Bulletin May 1973; Sept 1973; and n.d. (probably Dec 1973) [AA].

32. NAGC unnamed newsletter, May 1974 [AA].

33. The LSAs were asked to open one locality in 1975-6 and establish an Assembly by 1979. The assignments were Peace River (to be handled by Grande Prairie), Westlock (St. Albert), Camrose (Strathcona County), Rocky Mountain House (Red Deer), and Edson (Edmonton, with assistance from St. Albert and Strathcona County). NAGC Rising Star #1 (Mar 1975) [AA].

1973 and March 1974.[34] By April 1975 he was in Grande Prairie again to help keep its LSA.[35]

Such mobility had its price. Keeping at least nine Bahá'ís over the age of 21 in any of the new Assembly towns was a constant problem. The first LSA in Leduc was formed in April 1973 by ten young adults, all of whom moved there specifically for that purpose, eight of them in the last month. Within four months, half the community had left for other goals: three to "the north" and two to New Guinea. The experience of two young Bahá'ís is a good illustration of that period. Robert Swart of Calgary was attending the University of Alberta in Edmonton in 1972. He often used to hitchhike back and forth between the two cities, and on many occasions was given rides by Bahá'ís going to or returning from the Bahá'í property and summer school west of Sylvan Lake. Becoming intrigued with the things he heard, and the openness of the young Bahá'ís, he visited the school and decided to join. In 1973 he shared a house in the Calder area of Edmonton with three other young Bahá'í men, and a year later moved back to Calgary where he was one of about six youth. But Swart soon drifted away from the religion. Looking back many years later, he said that for him the religion had been philosophically attractive, but not as a practice. He claims to still strongly support Bahá'í ideals, but stated that joining "was something you did as a teenager; it was partly social." [36]

Another young man who shared the house with Swart was John Higgins. Originally from Edson, Higgins had first met Bahá'ís in 1973 at macrobiotic cooking classes in Edmonton. He attended a few meetings at the Calder house to learn more about the religion. One of the four men living there pioneered to Grande Prairie that year and, when Higgins moved to Edmonton for a course at NAIT, he asked if he could stay at the house. One of the residents said that they preferred everyone in the house to be a Bahá'í and asked him if he would like to join. Higgins' response, as he remembered it, was simple: "I said 'sure'." [37] At the end of his course in the spring of 1974 he was asked by the secretary of the Northern Alberta Goals Committee to consider moving to Grande Prairie to help make nine Bahá'ís for an Assembly. Higgins agreed and became a member of the first LSA there. Two of the nine left the city almost immediately afterwards, and Higgins spent the summer at a macrobiotics centre in Boston. Although he was asked to stay at the centre, he returned to Grande Prairie out of a sense of commitment to the LSA. The Bahá'ís were actively teaching, using print and radio publicity and developing interfaith connections with Christians. But Higgins remembers the administrative duties as "being a real chore." Only one of the remaining members

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34. NAGC Bulletin #9 (Jan 1974), page c; ibid, unnumbered (Mar 1974), 8 [AA].

35. John Higgins interview, 8 Dec. 1991.

36. Robert Swart, phone interview with the author, Calgary, 21 Feb. 1991.

37. John Higgins interview, 8 Dec. 1991.

had any Assembly experience and the group relied heavily on him for direction. "All of us were pretty green", Higgins recalled. "I think they sent me out too soon." [38]

The Grande Prairie LSA was maintained in April of 1975 due to one new member from the city and two more arrivals from central Alberta, one of whom Higgins married that year. The next year, however, was difficult for the small group due to three resignations and numerous personal problems. Higgins stated that these problems "absorbed almost our whole year." One new Bahá'í came in during this year but they were unable to reform the LSA in April 1976 due to a lack of numbers. These difficulties appear to have reinforced, rather than dampened Higgins' commitment to the ethic of dispersion. He and his wife subsequently spent two years (1977-1979) in Iceland, a Canadian international pioneer goal, where they helped in the formation of four LSAs. Higgins spent most of the next ten years in Edmonton and pioneered yet again to Leduc in 1989 to maintain the Assembly there.

Other new Assemblies experienced similar difficulties in the 1970s. The Leduc LSA was lost for one year in the mid-1970s, and its continuation was a worry every year. Cardston had an LSA for only two years from 1972 to 1974, and has not had an LSA since.[39] One Bahá'í couple moved to High River for employment reasons in 1973 and was alone there for about three years. An LSA was formed in the late 1970s by more 'pioneers'; only two or three members were from High River itself. The community experienced high turnover and, like Cardston, soon dropped below nine, and has remained at group status since.[40] In September 1975 Medicine Hat had five youth, only one of whom was 21; by April 1976 it was down to two (a married couple), and by December 1976 back up to seven.[41] Some of this movement was for education at universities in Lethbridge, Calgary or Edmonton, resulting in active campus Bahá'í organizations there. Other moves were to pioneer to more urgent areas. Red Deer lost six members in 1976 alone; two to the Caribbean, two to Sylvan Lake, and one each to Belgium and Yukon.[42] By November 1975 the number of Canadian LSAs had dropped from 200 to 182, and localities from 950 to 815. Seven months later the LSAs had fallen to 177. [43] Clearly, the Canadian Bahá'ís were getting ever further from their assigned goal of 300 LSAs and 1500 localities by the end of the Five Year Plan in 1979.

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38. John Higgins interview, 8 Dec. 1991.

39. Even today the Leduc Assembly is often maintained only by individuals and couples moving in, usually from Edmonton. Cardston has five adult members today.

40. Jean Hedley, phone interview with the author, High River, Alberta, 3 Mar. 1991.

41. Enid Wrate to Reg Wilson, October 1976; Wilson to LSA of Lethbridge 4 Apr. 1976; Ted Anderson to Counsellor Lloyd Gardner 23 Dec. 1976 [all AA].

42. Ted Anderson to Lloyd Gardner, 23 Dec. 1976 [AA].

43. NSA to all LSAs 20 Nov. 1975; NTC to NSA and other institutions 9 June 1976 [NSAA].

In Alberta, the urban LSAs outside Edmonton and Calgary were functioning, if unsteady; the native LSAs were in most cases moribund.[44] In 1974 approximately one half of the Bahá'ís in the province were native, but in most cases their contact with non-natives was sporadic and their internal development was slow or non-existent. In the first month of the Five Year Plan (May 1974) the NAGC had requested that Bahá'ís "go to the reserves for the purpose of establishing personal friendships with Native Peoples, but not to go onto the reserves simply to teach." The NAGC called for 45 individuals to commit themselves to particular reserves.[45] A similar approach was followed in southern Alberta, particularly aimed at linking up with and supporting the steadfast families of the Knowltons on Peigan and the Royals on Blackfoot. Calgary organized five teams to visit the Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan, Stoney and Sarcee reserves.[46]

Many individuals in the province gave heroic effort in travelling, visiting, and organizing throughout the Plan, but the successes of the early 1960s and early 1970s seemed to be slipping away. Peigan reserve, the first to be opened to the Bahá'í Faith in Alberta, lost its LSA in 1974, and it was reported that "Blood and Blackfoot LSAs are apparently not functioning or are very weak." [47] The Blood LSA was lost in 1976, and the Samson LSA was temporarily lost under pressure from a hostile chief, despite having approximately 40 adult members in the mid-1970s.[48] Auxiliary Board Member Ted Anderson reported in 1977 that northern Alberta in particular was "the toughest assignment" of his whole area (which also included northern B.C., Yukon, and the Mackenzie district) in part due to "sad neglect of Indian teaching".[49]

The administrative institutions had to face the reality that native Bahá'ís were not like white Bahá'ís, and were not setting up Assemblies and 'deepening' through reading. In 1978 the NTC perceptively noted that even a consistent outpouring of teaching and visits by non-native Bahá'ís probably would not have produced a different result, and probably would not do so in the future. Two things were missing: better intercultural understanding, and a body of native Bahá'ís who would, in Shoghi Effendi's phrase, "carry the message to their own people". For the first need, the NTC proposed to sponsor intercultural councils and gatherings as a way of giving "formal recognition to the unique and distinctive character of the Native Bahá'í community." For the second, the NTC sought

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44. This was also true elsewhere in Canada. In 1969 a high-level meeting to assess native teaching had noted that the Canadian native LSAs "are not meeting -- the assemblies simply are not functioning." ["Minutes of a Meeting to Evaluate the Continental Conference on Indigenous Teaching, September 1, 1969", 1 [AA].]

45. NAGC unnamed newsletter, May 1974 [AA].

46. Ted Anderson to Lloyd Gardner, 23 Dec. 1976 [AA].

47. Ted Anderson to Continental Board of Counsellors 19 Dec. 1974 [AA].

48. A membership list from 1975 records 41 [AA].

49. Ted Anderson to Ron Parsons, his replacement as Auxiliary Board Member, 28 Feb. 1977 [AA].

to encourage more Bahá'ís to develop ties of friendship and trust in order to "have a sound relationship with Native Bahá'ís and . . . help bridge the two cultures." [50]

But as the Five Year Plan drew to a close, there was no time to develop this sound relationship. In 1978 the NSA deliberately selected natives as the means to fulfil statistical goals.[51] As a result of this focus, native teaching occurred in many provinces, but the main bulk of effort and conversions again took place on the prairies. Once again teams of Bahá'ís were formed to travel to reserves, make presentations, and directly invite people to join. Once again the lists of new members printed in Bahá'í Canada began to fill up with native names and locations, most in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Of course the most easily accessible reserves had been reached already; many of the new LSAs were formed on smaller reserves further away from the larger centres of Edmonton and Calgary, particularly in northern Alberta.[52] This tactic was highly successful in terms of numbers of converts, localities and LSAs formed. Once again the goals of a teaching Plan had been achieved with a last-minute rush of effort. In 1963 the statistical targets had been attained primarily through the enrollment of large numbers of Indians, particularly in Alberta and Saskatchewan. In 1973 the goals were achieved through a large number of youth enrollments all over Canada. 1979 saw a combination of youth and natives, again mostly on the prairies.

During the Five Year Plan from 1974 to 1979 the Alberta Bahá'ís more than doubled their LSAs, quadrupled the number of groups numbering less than nine, and tripled their total localities from 50 to over 150. The young converts of the 1970s had for the most part either dropped out or become firmly integrated into the ethic of dispersion through teaching, travelling, and/or pioneering inside and outside the province. Some of the resultant Assemblies and groups were unstable, and native LSAs in particular were weak. But the effects of the participation of youth in dispersion efforts extended beyond numbers of localities. The urgent nature of striving for goals encouraged concomitant activities -- not discussed here -- of scriptural study, children's programs and other forms of community development. And by deliberately encouraging the establishment of many small communities, the Bahá'ís effectively increased the percentage of their members who had gained experience in propagation and administration.[53]

The last-hour achievements of the Five Year Plan were followed by a familiar pattern of loss of contact and high dropout rate, and a decline, re-establishment and increase of

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50. NTC report to NSA 24 Mar. 1978, 2-3 [NSAA].

51. A NSA letter to individuals identified as capable and willing to undertake native teaching appealed to them to "give first priority to taking the Faith to the Indian people during the remaining months of the Five Year Plan." (21 July 1978, [AA].)

52. See Appendix 11 for locations.

53. The role of NSA educational programs should also be noted. The NSA stated to the Assembly Resource Team in 1975 that their work had "greatly heighten[ed] the community's awareness" of Assemblies and had produced "a corps of highly qualified believers" educated in LSA administration and consultation techniques. (NSA to all Assembly Resource Team Members 28 Mar. 1975 [AA].)

LSAs and localities. Bahá'í membership continued to increase, but at a much slower rate in the early 1980s. After gaining 2,380 new members in 1980 there were just over 800 for the next two years, and the annual number of new members has remained in the 500-700 range almost every year since. "Some of that decrease", the National Teaching Committee noted in 1981, "is due to less intense native teaching on reserves".[54] But the cycle of peaks and lows was less extreme in the subsequent Seven and Six Year Plans. Overall, the number of Alberta LSAs has been maintained and slowly increased through the 1980s up until the present. This was in part due to youth who gradually became settled in their chosen communities as their age and family responsibilities increased. But the Canadian community was also aided by the unexpected arrival of thousands of Iranian Bahá'ís after the Iranian revolution in 1979. Their example, numbers, distribution and dedication greatly assisted the Canadian Bahá'ís to achieve the goals of the Seven Year Plan (1979-1986) and the Six Year Plan (1986-1992). The arrival of more than 300 Iranians in Alberta was a third, smaller wave of members from another culture. And, as had occurred with the wave of youth, the Bahá'ís were able to successfully integrate this group into the existing ethic of dispersion across the province.

54. NTC report 24 Sept. 1981 (NSAA).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE THIRD WAVE: IRANIANS

The arrival of large numbers of Iranian Bahá'ís in Canada was the direct result of political events in Iran, the scene of the beginnings of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions. Following the 1979 revolution, the approximately 300,000 Bahá'ís in Iran came under severe persecution by the new fundamentalist Islamic government. This attack was only the latest of a long series of hostilities dating from the 1850s. Because of the Muslim belief that Muhammad was the last of God's Prophets, the Bahá'í Faith has been labelled a heresy and its Iranian followers as apostates. Iranian Bahá'ís are thus extremely vulnerable to discrimination and violence -- from clergy, neighbours and government, particularly during times of political crisis and social unrest.[1] The post-revolution persecution was by far the most organized and tenacious, described by outside observers as a deliberate campaign of extermination "which has included 'administrative strangulation', the destruction of the economic base of the Bahá'í community, and the terrorization of its membership." [2] Thousands fled across the borders into Pakistan and Turkey where they were housed in huge United Nations refugee camps. Hundreds more were pioneering and/or working overseas and found themselves trapped outside Iran by the revolution. As their visas expired they faced expulsion from their resident countries and probable imprisonment and execution upon their return home.

