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Restoring Nature: Ecology, Memory, and the Storm History of Vancouver's Stanley Park

ABSTRACT *Through an analysis of the forest restoration policies of the Vancouver Park Board and public reactions to periodic extreme weather events in the Lower Mainland in the twentieth century, this article examines the complicated interrelationship between history, memory, and ecology in the production of the landscape of Stanley Park. Urban park history in North America tends to focus on political, social, and cultural forces that shaped park design in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but does not account for the role of non-human natural forces. Using an environmental history approach to the study of Stanley Park, this article attempts to demonstrate the role nature played in reshaping the landscape and Park Board policies for British Columbia's best-known urban park. Two major windstorm events in 1934 and 1962 compelled the Park Board to pursue an extensive forest restoration programme for the park in order to re-create a version of nature with the past in mind based on popular perceptions of a 'virginal' forest. The Park Board's restoration policies reshaped the public imagination of nature by eliminating evidence of natural disturbance and disguising human interventions on the landscape. This created a collective amnesia about natural disturbance in Stanley Park, which persists to the present in light of recent storm events in 2006 and 2007. Powerful non-human forces have always reshaped the landscape of Stanley Park, but the public's ideal park landscape relies on the image of an undisturbed wilderness. The article argues that there was a dialectical relationship between popular perceptions of nature in the park and Park Board forest restoration policies that reinforced the image of the forest as an untouched natural environment.*

Au travers d'une analyse des politiques de reboisement pratiquées par le Conseil des parcs de Vancouver et des réactions du public face aux événements météorologiques extrêmes qui ont périodiquement touché la région de Vancouver au cours du XX^e^ siècle, cet article examine les liens complexes qui existent entre l'histoire, le souvenir et l'écologie qui ont façonné le paysage du parc Stanley. L'histoire des parcs urbains en Amérique du Nord traite généralement des forces politiques, sociales et culturelles qui ont influencé la conception des parcs aux XIX et XX^e^ siècles, mais elle n'aborde pas la question de l'influence des forces naturelles. À partir de l'histoire de

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l'environnement du parc Stanley, cet article vise à illustrer le rôle que la nature a joué dans l'aménagement du parc Stanley et dans les politiques du Conseil concernant le parc urbain le plus réputé de Colombie-Britannique. Deux tempêtes accompagnées de vents très forts, en 1934 et 1962, ont contraint le Conseil des parcs à entreprendre un programme de reboisement intensif pour redonner au parc Stanley l'apparence de forêt « virginale » que lui prêtaient les perceptions populaires. En effaçant toute trace des dégâts naturels et tout indice d'intervention humaine dans le paysage du parc, les politiques de réaménagement et de reboisement du Conseil des parcs ont influencé les conceptions mêmes que les gens se faisaient de la nature dans le parc. Tout ceci a engendré une amnésie collective concernant les dégâts naturels qui surviennent au parc Stanley, amnésie qui perdure à ce jour, comme l'attestent les tempêtes de 2006 – 2007. De tous temps, de puissantes forces naturelles ont refaçonné le paysage du parc Stanley; toutefois, l'image que le public se fait du parc idéal repose sur celle d'une nature sauvage ordonnée et imperturbable. Cet article soutient qu'il y a une relation dialectique entre les perceptions populaires de la nature dans le parc et les politiques de réaménagement et de reboisement du Conseil des parcs, qui a contribué à perpétuer l'image d'une forêt qui serait épargnée par les événements naturels.

There is a lot to be said about the adaptability of nature. Seeing the fractured remains of the glorious firs, cedars and hemlocks reminded me of the broken lives in the storms of human life. Life goes on without hoopla, fanfare or so much as a neighbour's 'How are you doing?' So spare me the chastisement of those who haven't jumped to attention because a few trees fell.

George Grunau, letter to the *Vancouver Sun* regarding 2006–2007 storm damage in Stanley Park, 19 January 2007.

Where are the Seven Sisters? The once world-renowned cluster of Douglas fir and western red cedar trees no longer stands in Stanley Park; the Vancouver Park Board removed the last of the group in the early 1960s, after years of watching the trees decay and rot. They were once a landmark feature of Stanley Park, immortalized by the poet/performer E. Pauline Johnson as the 'Cathedral Trees,' but they were more commonly known as the 'Seven Sisters' (fig. 1).[1] To Johnson, the trees were such majestic forest giants that 'there is no cathedral whose marble or onyx columns can vie with those straight, clean, brown tree-boles that teem with the sap and blood of life.' Though she praised

1 The origins of the second name are unknown. Possibly, it is a commemoration of the seven Sutherland sisters, who used to pose in drugstore windows in Vancouver as part of a marketing campaign in the early twentieth century.