Through a combination of planning by the NSA and cooperation from the federal government, many of the refugees and pioneers ended up in Canada. In May 1981 there were 750 Iranian Bahá'ís in the whole country, mostly in the vicinity of Toronto and Vancouver. In Alberta there were only 25, all located in Calgary and Sherwood Park. Four months later the numbers had risen to 1,072 and 34 respectively,[3] and it was obvious that thousands more would require haven. The NSA began to sponsor refugees, assisted by funds from Bahá'ís around the world, channelled through the Universal House of Justice. In 1982 the NSA organized an Iranian Affairs Desk to handle the rising number of cases.[4] In April of that same year the NSA signed a generous agreement with

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1. See J. Douglas Martin, "The Persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran, 1844-1984," Bahá'í Studies vols. 12/13, 1984; Moojan Momen, ed., The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), and Heshmat Moayyad, ed., The Bahá'í Faith and Islam (Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 1990).

2. From a report on persecutions of religious minorities in Iran, commissioned by the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, 12 Sept. 1979, paraphrased in the pamphlet "People Are Asking" (Thornhill, Ontario: Bahá'íCanada Publications, n.d.). See also Geoffrey Nash, Iran's Secret Pogrom (Suffolk: Neville Spearman, 1982), and Bahá'í International Community, The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority (New York: Bahá'í International Community, 1981).

3. Bahá'í Canada 4,1 (Mar-May 1982), 11-12; NSAA.

4. Three years later the Universal House of Justice gave this department overall responsibility for coordinating Iranian refugee programs around the world. Much of the subsequent successes of the programs was the result of the work of the head of the department, Mona Mojgani. Her efforts and adventures would be a good case study of both a unique immigration program and a unique individual operating under tremendous pressure and no small danger to herself.

the federal Department of Immigration which provided federal sponsorship of Bahá'ís anywhere in the world considered to be in danger if they were forced to return to Iran. Notably, it was representatives of the NSA, rather than the Immigration officials, who were allowed to affirm the status of Bahá'í refugees.[5]

By this time approximately twenty of an anticipated 500 to 1000 refugees had been admitted. The NSA and the immigration department worried about the creation of large and poorly integrated groups in the major cities of Canada. The NSA instituted a firm policy of deliberate dispersion. The Iranian Affairs department and the refugee committees assigned the incoming refugees to smaller Bahá'í communities all over the country. An NSA condition of sponsorship was that the Iranians had to agree to stay wherever they were posted for at least one year. Through this dispersion policy, the NSA hoped to address not only the rural-urban distribution of this influx, but also their overall distribution within the country. In 1981 and 1982 Alberta had just over 3% of the Iranians in Canada, and the percentage was even lower in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. A regional committee to assist incoming refugees in western Canada was duly set up in Edmonton. The NSA's policy of deliberate dispersion of the Iranian immigrants was effective in four ways: first, Canadian Bahá'ís were reinvigorated through personal contact with those who had suffered the effects of the persecutions; second, more Canadians were able to assist with the costs and work of settlement and integration; third, the refugees aided Canada's expansion goals by reinforcing smaller communities; and fourth, the Iranians were temporarily prevented from forming large, poorly integrated groups in the major cities.

It is, of course, a religious truism that the blood of martyrs waters the seeds of faith. The examples of individuals who went to their deaths because they refused to renounce their faith were an obvious source of strength for Iranian Bahá'ís inside and outside Iran. The martyrdoms also encouraged Bahá'ís all over the world to sacrifice and intensify their teaching efforts. The cover of a special 1981 issue of Bahá'í Canada contained the challenge: "The only way we can compensate is to say, 'they are dying, but I can do this'." "This" was specified as enrollments, overseas pioneering, and financial contributions. Assistance would come from the martyrs, said the NSA: "They gave their lives for the triumph of the Cause; they yearn to assist us in achieving its goals; and they are possessed of the power to do so." [6] The theme for increased teaching efforts was known as "Redeeming the Ordeal." [7] One Bahá'í wrote in 1984 that the Iranian persecutions

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5. See Refuge: Canada's Newsletter on Refugees 2, 1 (Sept/Oct 1982) on the uniqueness of the Bahá'í sponsorship program.

6. Bahá'í Canada Special Edition (Sept-Oct 1981), cover and page 3. The whole issue concerns the Iranian martyrs, including lists of those executed and murdered, powerful stories of mob violence and steadfast responses, effects of the persecution on children, and excerpts from the last letters of Bahá'ís executed by the Iranian government.

7. This was not the first time such a link of teaching and martyrdom had been made. This theme is explicitly presented in many Bahá'í books and is implicit in any history or mention of the beginnings of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions. In 1955, during a serious outbreak of persecution, Shoghi Effendi wrote that the Bahá'ís should be "spurred on by the realization of the great and varied sacrifices being made . . . by the great mass of their long-suffering brethren in Bahá'u'lláh's native land". (Shoghi Effendi to NSA of Canada 16 July 1955, Messages to Canada ([Thornhill, Ont: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1965), 55.

and executions served to stabilize and consolidate the diverse global Bahá'í membership after many years of expansion:

> When it entered the present crisis, the Bahá'í community had just passed through an extended period of rapid growth, particularly in developing lands. The expansion has produced a membership drawn from a great variety of races, cultures, and social backgrounds, all held together solely by devotion to the founder of their religion. It would be difficult to envisage anything more certain to awaken a sense of solidarity in this heterogeneous body of people than the collective experience of defending their coreligionists against what is perceived as a brutal and totally unprovoked attack. [8]

As a group the Iranians experienced the same problems as any displaced group of refugees: the language barrier, the 'coldness' of Canadians, the sense of loss of property and culture, the sense of guilt over friends and relatives who had been executed or were still in prison. There were also generational differences. Older Bahá'ís missed their old culture and disliked the changes North America produced in their children and grandchildren. Many continue to hope that their stay in Canada is only temporary and that they will someday be allowed to return. Younger Iranians had far less difficulty with learning a new language and adapting to the new culture. The emigration cost them many years of their lives, however. Many with years of university were forced to start over with English classes and mature high school classes, and then begin university again. Those of the middle generation were and are caught to some degree between the older and younger groups: balancing care of older relatives and raising children in a culture they believe to be sorely lacking in faith and morals. The strong emphasis on individualism in North America is a problem because their previous culture, and their ideal future Bahá'í culture, include a strong sense of community. "Most of the time", said one, "I feel like I'm living in a vacuum." [9] Another said that he still has to change his culture three or four times a day, depending upon his encounters with AngloSaxon Canadians and Iranians who are older, younger, or his own age.[10]

Within the Alberta Bahá'í community, the integration of significant numbers of people from a different culture was similar to the arrival of youth a decade earlier: a mixture of excitement, concern and occasional resistance to differences of behaviour. Like youth in the 1970s, the Iranians wrought changes in the Alberta groups. Their presence served to rekindle or maintain an attitude of sacrifice and effort among the general membership; they served as a living reminder of much greater sacrifices taking place in the world. Many of those interviewed spoke of how the Iranians had impressed them with their hospitality, devotion, emphasis on prayer, and other personal forms of faith. As one put

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8. J. Douglas Martin, "The Bahá'í Faith in Its Second Century," The Bahá'í Faith and Islam, 68.

9. Shepar Mohtadi, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 30 May 1992.

10. Sia Samimi, interview with the author, Calgary, Alberta, 30 May 1992.

it, they were "Bahá'ís of the heart" rather than focused only on administration.[11] Of course in many cases the local LSAS benefitted from those with years of experience on the LSAs of large congregations in Iran and the LSAs in other countries.

Iranians also brought different attitudes towards the idea of a community. In large part due to the persecution and hostility of their home culture, Iranian Bahá'ís have become closely connected within their religious communities through family ties and a stronger sense of responsibility for other members. It was difficult for them to understand how Assemblies of larger centres could 'neglect' members who were not actively participating. One Edmonton Assembly member said in 1991 that he had seen this issue come up many, many times in the last decade, and that it was always an Iranian who mentioned it.

The integration process was helped by the Bahá'í commitment to cultural diversity, and genuine effort on both sides to cooperate in expansion activities. The NSA sponsored annual Persian/English Integration Conferences, the stated purpose of which was "to assist the speedy integration of the two cultures for the winning of the goals." [12] Like youth a decade earlier, Iranian Bahá'ís helped to bridge the cultural gap between the white and native communities. Iranians, particularly those with experience in indigenous proclamation in the developing world were quickly added to Indian teaching teams all over the province. The natives reportedly responded well to the Iranians, partly because they were not the usual whites coming onto reserves, and partly out of empathy to their sufferings. Other Iranians voluntarily moved to isolated areas to establish new localities. Iranian Bahá'ís increasingly appeared in Bahá'í Canada's pictures of travelling teachers and newly formed LSAs. The NTC has continued to encourage Iranian-native activities, and called for Iranians to pioneer near Indian reserves or visit "and help these people develop strong, internally self-directing Bahá'í communities." [13]

The statistical effects of the policy of dispersion were immediately apparent. The arrival of hundreds of Bahá'ís coincided with the usual decline of LSAs and localities immediately after the end of an expansion Plan. In 1983 the National Teaching Committee noted that a "significant part" of recent increases in LSA numbers was due to the Iranian arrivals: "a number have already settled, or have been assigned to settle, in communities with understrength Assemblies or promising groups. Hand in hand with these arrivals a good many Canadian Bahá'ís have sacrificially left their homes to pioneer on the homefront".[14] The experience of one individual illustrates the combination of deliberate and voluntary dispersion within the province. Faramarz Karami had been pioneering in

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11. David Sherwin, interview with the author, Red Deer, Alberta, 20 Jan. 1991.

12. Bahá'í Canada 7,6 (Dec./Jan. 1985/1986), 18.

13. NTC letter in Persian, Canadian Bahá'í News (Nov. 1991); English version printed in ibid. 4,7 (Dec. 1991), 8-10.

14. Bahá'í Canada 5, 2 (May-June 1983), p.21. Specific numbers for Alberta are unavailable, but among the first of the smaller communities to benefit were Lethbridge, Drumheller and the bedroom towns around Edmonton and Calgary.

Surinam, South America, and was forced to come to Canada when his Iranian visa expired. He was assigned to Alberta and arrived in January 1982. For the next year he stayed with a Bahá'í family in Ardmore. The change in temperature from +40° centigrade in Surinam to -30° in central Alberta was a shock, but other than this Karami recalled this time with affection, stating "the Bahá'ís of this area accepted me to help me".[15]

Karami quickly became involved in propagation activities, in the course of which he visited the principal of the high school in Grande Centre to present a book on the Iranian persecutions. After his year of commitment to Ardmore was completed he decided to pioneer to Grande Centre, despite warnings that work was impossible to find because of the recession. In his words, "after an hour I found a job and started 15th of Feb 1983 at 'Arcade' [and] for this reason I pioneer[ed] to G.C." Soon after this Karami obtained work as a school janitor on the Cold Lake armed forces base. He was the only resident Bahá'í for almost two years. In December 1984 he was joined by another Iranian, a refugee pioneer from India, followed soon after by a third Iranian. More arrived over the next few years, and the first Assembly of Grande Centre was formed in October 1987. Eight of the nine Assembly members had deliberately moved there for that purpose. Five of these eight pioneers were Iranian. The ninth member was a resident of the town who reportedly took five years to investigate the religion before joining.[16]

After the Grande Centre LSA was established Karami turned his attention to Bonnyville, which had a few Bahá'ís and an Assembly at risk. He found a job there while keeping an apartment in Grande Centre to serve on its LSA. In 1988 he officially moved to Bonnyville in order to help maintain its LSA. Karami left Alberta in the summer of 1991, planning to visit Haifa, Israel and then return to Surinam. The urgency of propagation in Eastern Europe, however, caused him to move there instead and he is, at the moment of writing, in Bulgaria.[17] Two other Bonnyville members left that same summer to pursue their education, which reduced the community to six adults. In spite of active local teaching efforts and many calls for replacements, the LSA was unable to reform in April 1992.

Another important aspect of contact with Iranians was a second 'youth movement' in the mid-1980s. This was partly stimulated from national and continental Bahá'í institutions which organized and encouraged teaching and service projects, especially during 1985 which the United Nations had designated International Youth Year. In 1984 the Canadian NSA established a Youth secretary under the National Teaching Committee and organized an international youth conference in London, Ontario. 65 youth participated in a smaller conference held in Edmonton in October 1984 to prepare for the upcoming

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15. This and following information from a letter to the author, 11 Nov 1989.

16. See picture and names in Bahá'í Canada 9, 12 (Feb. 1988), 5.

17. Raymond Switzer, interview with the author, Bonnyville, Alberta, 22 Sept. 1991.

year. The new youth activity was also in part a spontaneous response to the Iran persecutions, particularly stories of steadfast young Bahá'ís. One of these, a sixteen-year old girl named Mona Mahmúdnizhad was hanged on 18 June 1983 along with six other women. Doug Cameron, a Bahá'í musician from Toronto, wrote a song about her which received significant airplay across Canada. The accompanying video made a strong impact in the media and was a feature of Bahá'í conferences for some years afterward.

Activity in Alberta generally reflected a national pattern in the 1980s: struggles to maintain LSAs and counter decreasing numbers of localities, and sporadic bursts of growth in scattered areas due to "teaching projects" on reserves and areas of high native population.[18] These propagation campaigns usually featured teams composed of youth, Iranians, long-time members and Bahá'ís who had been part of the first youth wave in the 1970s. One such project in Athabasca in 1984 brought in 41 enrollments and established nine new localities. Bahá'ís who took part came from Morinville, Edmonton, Sherwood Park, St. Albert and Leduc, as well as B.C., Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Various propagation techniques were used. By this time Bahá'ís were more comfortable with 'direct teaching' and reportedly worked "both directly through personal teaching and proclamation, and indirectly through the media." A similar campaign in the Fort Vermilion region brought in 95 enrollments in seven days.[19] A second Fort Vermilion campaign in 1985-6, near the end of the Seven Year Plan, resulted in an additional 36 members in twelve weeks. By contrast, a nineteen day project in Toronto brought in only one new Bahá'í.[20] Strenuous efforts in rural areas, reserves and smaller towns and cities once again helped the Canadian community to achieve its numerical goals for a teaching Plan. The main Seven Year Plan goal for Canada was 350 LSAs. In January 1986, four months before the end of the Plan, the Bahá'ís had achieved 351 and maintained them until April. Yet, in a familiar pattern, the number had dropped to 338 as early as October 1986.[21]

One notable achievement in the field of native contact was the holding of a dozen or so native councils on various reserves in Alberta during the 1980s. Some of the councils were quite large. In 1982 a Continental Indigenous Council was held on the Blood reserve, attended by over 400 people from ten countries and representing 60 different indigenous tribes. Rúhíyyih Khanum attended the conference, as did members of the "Trail of Light", a native team which had recently returned from a teaching campaign among the Central and South American Indians.[22] Native administrators and shamans -

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18. See Appendices 5, 6 and 11 for locality list and tables of total numbers.

19. Bahá'í Canada 6,3 (Oct. 1984-Jan. 1985), 29-30.

20. Bahá'í Canada 7,6 (Dec. 1985-Jan 1986), 20.

21. Bahá'í Canada 7,6 (Dec./Jan. 1985-1986), 13; ibid, 8,8 (Oct. 1986), 4.

22. The Universal House of Justice, ed., The Seven Year Plan 1979-1986: Statistical Report Ridvan 1983 (Bahá'í World Centre [Haifa]: Universal House of Justice, 1983, 27.

- both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í -- were requested to help plan and run these councils. There was deliberate encouragement of the use of Indian spiritual forms and rituals such as sweetgrass purification, feathers, showing respect to elders, sharing food, looser schedules and lengthy prayer sessions featuring spontaneous prayer 'from the heart' as well as the more common Bahá'í practice of reading from prayer books. The native participants reportedly appreciated the cooperative willingness of off-reserve Bahá'ís to learn as well as instruct, and their openness to native leaders and Indian cultural forms. A 1986 review concluded that holding native councils was far more productive than attempted programs of regular visits by outside Bahá'ís. One participant later commented that the feeling generated by such councils "was completely different -- the spirit of these Native friends soared upward . . . It created the overwhelming sense that the promises of 'Abdu'l-Bahá could be realized." [23]

Despite these cooperative cultural links, the native LSAs were still barely functioning. At the beginning of the Seven Year Plan in 1979, the NSA set a goal for visiting Bahá'ís to hold children's classes and worship meetings on reserves and to encourage the native LSA members to meet. Within a year the Northern Alberta RTC drew up a list of coordinators and assistants who would visit twelve northern reserves twice a month throughout the summer. "The time has now come", the RTC wrote, "to very directly and lovingly start confirming the friends on the reserves in the Faith." [24] Four years later, it was obvious that "in almost all cases, the native Assembly members did not become deepened through these efforts." [25]

Of 338 LSAs in 1986, 45 were on native reserves or Métis lands. Only eight of these were functioning well enough to receive mail from the NSA, and only one was responding.[26] This singular LSA was Peigan, for many years the most consistent native Assembly and a prime focus of travelling teachers and visitors through the 1970s and 1980s. The Bahá'í presence on the reserve was greatly increased after the opening of a Bahá'í centre in 1986. The centre was initiated by Clarence Knowlton, son of noted Bahá'í Samson Knowlton, after a dream vision. With the help of many members from nearby towns, an old factory was renovated and entitled **Naatowə'ʔii**, "sacred things". The dedication ceremonies featured native prayer, dancing and gift-giving, a full meeting of the Canadian NSA, and the presence of Rúhíyyíh Khanum, widow of Shoghi Effendi, who reprised her 1960 visit to the first LSA on the reserve.[27] The National Indian Desk

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23. National Indian Desk, National Bahá'í Centre, [Thornhill, Ont], "Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada," 31 Oct. 1986, 5; John Sargent, "Development of the Native Teaching Structure," (address to a meeting of the National Indian Desk [n.p.: Thornhill, Ont., 1989]), 8 [NSAA]. Native councils had taken place since the 1960s: see guidelines for planning and implementing a native council in Arthur and Lily Ann Irwin, "Indians of Canada: A Guide For Teaching" photocopied manuscript [n.p., n.d. [ca.1966?]] [EBA].

24. Northern Alberta RTC to all Auxiliary Board Assistants in northern Alberta, 26 May 1980 [EBA].

25. Assembly Development Committee to Edmonton LSA, 17 Jan. 1984 [EBA].

26. Bahá'í Canada 8,8 (Oct. 1986), 4.

27. Bahá'í Canada 8,7 (Sept 1986), 13-14. She had also visited Peigan while on a visit to Canada in 1982.

reported that "regular gatherings of the Bahá'ís and excellent support from a few key non-Native supporters has brought forth the Peigan Bahá'í Centre and won for the Faith deep respect of local leaders and the community." [28] Three years later in 1989 Ahmad Motlagh, an Iranian who had spent many years in active propagation work in India, took up residence at the centre. In 1990 he was joined by a retired AngloSaxon Bahá'í who visited a summer school and was inspired to stay on. The presence of these two men and their constant contact with the Peigan natives brought a tremendous rush of membership, currently recorded as 140 children (under age fifteen), 63 youth (fifteen to twenty-one) and 215 adults.[29]

The very presence of Iranians in Canada was a strong boost to the Alberta communities. During the 1980s more than 3,000 Iranians were admitted into the country. Today there are 3,741 in Canada and 340 in Alberta.[30] Their participation in provincial expansion and dispersion plans was a key factor in the growth of members, LSAs and localities in the 1980s. Not to be overlooked is the greater recognition that they brought to the religion through their experience and presence. Media coverage and stories of the persecutions and executions greatly increased the visibility of the Bahá'í Faith around the world. The focus of newspaper articles in Canada changed from examinations of principles of harmony to the sufferings of a group because they held to such principles.[31] Throughout the early 1980s all major newspaper, magazine and television outlets carried stories on the developments in Iran, often supported by interviews with local refugees. The NSA buttressed this attention with a large-scale ad campaign in newspapers and newsmagazines. Boosted by awareness and sympathy, annual enrollment figures more than tripled from 680 in 1978-9 to 2,380 in 1979-1980.[32] Part of this increase was due to higher native enrollments around the end of the Five Year Plan, and part was due to increased effort by Canadian Bahá'ís in response to the Iranian persecutions. Media coverage continued for many years. By 1986 37% of Canadians surveyed had heard of the religion; of these, 38% had read newspaper stories of the Iranian persecutions.[33]

Of course the impressions left by such coverage was not always accurate. The mayor of Calgary, who proclaimed a "Bahá'í Week" in November 1984, was surprised to learn

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28. National Indian Desk, "Status Report," 31 Oct. 1986, appendix [NSAA].

29. NSA Department of Records, 20 April 1992. See the report on their activities in Canadian Bahá'í News 3,6 (Dec. 1990), 6-7. Both men have now left Peigan to serve in other areas, Ahmad Motlagh to the native Bahá'í institute in Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, and Bill Brewer to Peace River. They have been replaced by a couple who are continuing religious activities and offering the centre for various native-sponsored programs.

30. With known addresses, including children and youth. Another 440 and 53, respectively, are listed as address unknown [NSA Department of Records 20 Apr. 1992].

31. See for example The Globe and Mail 31 May 1975: "Bahá'í Faith: a quiet quest for harmony among all the religions", and The Toronto Star 31 Mar. 1982: "Iran's Bahá'ís face a new reign of terror, analysts fear."

32. See Appendix 4.

33. Professional commissioned survey reported in Bahá'í Canada 8,7 (Sept. 1986), 5.

from the local delegation that Bahá'ís were not, as he had assumed, primarily Iranian.[34] This impression was abetted by the quick concentration of Iranians in Calgary and Edmonton. Many of the new arrivals in western Canada soon made their way to the cities, attracted by family members, fellow Iranians, and the availability of language classes, adult high schools, colleges and universities. Sometimes the arrivals were met by family members at the airport and never arrived in their assigned destinations. One woman who worked for the Iranian Affairs Desk at the national centre recalled that Edmonton was particularly problematic in this respect.[35] The majority of new arrivals remained in their assigned communities for the required year, but then moved to the cities for the same reasons mentioned above. As had happened with youth ten years earlier, high mobility caused problems for the national and local Assemblies. A national internal census was carried out in 1986, in part due to the high percentage of Bahá'ís with unknown addresses, and in part because of the numerous official and unofficial moves of the Iranian members.[36]

Today the presence of Iranian Bahá'ís is much stronger in the larger urban centres of Alberta. Currently there are 346 Iranians in the province (including youth and children) distributed in 28 localities. Over half of these places (sixteen) have five or less Iranian members, a rather sparse diffusion. But in eleven localities Iranians make up 40% or more, a significant proportion of the total community. 63% of all Iranians reside in Calgary and Edmonton. This figure rises to just under 80% if eight nearby bedroom suburbs are included.[37] Thus Iranians currently make up almost 20% of the known Alberta membership, but are found in less than ten percent of the total localities, primarily in or near the two main urban centres.

In addition to their numerical concentration, Iranians are also highly visible in their Bahá'í groups due to higher and more consistent participation than non-Iranians.[38] Based upon personal observations, it appears that Iranians are generally among the most committed and active members of any congregation. This consistency has helped to stabilize a number of borderline groups. One Canadian Bahá'í said that before the 1980s the activity and membership of the communities fluctuated a great deal.

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34. Bahá'í Canada 6,3 (Oct. 1984-Jan. 1985), 68.

35. Valerie Trueit, interview with the author, Edmonton, 19 Oct. 1991. She has no statistics on the problem mentioned above, but reports that the Iranian Affairs staff were concerned because it hampered integration, broke the agreement made between the refugees and the NSA, and possibly jeopardized the good relationship established with federal immigration officials.

36. Bahá'í Canada 8,5 (July 1986), 5.

37. Airdrie, Okotoks, Morinville, Spruce Grove, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Beaumont and Leduc. All figures include Bahá'ís with known addresses only (NSA Department of Records 15 Nov. 1991). See Appendices 9a and 9b.

38. This difference can be indicated by the percentages of Bahá'ís in Alberta with known addresses: 86.5% of Iranians (340 out of 393), compared with 67.6% of non-Iranians (2,262 out of 3,345). (NSA Department of Records, 20 Apr. 1992.)

> . . . it used to be 'teach, teach, teach' and the energy level would be high. New Bahá'ís would come in, but then the energy would drop off, and the brand new Bahá'ís would drift away. When the Iranians came, there were difficulties at first and the situation improved afterwards. [39]

But Iranian consistency is also a problem in some places. Their strong presence has led at times to feelings on both sides that Iranians are overwhelming the other Bahá'ís. One couple from Calgary said that half of the approximately 300 members in that city were Iranians, but that on average only ten non-Iranians attend the monthly community worship meetings.[40]

The presence of Iranians has greatly assisted the Bahá'ís of Alberta in a number of ways: a significant numerical increase, their dispersion out to understrength communities, good experience in administration and indigenous propagation, an example of commitment and devotion, and a living reminder of sacrifice and martyrdom. It remains to be seen if this large group of a different culture will be successfully integrated in the large cities and, if so, how long the process will take. The Bahá'ís were unable to integrate large numbers of Indians in the 1960s but were more successful with smaller numbers of white youth in the 1970s. The arrival of the Iranians helped to consolidate the disparate cultures and communities in the 1980s, but they also brought new challenges of integration. Generally, AngloSaxon Bahá'ís tend to participate more intermittently and less intensely in community life, and Iranians tend to congregate in larger, family-linked groups. In Calgary and Edmonton -- and in other large urban areas of Canada -- these two cultural tendencies are tending to produce predominantly Iranian Bahá'í congregations. That the two cultures have integrated as well as they have reflects their religious principles of cooperation and ethnic/racial equality. It remains to be seen whether both cultures will be able to reach the large numbers of native Bahá'ís in a meaningful way.

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39. Duncan Hedley, phone interview with the author, Beaumont, 20 Feb. 1992.

40. Shapar and Shahnaz Mohtadi interview, 30 May 1992. Their impressions of the ratio of Iranians corresponds reasonably closely with figures for Bahá'ís with known addresses in the city: 266 total and 126 Iranians. There are another 240 listed as address unknown, only nine of whom are Iranian. (NSA Department of Records, 15 Nov. 1991.

CONCLUSION

The risk of concentrating so much on external expansion and dispersion is that the internal attention to community development and participation has been acknowledged only in passing. In a sense this thesis has examined the shell, rather than the substance of the Bahá'í Faith in Alberta. Any 'internal' study, however, must first take into account the priority placed upon dispersion in order to understand the process and events within the communities themselves. The current numbers and distribution of Bahá'ís in Alberta clearly demonstrates their response to the ethic of dispersion promulgated by their religious founders and stressed by their administration. By any standard their diffusion is a remarkable phenomenon, especially given the fewness of their numbers and the lack of professional clergy or missionaries. In fifty years the Bahá'ís of Alberta have grown from one or two isolated individuals to 2,262 affirmed members in 171 localities. This expansion has not been the result of spontaneous response to a new faith but a deliberate and sustained campaign of propagation and relocation. Sir William Osler once described faith as "the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible." [1] In the case of Bahá'í dispersion, we can at least observe faith in operation. The efforts of the Bahá'ís in their expansion activities, often carried out despite significant costs of time, money, career and internal community development, demonstrates their faith in the power of their religion to overcome obstacles, their faith in the assigned priorities of their elected NSA and Universal House of Justice, their faith in the eventual development of tiny LSAs into world-healing Houses of Justice and, in the last resort, their faith in Bahá'u'lláh's claim that "movement itself from place to place, when undertaken for the sake of God, hath always exerted, and can now exert, its influence in the world." [2]

Given their priority of expansion and dispersion, the arrival of Bahá'ís in the province was entirely predictable. The migration of 'pioneers' in the 1940s and 1950s was the result of continental expansion goals assigned from the world centre, and the U.S. and Canadian members showed strong determination to accomplish these. Dispersion and expansion goals in the four subsequent Plans after 1953 appeared at first to be beyond the capacity of the fledgling Alberta LSAs, yet all were 'won' through three unexpected waves of native and youth enrollments and Iranian refugees. If they were at first unaware of the importance of the ethic of dispersion in the religion, the new arrivals soon noticed its use as the primary measurement of progress, read and heard appeals to pioneer inside and outside Canada, and witnessed their fellow members relocating in order to establish or preserve localities and LSAs. Youth enthusiastically adopted the ethic of dispersion and brought about notable increases in members, localities and LSAs. Many Iranians were already deeply involved in global pioneering before their arrival in

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1. 2 May 1905, quoted in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, 15th ed., 665.

2. Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice (Wilmette Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), 70.

Alberta, and carried on their efforts in their new home. Others who had been restricted in Iran became involved for the first time in active propagation activities after their move into the tolerant Canadian society. In either case they were instrumental in maintaining membership and LSAs during the 1980s, and served as an indirect stimulus to sacrificial efforts by Canadian Bahá'ís.

But the Bahá'ís were much less successful in integrating native converts into their ethic of dispersion. They have been involved in some expansion within the reserve system but only occasionally beyond. One major challenge for indigenous Bahá'ís, according to two Bahá'í authors, is "to assume full responsibility for the administration of the faith in their [lands], and for its development along lines appropriate to the particular cultural environment." [3] Except in a few individual cases, this has not yet occurred among Alberta's indigenous Bahá'í population. A solution to this problem is particularly important in the case of Alberta, which in the last ten years has overtaken Saskatchewan as the province with the most Indian members.[4] Although today natives make up more than one third of the provincial membership there is generally little connection with non-native Bahá'ís, whether on the reserves or in the urban areas. Prolonged contact appears to bring about more lasting membership and community development. A 1986 report listed twenty-two native and non-native individuals in Alberta who could be called upon for Indian teaching and activities. Most of these individuals had been active in native activities for many years; almost all of the natives mentioned were long-time members or relatives and descendants of early native Bahá'ís.[5]

Such individuals are crucial to inter-cultural religious contact. John Webster Grant notes that the problems of transmitting a message from one culture to another is in large part facilitated by "bridge figures", individuals "able to operate as insiders with respect to both the message and the host culture." [6] The history of the Bahá'í transmission from Persian Islam to North America is often the story of bridge figures on both sides. Similarly, the initial contacts and later developments among Alberta's native cultures depended in a similar fashion on the actions, attitudes and status of a few key native and non-native individuals. On the whole, however, the initiative lay on natives who were able and willing to cross the gap to the white - administrative world. The Native Desk of the NSA, in its survey of Bahá'í-native relations since the 1950s, concluded: "Those

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3. William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 193.

4. Figures for Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1981 were 1190 and 468 respectively; 1129 and 1181 in 1991. See Appendix 8.

5. National Indian Desk, National Bahá'í Centre [Thornhill, Ont], "Status Report on Native Teaching in Canada," 31 Oct. 1986 [NSAA]. The distribution of the individuals named indicates the comparative success in southern Alberta: in the south, 10 natives and 7 non-natives; in the north, 2 natives and 3 non-natives. There were also 2 each listed for the Peace River region.

6. Grant, Moon of Wintertime: Missionaries and the Indians of Canada in Encounter since 1534 (University of Toronto, 1984), 260. See also 259-260 for relevant considerations of "safeguards for both the message and the receiving society".

Native friends that we were able to effectively reach were those that were able to cross the cultural barrier to us." [7]

In the 1960s and 1970s some Bahá'ís travelled to reserves every week or two weeks for years, but the importance of dispersion often meant that the most active teachers moved elsewhere and personal contact was lost. In a few instances, Bahá'ís remained in the same place for many years and were able to retain contact and act as resources for temporary contacts and visits. The presence of white Bahá'ís on the Blackfoot and Peigan reserves for many years helped to maintain LSAs and encourage the participation of important native Bahá'í families. And even after years of sporadic contact there may still be a potential of good feelings toward Bahá'ís: one youth who visited the Peigan reserve in August 1991 met natives who reminisced about attending meetings in Lethbridge twenty years earlier.[8] The new Peigan centre may be an important step in full integration of Indian Bahá'ís in the province. If the resident Bahá'ís stay and receive adequate support from their fellow members off the reserve, there may be a breakthrough in the form of a truly indigenous native Bahá'í community. If not, the usual result will occur: loss of personal contact, decreased affiliation and dashed hopes on both sides.

It is clear that Bahá'ís, like Christians, have also been involved in "the dissemination of a message across a significant cultural barrier".[9] This cultural gap has been most prominent in the native wave of enrollment, and bears closer examination. John Webster Grant's analysis of the process is useful for illuminating the native-Bahá'í experience in Alberta. Grant sees intercultural missionizing as a two-way street:

> "For successful transmission to occur, however, certain conditions must be met. It will be helpful if the bearers of the message have a strong desire to transmit it, almost essential that they have confidence in its truth and value. Those on the other side must have a desire to receive it, arising out of either a sense of unfulfilled need or the anticipation of possible enrichment. . . . In almost every case . . . elements of both will be present." [10]

There is no doubt that Bahá'ís have had a strong desire to spread their religion. Bahá'í doctrine centres on the belief that it is the latest in a long series of true faiths, and that its teachings are the only solution to the problems which stand in the way of world unity. This attitude is combined with a strong principle that the religion must be spread to all lands and all peoples. Furthermore, with no clergy or paid missionaries all Bahá'ís are urged to see themselves as teachers. As noted above, carrying their religion to native peoples has been given special emphasis, particularly in the last forty years. Grant states

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7. John Sargent, "Development of the Native Teaching Structure," (address to a meeting of the National Native Desk [n.p.: Thornhill, Ont., 1989]), 2 [NSAA].

8. As reported by Milad Asdaghi at the Edmonton Bahá'í Centre, 18 Aug. 1991.

9. Moon of Wintertime, 258.

10. Moon of Wintertime, 259.

that the other factor, a desire to receive the religion, is inherently more difficult to estimate. We should begin, he writes, "not by trying to estimate the sincerity of the conversion . . . but simply by asking what conversion meant to the Indians". Three considerations useful here are those of material gain, new spiritual power, and "the Yes that means No". [11]

A desire for material gain is an obvious motivation, and there is evidence over the years of natives asking urban Bahá'ís for accommodation, money, and rides.[12] This was never a major factor in Bahá'í - native relations, partly because of the limited number and resources of the Bahá'ís themselves, and partly due to their rejection (usually after initial generosity) of repeated requests. In this they were supported by the Universal House of Justice which has been involved since its inception with 'aboriginal' teaching all over the world:

> When teaching among the masses, the friends should be careful not to emphasize the charitable and humanitarian aspects of the Faith as a means to win recruits. Experience has shown that when facilities such as schools, dispensaries, hospitals, or even clothes and food are offered to the people being taught, many complications arise. [13]

A very limited source of material assistance in the form of gas, food and general expenses has been provided by the NTC and RTCs to native Bahá'ís involved in teaching campaigns. In such cases the Bahá'í organizations were willing to support specific individuals for specific timeperiods or projects in exchange for introductions, translations, and the important goal of Indians teaching other Indians.[14] On other occasions individual natives have been subsidized to attend one or two week 'deepening' institutes or conventions. These contributions, however, are also common in other areas of Bahá'í expansion activities and native assistance was an important consideration rather than a departure from the norm. Certainly there is nothing in Alberta's Bahá'í history to compare with the resources and impact of the Christian missions.

A second factor suggested by Grant is "the Yes that means No", a form of polite and superficial acceptance to avoid conversion pressures or embarrassing one's visitors. The sincerity of any conversion is impossible to determine, and it is risky to generalize about such a personal process. Some Indians joined only after many years of contact, observation and study; others were willing to sign a membership card after one talk or presentation. Some conclusions about the Alberta experience, however, can be

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11. Moon of Wintertime, 249; see 243-263 for other considerations.

12. For example Arthur B. Irwin, "Early Native Teaching in Canada," (n.p., 1983), 14. The Irwins also assisted the daughter one of the first Bahá'í couples on Peigan reserve to enter and complete her nursing training in Calgary (ibid).

13. Universal House of Justice to all NSAs 13 July 1964, Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968 (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1970), 32.

14. See for example NTC minutes during the last year of the Ten Year Crusade (1962-3) and the Nine Year Plan (1972-3) (NSAA).

reasonably made. Submission to pressure is not a factor here: Bahá'ís had no political or clerical power and were forbidden to seek conversions through force, inducements or persistence. But politeness is surely the reason for many new native members, because Bahá'ís required few preconditions, and demanded few immediate and radical changes immediately afterwards. The recurrent pattern of teaching campaigns and subsequent general unenthusiastic participation points to courteous acceptance rather than deeply felt response. Innumerable letters to and from various Bahá'í institutions discuss the difficulties in recontacting those on native membership lists or of visitors discovering that nominal Bahá'ís did not consider themselves members.

On the other hand, this pattern could also be the result of little followup and cooperative development on the part of non-native Bahá'ís. In this case many of the acceptances could have reflected a readiness to participate in a vision which did not readily appear. Perhaps it would be more accurate to speak of a "Yes that means Maybe"; a conversion contingent upon further proof and results. This relates to the third factor, namely conversion for access to a new source of spiritual power. On the surface this would seem unlikely, for Bahá'ís deliberately used few rituals or ceremonies in their worship and did not claim to have unique access to God or divine revelation. They did, however, speak of a new and powerful revelation to all humanity and the gathering together of all peoples, and were tolerant and even supportive of traditional forms. This undoubtedly had strong appeal to natives in the aftermath of mission stations, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s before the popular resurgence of traditional native religions. At the present time in Alberta the factor of new spiritual power is unclear. There are a number of natives who claim that the Bahá'í Faith has helped them to stop drinking, reduce family violence and the like, and it may be an attractive option for natives uncommitted to either Christianity or traditional religions, or who are involved in recasting traditional forms.[15]

It is probable that the adoption of the Bahá'í religion was in some cases a desire to supplement rather than replace other religions.[16] Bahá'í universalism is easily incorporated into the new forms of traditional religion being created in native communities in the 20th century: an idealized "pan-Indian" spirituality which incorporates rituals from diverse cultures; the rejection of historical native traditions such as slavery, torture, inter-tribal warfare, and - to a large extent - sorcery; and the highlighting of themes of pacifism, racial equality, equality of men and women, international contacts,

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15. An example of each of these tendencies can be found in recent issues of Canadian Bahá'í News. A participant at an indigenous conference in Argentina is reported to have said: "We Amerindians are like an empty box. It will be filled by the Bahá'í civilization." (3,1 (June 1990), 9.) A gathering on Pasqua reserve, Saskatchewan a few months later was entitled Spiritual Unity of Tribes. Its stated purpose was "to pass along the wisdom of the tribes from the elders to the next generation." Many of the organizers, speakers and audience were native Bahá'ís. (3,4 (Oct. 1990), 10.)

16. See Moon of Wintertime, 249.

and ecological consciousness.[17] In this light, it is likely that a good number of natives joined as a positive response to a claim for religious tolerance, racial equality, and international cooperation. Although presented primarily by whites, this religion was in some ways markedly different from the polarized worldview of earlier and contemporary missionaries of Christianity, a religion which, in Grant's words, "presented unusual difficulties to people schooled in native traditions." [18] Grant continues:

> Christianity demanded that its creed should be accepted as true and that all beliefs and practices incompatible with it should be renounced as false. It set up absolute standards of right and wrong that went beyond customary considerations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. [19]

It is also likely that, as in earlier times, adoption of a new religion was a symptom of "the deep trouble into which most Indian societies had fallen".[20] During the 1950s and 1960s many natives had the feeling that tradition and mission had failed them, and they were encountering deep prejudice in education, employment and accommodation in the 'white world'. In 1963 the wife of the Hobbema chief, not a Bahá'í herself, sent a message to the Edmonton community:

> Tell them that we were a long time victims of various religions, and I feel we have been lost. We did not know which way to turn. Missionaries have spoken against one another. We feel that this religion is much like the one our Lord gave us Indians, and when I was in serious trouble, the only ones could turn to were the Bahá'ís. [21]

It is thus understandable that natives would be receptive to a new religion from outside whose members attempted to demonstrate racial and sexual equality, showed respect for Indian authority structures, stressed consultation in problem-solving and spiritual education, whose texts contained passages of universalistic hope, and who cited 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ur-text which promised that natives would enlighten the world. Bahá'ís have attempted to separate out what they believe to be civilizing aspects from the conquering aspects of cultural contact. They see cultural contact and internationalization as a result of the Will of God; and therefore as a good thing and as an inevitable thing. Planned conversion campaigns on the prairie reserves could be characterized as a milder form of cultural imperialism, in that imperial visions of civilization also require drawing together

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17. See comments in Ake Hultkrantz, Native Religions of North America (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), esp. 27 and 82-4. One revealing example of this process is the new ecological reinterpretation of Chief Seattle. See Rudolf Kaiser's intriguing " 'A Fifth Gospel, Almost': Chief Seattle's Speeches): American Origins and European Reception," in Indians and Europe, ed. Christian F. Feest (Aachen: RaderVerlag, 1987), pp. 505-526. The "Chief Seattle Myth" has become ingrained on both sides of the cultural divide: see Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, The Power of Myth, ed. Betty S. Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 32-5; and George Erasmus, "A Native Viewpoint," in Endangered Species: The Future for Canada's Wilderness, ed. Monte Hummel (Toronto: Key Porter, 1989), pp. 92-98.

18. Moon of Wintertime, 243.

19. Moon of Wintertime, 245.

20. Moon of Wintertime, 245.

21. Canadian Bahá'í News 160 (May 1963), 3.

disparate cultures under a new system of belief and administration. But it should be pointed out that Bahá'ís did not (and do not) see North American-European civilization as inherently superior. In many ways - politically, morally, and ideologically - it is believed to be deeply inadequate. While limited by their surrounding cultural attitudes and norms, Bahá'ís are nevertheless more likely to be open to other cultures and more accepting of cultural diversity.

Universalist religions such as Buddhism, Christianity or Islam have the direct intention of breaking apart what are considered to be prejudices of tribal or ethnic identification. The Bahá'í Faith, like these religions and like their associated empires, aimed to eliminate these ancient rivalries and unite these groups on a 'higher' level. Thus in the early 1960s the NSA repeatedly urged Canadian Bahá'ís of all ethnic backgrounds to "make every effort to understand the cultural backgrounds of others in order that we could build firm foundations of love and unity". The fact that Canadian Bahá'ís now included Indians from eleven different 'tribes' was a source of pride and a sign of proper cultural diversity. The vehicle for the oft-cited education and uplifting of the Indian was predicted to be the application of Bahá'í standards to the new native Bahá'ís, using "liberal doses of love and understanding" and gradual education and application of Bahá'í law. But this process would also force non-native Bahá'ís to re-examine their own assumptions and interpretations: "[i]t is certain that, in so doing, the understanding of the non-Indians would be enriched." [22]

It is important to note the difference here from conversion-oriented Christian missions. Bahá'ís also had a vision of bringing new, healing message from God which would lift the Indians up from their current difficult situation. But Bahá'ís also came with the idea that natives would in some ways help them to understand their own message and share it with the world, as promised in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Ur-text. Native conversion in Alberta was a vital goal, but not as crucial as for Catholic, Anglican, or various Protestant missions. There was never a sense of needing to "save" Indians from a future eternal torment; instead, there was a hope that the natives would, in some as yet unknown fashion, help to save the world from its current torment. The final goal was unity, not conversion, and true unity would come about as a result of conversion and cooperation, tolerance, and cultural diversity.

This is not to say that Bahá'ís did not use similar methods to reach, attract and convert native peoples. In 1968 A.C. Forrest noted the successes of Pentecostal churches in Indian "missions", particularly when compared with the established churches. Forrest proposed three factors behind this: informal and enthusiastic worship, personal conversion, and the "use of modern equipment and techniques". [23] To this we should add an additional factor: less native resistance due to the absence of earlier involvement

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22. NSA Annual Report 1962-3, 3, 5 and 9. [NSAA].

23. A.C. Forrest, "The Present," in Religion in Canada: The Spiritual Development of a Nation, ed. William Kilbourn (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 79.

in reserve control and residential schools. Comparing Pentecostal and Bahá'í growth among natives reveals three of the same four elements at work, the exception being that Bahá'í worship tends to be more formal and calm with no sermons and usually little or no music. In compensation for this, Bahá'í theology is less restrictive due to its universalistic and tolerant approach and lack of saved/unsaved duality. The most important factor in both is the emphasis on personal conversion; no doubt a closer examination of conversion patterns will reveal a common root of persistent and capable individual missionary work. Grant noted a "remarkable increase" of native Pentecostal Christians to roughly 6,000 in Canada by 1971. Native Bahá'ís are currently about half of this number. This is also a remarkable increase, especially considering the much smaller numbers and resources of the respective national membership. It reflects the priority and dedication of native teaching within the Bahá'í community: as Grant noted, enrollment figures "correspond roughly with the time and effort expended by the various denominations." [24]

In sum, the Bahá'í mission to natives in Canada was to teach, not to save. But there were expectations of behaviour once the gift was accepted: to cease drug and alcohol abuse, extramarital sex, violence, and to start going to Bahá'í meetings. But since there were no Bahá'í centres or regular Bahá'í meetings to attend, there was also an expectation that natives would start organizing them. Despite such expectations, and despite the steady activity by a few native and non-native individuals, no large-scale, creative native response occurred. The causes are identifiable -- lack of follow-up, financial and personal exhaustion, local opposition, and cultural misunderstandings -- although the specific proportions of these would vary in different places. The failure to develop Bahá'í institutions in the native populations stands out even more when compared with the achievements in the cities and towns:

> [T]hrough this whole period the urban communities . . . were developing Local Spiritual Assemblies and beginning to become internally functional. There were not only able to sustain their own internal growth and consolidation, they, in many cases, were able to provide resources for extension goal areas. The Native communities, however, although some had many Bahá'ís (as the result of imported teaching projects) and Local Spiritual Assemblies (formed by teams from the outside), they were not becoming internally self-functioning. Not only were they not in a position to provide resources for the further growth of the Faith they continued to consume resources in terms of the need for teachers, consolidators and assembly election teams. Consequently, even though the teaching work among the Native people was continuing to push forward, opening more and more communities to the Faith, the teaching structure and limited resources had to support this larger and larger population. . . . Before long the available resources became consumed and the level of activity decreased. [25]

This is not to deny the profound effects that reportedly occurred on an individual or family level. All reports and reminiscences note warm personal bonding and mutual spiritual growth, and often the non-native Bahá'ís claim to have learned more than they

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24. Moon of Wintertime, 242.

25. John Sargent, "Development of the Native Teaching Structure," 4. [NSAA].

taught.[26] Some notable collaborations have occurred, such as an institute in Lethbridge for social and economic development known as the Four Worlds project. And, as the current Peigan experience demonstrates, there is still potential for development in the future. Perhaps there will yet appear in the future a mutual influence of native and Bahá'í approaches to religion which will result in a fusion that will, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "shed light to all regions." To achieve this, however, there will have to be some as yet unrealized or undeveloped cross-cultural developments that will change the way that the Bahá'í Faith is presented and received across the cultural divide. If the Bahá'ís are unable to use their reliable technique of "pioneering" to Alberta reserves they may find another means to create productive and sustained contact; or perhaps natives themselves will respond in a more self-sustaining way. Failure to achieve both of these will result in the continuation of the current situation of inflated numbers and deflated expectations.

The presence of large numbers of natives and Iranians has unquestionably changed the cultural makeup of the Bahá'ís, and to some extent their attitudes toward the responsibilities of membership and religious practice. Any future influxes of diverse groups -- something much anticipated by members today -- will intensify the need for cultural integration.[27] Integration is not only crucial to the current and future state of the Bahá'í communities; it addresses fundamental Bahá'í principles of unity in diversity. One member who stressed both the needs and the importance of the current integration process commented that white Canadians "are surrounded by other cultures, but we are not aware of them". The circumstances of meeting, worshipping, and working together with fellow believers from a different culture, he stated, was a good opportunity to learn the skills needed for cross-cultural communication. These skills are needed not only for internal Bahá'í unity and external expansion, but desperately needed in our increasingly interracial and intercultural world.[28]

The question of active membership is not by any means limited to natives. Bahá'ís are faced with a notable gap between their total recorded membership and those with known addresses. This was not a problem in the 1940s and 1950s when numbers were small, enrollments were few, and new members were expected to have studied Bahá'í literature and history. Changes in these expectations allowed far greater numbers to enroll, but the existing members were unable to keep track of such numbers or adequately integrate them into their communities. This problem has been furthered by numerous propagation campaigns which have resulted in high enrollments and high subsequent withdrawal or loss of contact. These withdrawals are not immediately apparent in larger or more

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26. Arthur Irwin later wrote: "We are convinced that we learned more from the Peigan Indian people about spiritual matters such as attitude toward prayer, respect for each other, the importance of silence and the tenacity of their faith, than they learned from us. We served only as postmen, to bring the message to them." ("Early Native Teaching in Canada", 8.)

27. Chinese and other Asians, for example, appear to be joining in significant numbers in Vancouver.

28. Raymond Switzer, interview with the author, Bonnyville, 22 Sept. 1991.

remote communities, and these names are kept on membership lists. As Denis MacEoin pointed out:

> The Bahá'í administration sets low requirements for membership but insists on formal withdrawal. Understandably, this latter is seldom forthcoming and, as a result, large numbers of individuals and even localities continue to be officially registered long after informal disaffiliation. [29]

Bahá'ís without addresses, most of whom are presumably no longer interested in membership, make up a large proportion of the Canadian and Albertan communities. This group makes up one third of the Alberta members, and 38 percent of the national membership.[30] This gap is the result of changes in enrollment practices. In the 1940s and 1950s, Bahá'ís sought to stimulate interest, encourage study and confirmation, and then accept new members. This approach is still common today because of the strictures against proselytization, but it has been augmented by another approach, beginning in Alberta in the late 1950s, of interest, enrollment and subsequent confirmation. The NSA recognized that this second approach would require more systematic followup: it asked that Assemblies and RTCs "make every effort to assist with easier enrollment" with the idea that "regular follow-up teaching to confirm and consolidate new recruits" would follow.[31] Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice had clearly envisioned teaching and consolidation activities as inseparable. But the Bahá'ís discovered that it was easier to mount teaching campaigns during peak periods of crisis at the end of teaching Plans than to find the individuals, dedication and resources for later confirmation. One noted Bahá'í, reviewing one of the youth campaigns of 1972, commented:

> The methods employed should probably not be repeated again in quite that form. Indeed, many of the "enrolled" believers have not been found since. . . .[but] Many genuine believers were found and a nucleus was indeed formed in most of the towns visited by the team. This was certainly more a proclamation activity than a teaching effort designed to confirm souls . . . All of us had overlooked the guidance in the July 1964 message from the Universal House of Justice which made it clear that the declarants must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey. [32]

The Bahá'í emphasis on voluntary membership and participation means that the situation of many inactive or resigned members is not considered to be a critical one requiring

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29. Denis MacEoin, "Bahá'ism," in A Handbook of Living Religions, ed. John R. Hinnells (London: Penguin, 1984), 493.

30. 1,083 out of 3,345 (32.38%), and 9,871 out of 26,028 (37.92%) respectively. See Appendix 5 for comparison.

31. NSA Annual Report 1962-3 [NSAA].

32. Rowland Estall, unedited draft transcript of taped autobiography, provided during interview with the author, Scarborough, Ontario, 9 Oct. 1990, 118.

drastic action. Iranians appear to find the gap more disconcerting, but it is likely to continue in the near future.

An important question for future Bahá'í dispersion is whether or not the Alberta Bahá'ís can continue their slow extension into ever-smaller towns and rural areas. Their ethic of dispersion has always run counter to the provincial trend toward urbanization, but the immediate future promises to be more difficult. Except for Peigan reserve, most recent growth has occurred in Calgary and Edmonton, and at the present time Bahá'ís are experiencing difficulties in holding on to their existing footholds of dispersion. Many Bahá'ís live in the larger centres because of the practical needs of work and education. Others are probably attracted by the range of opportunities and activities available there. There are also more Bahá'í activities and facilities such as children's classes, centres, and committees to spread the constant workload.

In previous years, Bahá'ís placed great stress on the "utmost importance" of pioneers remaining at their posts at all costs.[33] As overseas work and visas became progressively harder to obtain in the 1970s, this ideal shifted to the concept of a year or two years of service and then back home. Recent goals have included temporary pioneering service for a number of months, which are then totalled to make up the goal number of pioneers for each year. The same trend is now beginning to happen with 'homefront pioneering' as well. As we might imagine, Bahá'ís are still strongly encouraged to hold localities at all costs. A 1988 editorial in Bahá'í Canada noted present difficulties and reemphasized sacrifice and commitment to overcome those barriers:

> Pioneering is becoming more difficult. Economic recession and deteriorating social conditions mean that often more sacrifice is involved in homefront pioneering now than was the case even a decade ago. On the other hand, with the enormous sacrifices of the believers in Iran, there is a parallel spiritual power released into the world upon which, if we are responsive, we can draw to serve the Faith in the measure which the times now require. Moving to a homefront goal now needs not a casual commitment but the same spirit of pioneering which inspires individuals to move from the comforts of life in Canada to the remotest and most inhospitable regions of [the] globe. [34]

But at the same time there is now a move toward the idea of months of pioneering within Canada just as in international pioneering; to a temporary job, for a school term, or even just to live in a place temporarily.[35] On a practical note, this change recognizes the increased difficulties of acquiring work outside urban areas. It also, however, reflects the higher transience and personal expectations of Canadians both internationally and at

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33. See for example a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 6 May 1954, Messages to Canada ([Thornhill, Ontario]: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 1965), 43.

34. Assembly Development department report, Bahá'í Canada 9, 12 (Feb. 1988), 15.

35. Auxiliary Board Member Kathy Roesch, interview with the author, Edmonton, 8 June 1991.

home: fewer Bahá'ís are willing to stay in rural or small-town areas for long periods of time.

Another factor is that today there are very few truly virgin areas left in Canada where interested people do not have access to Bahá'í information through libraries, television programs, advertising campaigns or personal contacts. While long-term service by a dedicated Bahá'í is obviously preferable, the need for such continuity "so that the development of the Faith in these virgin areas may move along in an orderly manner" [36] is not as high a priority as it was forty years ago. The most recent expansion Plan required the NSAs to produce their own goals and select their own priorities, subject to approval by the Universal House of Justice. Whether the Canadian membership can sustain the ethic of dispersion without goals assigned from the world centre remains to be seen.

Whatever the theological or social differences and similarities between the Bahá'í Faith and other religions in the province, the ethic of dispersion has produced a notably different historical experience. Many religions are actively working to increase membership and carry messages of salvation to others, but no other religious group, even among Christian evangelicals, has shown such a strong commitment to geographical expansion and administrative practice. In the 1940s there were interesting similarities of membership and practice between the Bahá'í Faith and the small groups examined by W.E. Mann, but none of these have demonstrated remotely comparable growth and diffusion. According to the 1981 Canadian census, among the smaller religions only Jehovah's Witnesses, with their distinctly assertive proselytizing techniques, were similarly distributed across Canada in rough proportion to the general population. Within Alberta, approximately 45% of the Witnesses and the Bahá'ís are located in its two largest cities. But twice the percentage of Bahá'ís are located in urban areas of 2,500 to 5,000 population (15.38% and 7.26%, respectively). These are the smaller towns in which Bahá'ís can find work to support their pioneer moves, and a sufficiently diverse population to find potential members. In addition, the Bahá'í percentage of membership in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories is notably higher than either Jehovah's Witnesses or Latter Day Saints (Mormons); in some cases even with larger raw numbers of believers. This small but significant Bahá'í presence in the North reflects their greater committment to both dispersion and native teaching.[37]

Despite the sacrifices that such the ethic of dipsersion entails, this principle will inevitably play a large role in determining Bahá'í distribution and activities in the near future. It is ingrained so deeply in their vision of contributing toward a "new world order" of divine justice and human happiness that it has become an article of faith and

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36. From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 6 May 1954, Messages to Canada, 43; see also ibid, 54.

37. Canadian Census data, 1981. See Appendix 10 for comparative distribution of Bahá'ís, Jehovah's Witnesses and Latter Day Saints, and Appendix 7 for a map of the relative distribution of Bahá'ís in Canada. I regret that figures from the 1991 census were not available at the time of writing, although private enquiries indicate much the same proportions.

a sign of divinely-supported progress. Shortly before the end of the Six Year Plan in April 1992, the Canadian newsletter contained an article urging the members to continue to form and reform Assemblies, even if some "appear to be Assemblies in name only, unlikely to meet, let alone administer the affairs of the Faith in that community." Such Assemblies, the article continues, are only in an embryonic stage of development: "Should we toss it out because we saw its light flickering, or burning at a quieter pace that those around it?" [38] And, as always at the end of a Plan, the members responded through travel and movement to ensure the winning of the goal of 400 LSAS. By April 20th the Canadian Bahá'ís had formed 410: 75 in the last year of the Plan, eleven of which were established in Alberta.[39]

Statistics, however, tell only part of the story of the ethic of dispersion. A better example of the personal costs and rewards involved in following this principle is a poem printed in Bahá'í Canada in 1986,[40] written by a woman pioneering in Newfoundland. She and her family had offered to pioneer yet again, this time overseas, and were asked to move to the South Pacific. The following excerpts from her poem clearly show the internalization of the Bahá'í ethic of dispersion and the religious motivation behind it:

> We are bidden to dream,
> asked to serve,
> driven to build
> A New World.
> But not without a price. . .
>
> . . . The ache of distance already centres in the bottom of my heart . . .
>
> . . . the wonder of this Cause:
> A force that sends its lovers,
> willingly,
> longingly.
> Across the expanse of the world to unknown homes,
> for love of Him who has promised peace and unity . . .
>
> . . . We go alone to another island,
> to add bricks and mortar to a new vision. . . .
>
> . . . Never alone, never abandoned.
> We go by choice,
> in faith.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.
EXPANSION PLANS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI AND THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
(major goals only)

1937-1944 SEVEN YEAR PLAN (NSA of U.S. and Canada)

One Bahá'í in every state and province of North America.
(increased in 1940 to one LSA in every state and province).
One Bahá'í in every country in Central and South America.
Completion of exterior of temple in Wilmette, Illinois.

(1944-1946) - consolidation and planning

1946-1953 SEVEN YEAR PLAN (NSA of U.S. and Canada until 1948)

Consolidation of existing LSAs and unspecified increase.
Completion of interior of Wilmette temple.
Formation of NSAs of Canada (1948), Central & South America (1951)
Assist teaching in Europe; formation of NSAs of Iberia, Italy,
Low Countries and Scandinavia.

(1948-1953 FIVE YEAR PLAN for new NSA of Canada)

LSAs: 32 Localities: 100
Group in Newfoundland and at least one Bahá'í in Greenland.

1953-1963 TEN YEAR CRUSADE

LSAs: 60 Incorporated LSAs: 19
Opening of 11 North American regions and 2 Pacific island groups.
Consolidation in Iceland, Greenland, Newfoundland & Mackenzie district.
Property and endowment goals.

(1963-1964) - consolidation and planning

1964-1973 NINE YEAR PLAN

LSAs: 130; later increased to 150 Incorporated LSAs: 57
Localities: 750
Maintain localities in St. Lawrence Gulf islands, Queen Charlottes and Arctic districts.
Various international pioneer and property goals.

APPENDIX 1 (continued)
EXPANSION PLANS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI AND THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

(1973-1974) - consolidation and planning

1974-1979 FIVE YEAR PLAN

3 major objectives: consolidation of previous expansion achievements, continued "vast and widespread expansion", development of distinctive Bahá'í community life.

LSAs: 300 Incorporated LSAs: 150 Localities: 1500
63 international pioneers: Africa 26, Americas 24, Asia 5, Europe 8
(increased to 114 pioneers in 1978).
7 international property goals.
Increased use of radio and TV, youth participation, and academic courses, etc. in universities and colleges.

1979-1986 SEVEN YEAR PLAN

The Universal House of Justice provided goals in 3 stages: 1979-1981, 1981-1984, and 1984-1986. 9 general goals were assigned: teaching, children, minorities, schools, youth, universities, media, public relations and spiritual enrichment.

LSAs: Final goal 350 Localities: no number specified
190 international pioneers

1986-1992 SIX YEAR PLAN

NSAs required to formulate their own goals in consultation with the Continental Counsellors, under six general guidelines of widespread proclamation, greater involvement in society, increase in Bahá'í literature, maturation of administration, greater participation by membership, education of children and youth, social and economic projects.

LSAs and localities: Initial numerical goals were 50 new LSAs and 200 new localities within the first two years. Eventually, in early 1991, the NSA set itself goal of 464 LSAs, which was subsequently reduced to 400 in early 1992.
300 long and short term international pioneer goals were eventually assigned by the NSA and the Universal House of Justice.

APPENDIX 2a.
BAHÁ'Í ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

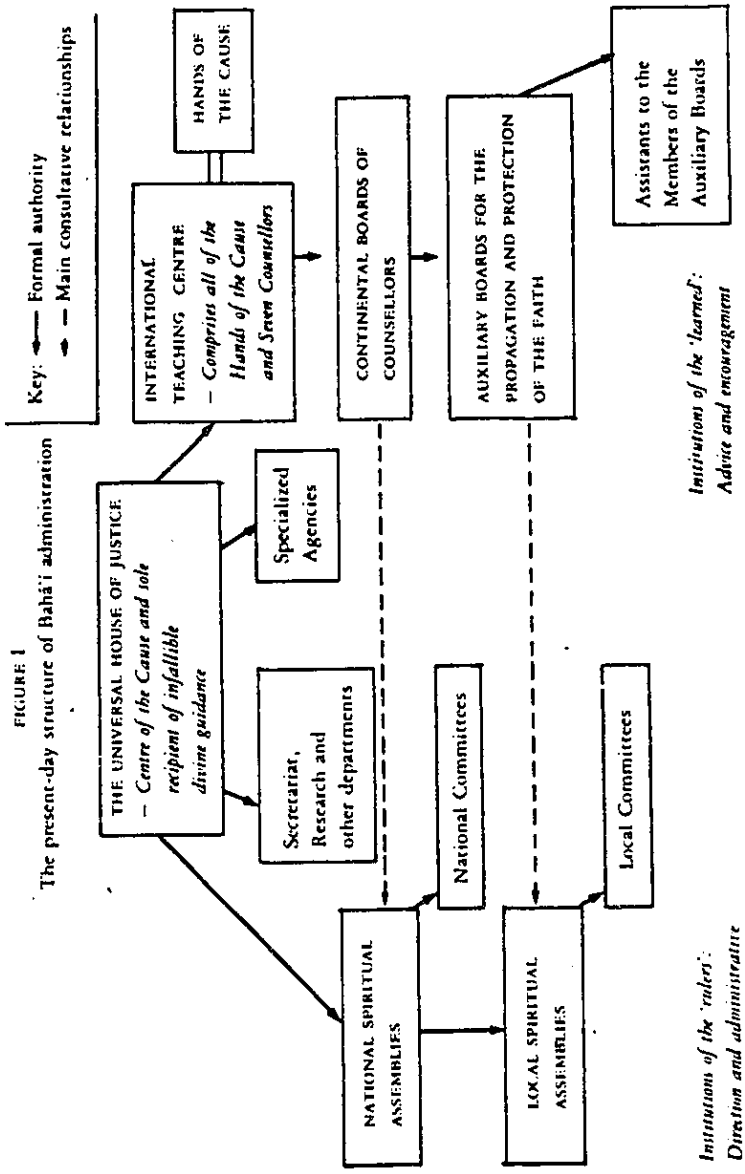
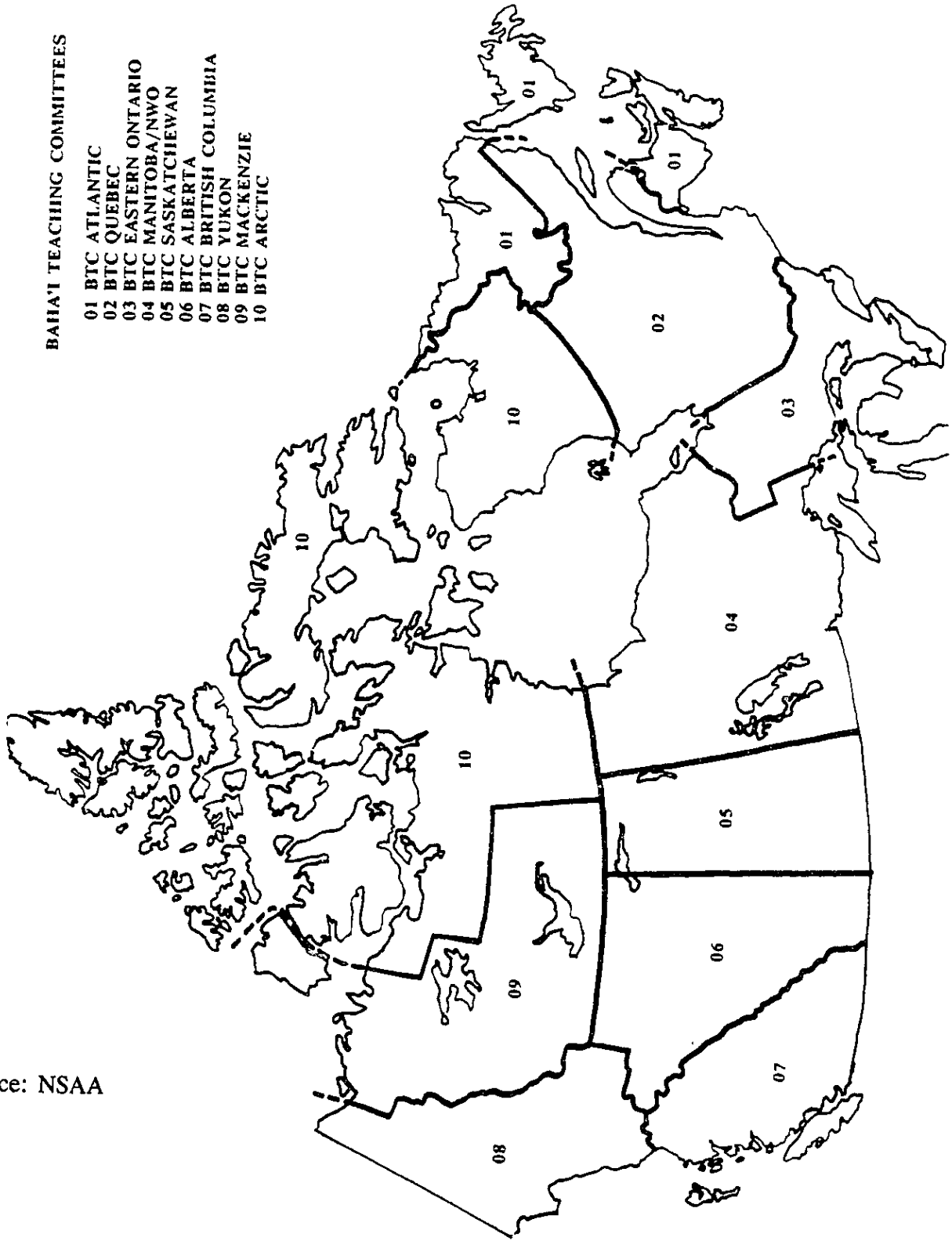


FIGURE 1
The present-day structure of Bahá'í administration

Source: Peter Smith, The Bahá'í Religion: A Short Introduction to its History and Teaching (Oxford: George Ronald, 1988), 48.

APPENDIX 2b.
BAHÁ'Í TEACHING COMMITTEE REGIONS IN CANADA, ca.1990



Source: NSAA

APPENDIX 3.
PRELIMINARY CHRONOLOGY OF BAHÁ'ÍS IN ALBERTA 1912 - 1944.

1912-1917?	Esther E. Rennels	Edmonton	(from U.S.?)
1925?- ?	Margery McCormick	*?Edmonton	(possible Bahá'í)
1926-7	Mabel H. Pine	Scollard	(from Armstrong, B.C.)
1928-41	" "	Vermilion	(from England)
3 Dec. 1937-	Elizabeth Conlon	Warner	(until 5 Jan 1939)
? 1939	John A. Dixon	Lethbridge	
Apr 1939	Doris Skinner	Calgary	(from Vancouver)
June 1939	Dorothy Sheets	*Calgary	
sum 1941	Mabel H. Pine	Edmonton	(from Vermilion)
? 1942	Gerda Christofferson	Calgary	
Feb. 1942	Evelyn (Eve) Cliff	Calgary	(from Vancouver)
Apr. 1942	Roland McGee	Calgary	(away in armed forces - Vancouver?)
sum 1942	Muriel Warnicker	Edmonton (visit)	
sum 1942	Marcia Atwater	Edmonton (visit)	
Jul 1942	Alison Pine	*Edmonton [youth]	
Jul 1942	Mabel S. Pine and Alison Pine	Ardmore	(from Edmonton)
Sep 1942	Anne McGee	Calgary	(from Vancouver)
Sep 1942	Ina Trimble	*Edmonton	
Sep/Oct 1942	Kathleen Bain	*Edmonton	
Oct/Nov 1942	Lyda Roche	*Edmonton	
Oct/Nov 1942	Kathleen Rimell	*Edmonton	
Oct/Nov 1942	Milwyn Davies	*Edmonton	
Dec 1942	Anita Ioas	Edmonton	(from California)
? 1943	Clifford Gardner	Calgary	(from Vancouver)
? 1943?	Jean Mushet	Calgary	
Jan 1943	Nan Greenwood	*Edmonton	
Feb 1943	Marguerite Winkler	*Edmonton	
Feb 1943	Cora Madge	*Edmonton	
July 1943	Eve (Cliff) Southwell	B.C. (Vancouver?)	(from Calgary)
1943-4?	Jean Eager	*Calgary	
Feb 1943	Kathleen Bain	B.C. (near Vancouver)	(from Edmonton)
May 1943	Blanche Davies	*Edmonton	(youth, daughter of Milwyn Davies]
sum 1943	Nan Greenwood	Calgary	(from Edmonton)
Jul 1943	Kay Lannon	Edmonton	(from Vancouver)
Aug 1943	Anne McGee	Edmonton	(from Calgary)
Aug 1943	Mary Davies	*Edmonton (youth, daughter of Milwyn Davies)	
14 Oct 1943	Blanche Liddell	Grande Prairie	(until 13 Aug 1944)
Dec 1943	Don & Carroll Jones	Edmonton	(from Squilax, B.C.)
?1944?	Al Pringle	Calgary	
?1944?	Bunde Karlsson	Calgary	
Jan 1944	Dorothy Sheets	Regina	(from Calgary)
Jan 1944	Mary Murray	*Edmonton (youth)	
Feb 1944	Ada Young	*Edmonton (youth)	
Dec 1944	Jean Eager	Calgary	

* known to have joined in that city.

APPENDIX 4.
GROWTH OF BAHÁ'Í MEMBERSHIP IN CANADA, 1893 - 1992.

NOTE: Figures between 1969 and 1979 are in many cases approximations only. Membership totals circa 1970-1975 are particularly unreliable. In the early 1970s an overwhelming surge of new members (primarily youth), high mobility and high levels of resignations caused a gap of almost 3,000 between recorded members and known addresses. Computerization in the late 1970s led to improved record-keeping, and apparent small declines in total membership in 1977 and 1981 may reflect either actual decreases or better records. Figures after 1979 are much more reliable, especially since an internal census in 1986. Today there still exists a large gap of almost 40% between listed members and those with known addresses.

Statistics after 1948 are grouped according to Canadian expansion Plans in order to highlight the usual pattern of high enrollments at the end of each Plan.

	Enrollmt	Gross	Deceased	Resigned	Net Gain	Accum. Net Growth	With known addresses
1893-1900	5				5	5*	na: not available for early years
1900-1920	6	6	4	-	2	2	
1920-1925	11	17	6	-	5	7	
1925-1930	8	25	2	-	6	13	
1930-1935	20	45	5	1	14	27	
1935-1940	47	92	7	5	35	62	
1940-1945	60	152	9	1	50	112	
1946	22	174	5	-	17	129	
1947	22	196	2	1	19	148	
1948	31	227	2	1	28	176	
1949	51	278	4	1	46	222	
1950	52	330	2	3	47	269	
1951	66	396	6	-	60	329	
1952	39	435	4	4	31	360	
1953	102	537	14	3	85	445	
1954	82	619	8	2	72	517	
1955	69	688	1	4	64	581	
1956	62	750	5	-	57	638	
1957	54	804	6	2	46	684	
1958	60	864	5	-	55	739	
1959	77	941	4	2	71	810	
1960	67	1008	7	1	59	869	
1961	241	1249	12	17	212	1,081	
1962	425	1674	28	12	385	1,466	
1963	512	2186	34	26	452	1,918	

* moved to U.S. in early 1900s: see Chapter 2.

Continued . . .

APPENDIX 4 (continued)
GROWTH OF BAHÁ'Í MEMBERSHIP IN CANADA, 1893 - 1992

	Enrollmt	Gross	Deceased	Resigned	Net Gain	Accum. Net Growth	With known addresses
1964	253	2439	8	20	225	2,143	na
1965	125	2564	1	9	115	2,258	
1966	162	2726	2	10	150	2,408	
1967	259	2985	4	10	245	2,653	
1968	431	3416	5	10	416	3,069	
1969	586	4002	3	3	580	3,649	
1970	909	4911	-	1	908	4,557	
1971	2687	7598	31	107	2549	7,106	
1972	1741	9339	29	11	1701	8,807	
1973	1911	11250	49	126	1736	10,543?	7,624
1974	753	na	na	na	na	na	7,323
1975	755					c.11,000?	
1976	481					na	
1977	490					11,319	6,433
1978	501					na	
1979	680					12,592	
1980	2380					13,502	
1981	810					12,100	7,960**
1982	814					15,500	
1983	772					15,800	
1984	721					16,485	
1985	692					17,125	
1986	837					17,439	
1987	523					na	
1988	596					na	
1989	566					na	
1990	687					22,080	12,981
1991	770					23,239	14,007
1992	na					26,028	16,157

** Canadian Census data, 1981.

Sources: NSAA c.July 1971; 18 Mar. 1972; 20 Apr. 1973; 17 June 1974;
31 May 1977; 21 Apr. 1990;
NSA Department of Records 22 Mar. 1991 and 20 Apr. 1992.

APPENDIX 5.
COMPARATIVE GROWTH OF BAHÁ'Í MEMBERSHIP IN CANADA AND ALBERTA, SELECTED YEARS 1945 - 1992

Code: **A** = Adult **Y** = Youth **Ch** = Children

	CANADA				ALBERTA				
	A	**Y**	**Ch**	Total	**A**	**Y**	**Ch**	Total	Percentage
1945	112	na	na	112	15	na	na	15	(13.39%)
1953	445	na	na	445	29	na	na	29	(6.52%)
1963*	1,918	na	na	1,918	na	na	na	na	
1973*	4,950	2,674	na	7,624	484	na	na	484	(6.35%)
Feb 1982	14,840	779	na	15,619	1,480	65	na	1,545	(9.89%)
1992	22,917	1,051	2,060	26,028	2,868	173	304	3,345	(12.85%)
1992 (with known addresses)	13,165	945	2,047	16,157	1,808	151	303	2,262	(14.00%)

* Approximate figures.

Sources: Canadian Bahá'í News/Bahá'í Canada; Canada's Six Year Plan 1986-1992; NSA Department of Records 20 Apr. 1992; NSAA.

APPENDIX 6.
COMPARATIVE GROWTH OF BAHÁ'Í ASSEMBLIES AND LOCALITIES IN CANADA AND ALBERTA, SELECTED YEARS 1944 - 1992

a) ASSEMBLIES

	CANADA		ALBERTA	
	Total	Incorporated	Total	Incorporated
1944	10	3	1 (10.00%)	0
1953	30	na	2 (6.67%)	0
1963	63/67*	19	5 (7.94/7.46%)	2
1973	200	88	13 (6.5%)	na
1979	312	168	29 (9.29%)	12 (7.14%)
1981	336	162	35 (10.42%)	12 (7.4%)
1986	341	156	44 (12.9%)	na
1992	405	173	53 (13.09%)	11 (6.36%)

b) LOCALITIES (Assemblies, groups and isolated Bahá'ís)

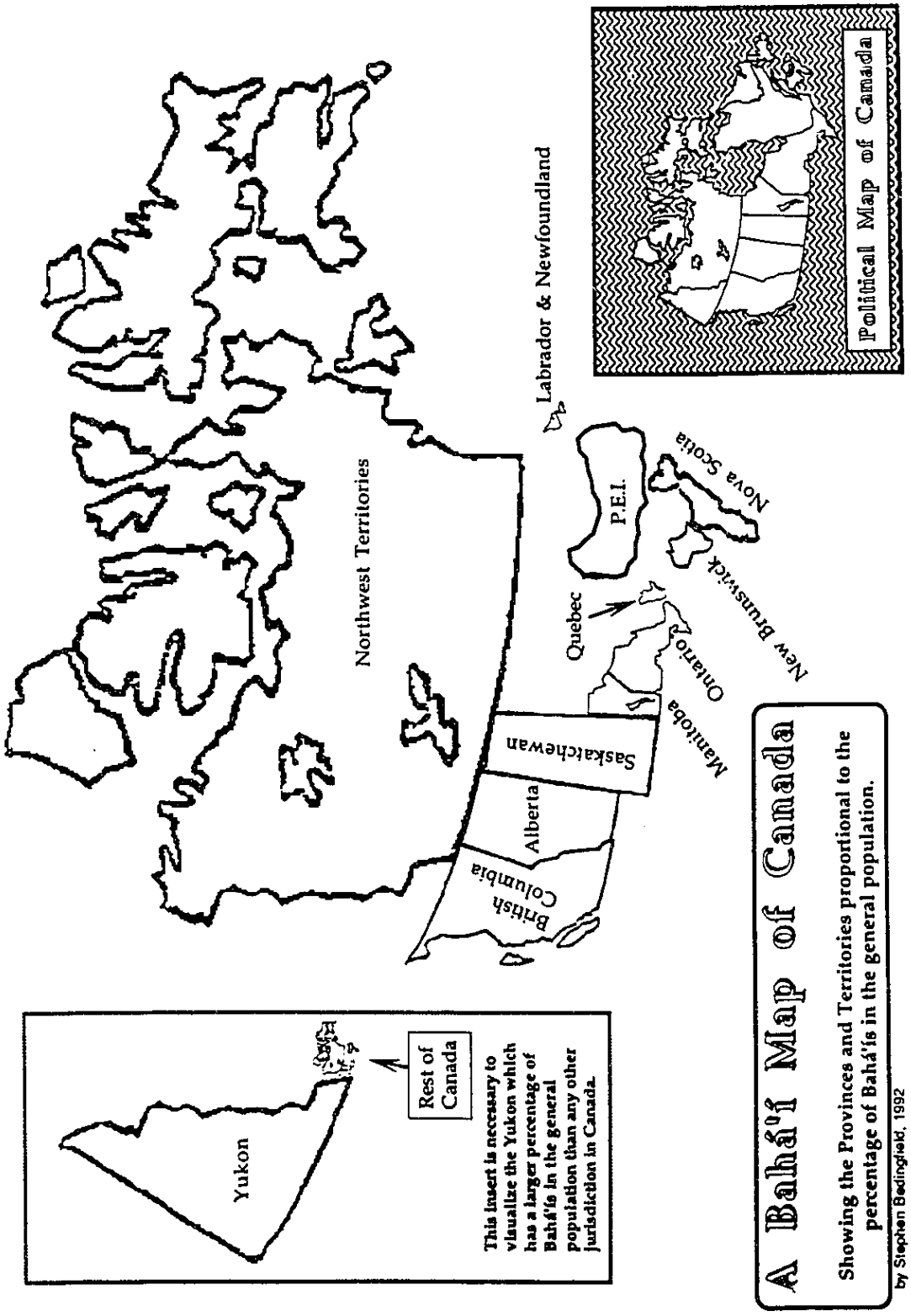
	CANADA	ALBERTA
1944	na	3
1953	102	5 (4.9%)
1963	207/231*	19 (9.18 / 8.23%)
1973	950	na
1977	909	74 (8.14%)
1979	1675	139 (8.3%)
1981	1610	175 (10.87%)
1986	1010**	na
1992	1375	207 (15.05%)

* Statistics for 1963 list Yukon and the NorthWest Territories of Franklin, Keewatin and Mackenzie separately. The whole of Canada thus had 67 LSAs, 88 groups, and 76 isolated Bahá'ís.

** decline in part due to internal census and more efficient record-keeping.

Sources: Canadian Bahá'í News/Bahá'í Canada; Canada's Six Year Plan 1986-1992; The Bahá'í Faith 1844-1963; NSA Department of Records 20 Apr. 1992; NSAA.

APPENDIX 7.
RELATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF BAHÁ'ÍS IN CANADA



APPENDIX 8.
DISTRIBUTION OF NATIVE BAHÁ'ÍS IN CANADA, 1981 AND 1991.

	Sept 1981				March 1991			
	Adult	**Youth**	**Total**		**Adult**	**Youth***	**Total**	
Nfld & Labr	0	0	0		3	1	4	
P.E.I.	1	0	1		2	0	2	
Nova Scotia	40	2	42		51	1	52	
New Bruns.	19	2	21		15	0	15	
Quebec	37	2	39		34	0	34	
Ontario	187	29	216		304	4	308	
Manitoba	171	12	183		226	4	230	
Saskatchn.	1109	81	1190		122	7	1129	
Alberta	**447**	**21**	**468**	(16.35%)	**1116**	**65**	**1181**	(29.73%)
B.C.	496	63	559		700	4	704	
Yukon	90	0	90		172	0	172	
Arctic	50	2	52		141	0	141	
TOTAL	**2647**	**215**	**2862**		**3886**	**86**	**3972**	

* 1991 youth figures do not include native youth outside native communities (reserves and Metís colonies). In Alberta, native youth make 6% of the Bahá'ís in native communities, and outside the native communities adults make up 11% of the total. Based on these figures, we can estimate that native youth outside native communities are no more than .66% of the provincial Bahá'í total, and probably less than this.

Sources: NSAA; NSA Department of Records 22 Mar. 1991

APPENDIX 9a.
PERCENTAGE OF IRANIAN BAHÁ'ÍS IN CANADA AND ALBERTA, 1981 AND 1992

	CANADA	ALBERTA
May 1981	760	25 (3.29%)
June 1981	778	26 (3.34%)
Sept 1981	1,072	34 (3.17%)
Apr 1992 listed]	4,181	393 (9.4%) [Total membership
Apr 1992 addresses]	3,741	340 (9.09%) [with known

Sources: NSAA; NSA Department of Records 20 Apr. 1992.

APPENDIX 9b.
DISTRIBUTION OF IRANIAN BAHÁ'ÍS IN ALBERTA, 1991.

Locality is followed by numbers of Iranians, total Bahá'í membership in that locality, and percentage of Iranians. Figures are of known addresses only and include youth and children.

LOCALITY	Numbers	% (rounded)
Airdrie	9 / 12	75
Banff	4 / 9	44
Beaumont	6 / 15	40
Bonnyville	2 / 7	29
Calgary	126 / 266	47
Coaldale	2 / 8	25
Cochrane	1 / 15	7
Drayton Valley	1 / 2	50
Drumheller	3 / 21	14
Edmonton	93 / 213	44
Ft/ McMurray	5 / 26	19
Grande Centre	7 / 10	70
Grande Prairie	5 / 21	24
Innisfail	1 / 15	7
Leduc	7 / 10	70
Lethbridge	12 / 45	27
Medicine Hat	2 / 18	11
Morinville	2 / 10	20
Okotoks	7 / 12	58
Olds	3 / 16	19
Peigan IR	1 / 407	0.25
Pincher Ck	2 / 20	10
Red Deer	15 / 46	33
Red Deer Co	1 / 2	50
Rocky Mtn/ H	2 / 20	10
Spruce Grove	4 / 18	22
St/ Albert	16 / 36	44
Strathcona Co (Sherwood Park)	8 / 32	25

Source: NSA Department of Records, 15 Nov. 1991.

APPENDIX 10.
COMPARATIVE DISTRIBUTION OF BAHA'IS, JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND LATTER DAY SAINTS (MORMONS) IN CANADA AND ALBERTA, 1981

(highest and lowest percentages in bold)

	Population and percentage	Bahá'ís	Jehovah's Witnesses	LDS (Mormons)
CANADA	24,343,185 (100)	7,960	143,480	89,870
NFLD	567,680 (2.33)	40 (.5)	2,015 (1.4)	200 (.22)
P.E.I.	122,505 (.5)	30 **(.38)L**	430 (.29)	140 (.16)
N. Sc.	847,440 (3.48)	415 (5.21)	4,920 (3.43)	1,570 (1.75)
N. Br.	695,400 (2.86)	100 (1.26)	3,530 (2.46)	810 (.9)
QUE	6,438,400 (26.45)	645 (8.1)	19,850 (13.83)	2,150 (2.39)
ONT	8,625,110 **(35.43)H**	3,250 **(40.83)H**	48,465 **(33.78)H**	20,095 (22.36)
MAN	1,026,240 (4.22)	165 (2.07)	6,425 (4.48)	1,840 (2.05)
SASK	968,310 (3.98)	460 (5.78)	9,815 (6.84)	3,080 (3.43)
ALTA	2,237,725 (9.19)	780 (9.8)	16,195 (11.29)	42,980 **(47.82)H**
B.C.	2,744,465 (11.27)	1,815 (22.8)	31,515 (21.96)	16,740 (18.62)
YUKON	23,155 **(.1)L**	125 (1.57)	120 **(.08)L**	165 (.18)
N.W.T.	45,740 (.19)	140 (1.76)	200 (.14)	105 **(.12)L**
ALBERTA	2,237,725 (100)	780	16,195	42,980
500,000+	1,188,300 **(53.1)H**	345 **(44.23)H**	7,300 **(45.07)H**	14,090 **(32.78)H**
100,000+	---	---	---	---
30,000+	175,725 (7.85)	50 (6.41)	1,355 (8.37)	6,195 (14.41)
10,000+	80,680 (3.6)	15 **(1.92)L**	750 (4.63)	485 **(1.13)L**
5,000+	104,400 (4.67)	50 (6.41)	1,120 (6.92)	1,865 (4.34)
2,500+	119,375 (5.33)	120 (15.38)	1,175 (7.26)	6,870 (15.98)
1,000+	59,065 **(2.64)L**	20 (2.56)	585 **(3.61)L**	1,630 (3.79)
Rural non-farm	319,425 (14.7)	150 (19.23)	2,780 (17.17)	6,880 (16.)
Farm	190,755 (8.52)	25 (3.21)	1,130 (6.98)	4,965 (11.55)

Source: Canadian Census data, 1981.

Note: census figures are rounded up or down to nearest multiple of five, and thus the percentages do not necessarily add up to exactly 100%.

APPENDIX 11.
BAHÁ'Í LOCALITIES IN ALBERTA, SELECTED YEARS 1944-1992.

Code: A = Assembly; I = isolated Bahá'í
G = group (2 to 8 adults); G+ = group with 9 or more adults (usually a non-functioning former Assembly)
y = youth

	Apr. 1944	Apr. 1953	Apr. 1963	Sept. 1971	Dec. 1978	Apr. 1992
Acadia					G	-
Alix					G	-
Airdrie			G	G	G	A
Alexander IR						G+
Alexis IR				I	-	-
Ardmore	I	-	-	-	-	-
Arrowwood						I
Assumption IR				I	-	A
Athabasca					I	A
Athabasca Co 12						G
Atikameg						I
Banff		G	-	I	A	A
Barrhead				I(y)	-	I
Barrhead Co 11						I
Bassano						G
Beaumont					G	A
Beaver IR (Boyer IR)						A
Beaver Lake IR						I
Beaverlodge					I	I
Beaver Ranch IR						G
Beiseker						G
Bentley					I	I
Big Horn IR						G
Big Valley						I
Black Diamond					I	-
Blackfoot IR			A	A	A	A
Blood IR			G	A	A	A
Blue Cloud IR					I	-
Bluesky (see Fairview MD 136)						
Bluffton			I	-	-	-
Bon Accord						G
Bonnyville					I	G
Bonnyville MD 87						G
Bow Island				I(y)	G	I
Bowden				I	I	I
Bowness			G	-	-	-
Boyle						I

	Apr. 1944	Apr. 1953	Apr. 1963	Sept. 1971	Dec. 1978	Apr. 1992
Bushe River IR						A
Bruderheim					G	-
Cadotte Lake IR						G
Calgary	G	A	A	A	A	A
Calmar						I
Camrose				I	I	G
Canmore				I	-	G
Cardston				G	G	G
Cardston MD 6					I	I
Caroline						I
Carstairs					G	G
Child Lake IR						A
Claresholm					G	I
Clearwater 99						G
Cluny					I	G
Coaldale						G
Coalhurst						G
Cochrane						A
Cold Lake						G
Cold Lake IR						I
Coronation						I
Cremona						I
Crowsnest Pass						G
Daysland					I	-
Delburne				I	-	-
Devon					G	I
Didsbury						G
Drayton Valley						G
Drift Pile River IR						I
Drumheller				I	G	A
Duffield				G(3y)	-	-
Duncans's IR					G	G+
Eckville						I
Eden Valley IR						A
Edmonton	A	A	A	A	A	A
Edmonton Beach						G
Edson					I	G
Elk Point					G	I
Ermineskine IR				A	A	G+
Fairview			I	G	I(y)	G
Fairview MD 136 (Bluesky)				G	G	A
Falher					G	I
Ferintosh						I
Fishing Lake MC 10					G	G
Fitzgerald IR						I
Foothills MD 31						I
Flagstaff Co.					I	-

	Apr. 1944	Apr. 1953	Apr. 1963	Sept. 1971	Dec. 1978	Apr. 1992	
Ft. McKay IR						I	
Ft. McLeod			G	I	G	A	
Ft. McMurray					A	A	
Ft. Saskatchewan				I	A	A	
Ft. Vermilion						A	
Fox Creek				I(y)	I	I	
Fox Lake IR						A	
Frog Lake IR				I	I	G+	
Garden Creek IR						A	
Gibbons						G	
Gleichen			I	-	-	G+	
Gift Lake MC 3						A	
Glendon						I	
Grand Centre					I	A	
Grande Cache				I	I(y)	G	
Grande Prairie	I	I	-	I(y)	G+	A	
Grande Prairie Co 1					I	I	
Grimshaw					I(y)	G	
Hairy Hill						I	
Hanna						I	
Hay Lakes						I	
Hay River IR					I	-	
Hillcrest			I	-	-	-	
High Level						A	
High Prairie					G	G	
High River					A	G	
Hines Creek						G	
Hinton				I	G	G	
Hughenden					I	I	
Improvement District 8						G	
Improvement District 10					I	-	
Improvement District 14						G	
Improvement District 16						G	
Improvement District 17 North						I	
Improvement District 17 Centre MC							A
Improvement District 17 East A MC							G+
Improvement District 18 North						I	
Improvement District 18 South						G+	
Improvement District 20						G	
Improvement District 21					I	I	
Improvement District 22						I	
Improvement District 23					I	G	
Innisfail				G	G	A	
Jasper					I	G	
Jasper Place (later merged with Edmonton)			G				
Jean Baptiste Gambler IR						I	
Jean d'Or Prairies IR						A	

	Apr. 1944	Apr. 1953	Apr. 1963	Sept. 1971	Dec. 1978	Apr. 1992
Keg River MC						G
Kehiwin IR						G+
Kikino MC						I
Kneehill						I
Lac la Biche				I(y)	G	A
Lac Ste Anne Co 28					I	G
Lacombe					I	I
Lamont						G
Lamont Co					I	-
Lavoy					G	-
Leduc					A	A
Leduc Co 25					G	G
Lethbridge	I	-	-	A	A	A
Lethbridge Co					I	-
Linden					I	-
Lloydminster			I	-	G+	G?
Louis Bull IR			G	A	G+	G+
Manning						I
Mayerthorpe						G
McLennan						G
Meander River MC						A
Montana IR				G	G	G
Medicine Hat				I	A	A
Morrin					G	-
Morinville						A
Mountain View Co 17					G	G
Mundare						I
Myrnham						I
Nampa						I
O'Chiese IR						G
Okotoks				I	I	A
Olds				I	G	A
Oyen					I	-
Paddle Prairie MC 1						A
Parkland Co West					G	G
Paul Band IR (see Wabamun)						
Peace MD 135						I
Peace River					G(2y)	G+
Peerless Lake						G
Peevine					I	-
Peigan IR			A	A	A	A
Pelican Narrows						G
Penhold				G(2y)	I	-
Picture Butte						I
Pigeon Lake IR			G	?	G	G
Pincher Creek					G	A

	Apr. 1944	Apr. 1953	Apr. 1963	Sept. 1971	Dec. 1978	Apr. 1992
Pincher Creek MD 9						G
Ponoka						I
Ponoka Co 3					G	G
Provost Co.					I	-
Rainbow Lake						I
Raymond						I
Red Deer				A	A	A
Red Deer Co 23 South						G
Redcliff					I	G
Rimbey						G
Rocky Mountain House				G	G	A
Rocky View 44						I
Rycroft						G
Saddle Lake IR					G	G
St. Albert				G	A	A
St. Paul					G	G
St. Paul Co 19						I
Samson IR			G	A	A	G+
Sarcee IR						G
Sexsmith						I
Sherwood Park (see Strathcona County)						
Slave Lake						G
Smoky River MD 130						G
Special Area 3						G
Spruce Grove					I	A
Starland MD 47						I
Stavely					I	I
Steen River MC						G
Stettler Co 6						I
Stirling						I
Stoney IR			G	G	G	A
Stony Plain					G	I
Stony Plain IR						I
Strathcona Co. (Sherwood Park)			G	G	A	A
Strathmore					I	A
Sturgeon MD 90						A
Sturgeon Lake IR						G
Suffield CFB					G	G
Sunchild IR				A	?	G+
Sundre						I
Swan River IR						I
Sylvan Lake				I(y)	G	G
Taber			G	G	G	G
Tall Cree IR						A
Thorsby					I	-
Tofield						I

	Apr. 1944	Apr. 1953	Apr. 1963	Sept. 1971	Dec. 1978	Apr. 1992
Utikoomak Lake IR						G+
Valleyview						G
Vauxhall					I	I
Vegreville					G	-
Vermilion					G	G
Viking				I	I	G
Wabamun IR (Paul Band)			A	A	A	A
Wabasca IR						I
Wainwright					I	G
Wembley						I
Westlock					I	-
Wetaskiwin				G	G	A
Wetaskiwin Co 10						G
Whitecourt				I	I	-
Whitefish Lake IR						I
Wildwood		G	-	-	-	G
Willow Creek MD 26						G
Youngstown				I	-	-

Sources: NSA Department of Records 20 Apr. 1992;
The Bahá'í Faith 1844-1963: Information Statistical and Comparative; Canadian Bahá'í News/Bahá'í Canada; NSAA; AA.