FIGURE 1. The Seven Sisters or Cathedral Trees, shown here in 1910, were once a popular landmark of Stanley Park. They were reduced to a cluster of stumps after they died and were taken down in the 1960s. Source: City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), Major Matthews Photograph Collection, St Pk P230N263.

the forces of nature that crafted the fine trees over the human architecture of a cathedral, she found common ground between the two as somewhere one could experience 'elevating thoughts, some refinement of our coarser nature.' Echoing Johnson's sentiments, Catherine Mae MacLennan's 1935 booklet of poems and stories about Stanley Park referred to the Seven Sisters as 'an ancient grove of giant trees.' Just a few years before the Park Board removed the dying trees, local writer Allen Roy Evans described the Seven Sisters as 'a majestic family, impressive not only in appearance, but in the antiquity of their lineage.'[2]

These writers invested the trees with such powerful symbolic significance for Vancouverites that they became natural monuments

2 Richard M. Steele, *The Stanley Park Explorer* (North Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1985), 139; E. Pauline Johnson, *Legends of Vancouver* (1911; repr., Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997), 113–14; Catherine Mae MacLennan, *Rambling Round Stanley Park* (Vancouver: Roy Wrigley, 1935), 13; Alan Roy Evans, 'The Majestic Old Family that Rules Stanley Park' *The Province*, 12 Jan. 1957, magazine section, 8.

admired both for their girth and age. However, unlike the marble or onyx columns of an ancient European cathedral, the trees were far less enduring. Stonework and masonry weather and wear over time through the very slow and gradual processes of erosion, but the trees were living organisms. They grew and thrived in the park for decades, slowly changed shape, and played host to numerous other living things, but eventually died. As the marvelous trees rotted throughout the 1940s, the startling sound of cracking wood would occasionally thunder through the forest as masses of bark fell to the ground, leaving the forest giants a mere shadow of their former glory. In the face of tremendous public sentiment toward the trees, the Park Board tried to preserve what remained of the Seven Sisters by fencing off the area and planting ivy to secure the decomposing bark. After the trees finally died, the park superintendent had the tops of the trees removed, leaving only the trunks standing like 'giant fence posts towering starkly into the sky.' The Vancouver Park Board, under extreme public pressure to keep the trees standing, would not allow the dead trees to fall. And so they stood rotting until the early 1960s, when it became eminently clear that the last of them had to be taken down before they were blown over onto an unsuspecting admirer. Nature changed in Stanley Park and the city quietly lost Johnson's famous trees.[3]

The story of the Seven Sisters is more than a mere anecdote: It shows, in microcosm, the relationship between human culture, non-human nature, and Vancouver Parks Board policy. The North American parks movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inspired people to create boundaries on maps in order to protect nature from the impact of human societies, Beginning in the United States with the creation of vast urban landscape parks such as Central Park in New York City, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, and Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, the movement continued on with the creation of large national parks in the United States and Canada. Stanley Park was one of Canada's largest urban parks, and contained what many believed to be (and continue to believe is) a pristine Northwest Coast coniferous forest. In the late 1880s, as Vancouver grew between forest and shore, city officials cordoned off the nearly 1000-acre tract of trees from urbanization, but the preservationist impulses of the parks movement could not stem the natural forces that

3 City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), Board of Parks and Public Recreation, Board Minutes, MCR-47–6, 9 Jun. 1943; *Vancouver Sun*, 18 Mar. 1947, 9. Today, a plaque marks the place where the Seven Sisters once stood.

would always change Stanley Park itself. The case of the Seven Sisters illustrates the complexity of the relationship between popular perceptions of a pristine, unchanged wilderness in Stanley Park, Vancouver Park Board policy, and the unruly, non-human forces that continuously change the landscape. The visiting public admired the beauty and majesty of the Seven Sisters and perceived them as an ancient and enduring historical landmark, like a cathedral; the Park Board aimed to satisfy this perception by preserving and, eventually, restoring the dying trees. The board exercised this policy of preservation on a grander scale throughout Stanley Park through broad forest restoration work.

Historians of urban parks have sought to explain the political and social forces that shape the development and design of parks, but have not examined the role of nature itself as a historical agent. In Galen Cranz's seminal work on US urban parks, the author discusses the traditional division of urban park history into two periods: a romantic period lasting from the 1850s until 1900, and a reform, or rationalistic, period that began in the late nineteenth century and continued until the 1930s. During the romantic period, park promoters saw parks as places for quiet contemplation and rejuvenation through passive interaction with nature. By the turn of the century, a new group of park advocates challenged the elite view of nature in urban parks and called for more useable park spaces for active leisure and recreation. Numerous histories of urban parks, including earlier scholarly writings about Stanley Park, have adopted this model. The crucial distinction between these two phases of park history is primarily sociological, however, and this approach to urban park history does not illuminate the changing reciprocal relations between humans and the rest of nature. To fully understand the historical development of urban park design, we must consider not only the ways in which human ideas and actions have influenced park policy, but also the role of non-human nature. How did nature itself shape both the environment and human perceptions of Stanley Park? By applying the lessons of environmental history to these questions and stories, we can see how natural events in nature can be agents of historical change.[4]

4 Most park historians use this periodization for urban park history. Galen Cranz's *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in* America (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982) sharply draws the line between what she calls the romantic park and the reform park at 1900. Terrence Young builds upon Cranz's model, but argues that the transition happens at different times in different cities in the United States, and can first be observed in the late nineteenth century. An important distinction between Cranz's and Young's

Environmental historians take an approach to their topic that incorporates the role of nature as an agent of change over time. Emerging as a line of enquiry in the 1960s and 1970s in the US, alongside the modern environmental movement, Carolyn Merchant says that environmental history 'asserts the idea of nature as a historical actor.' In his seminal essay 'Doing Environmental History,' Donald Worster calls upon historians to reject 'the conventional assumption that human experience has been exempt from natural constraints,' requiring historians to critically rethink the notion of agency. Historians traditionally have relied too heavily on a Kantian sense of autonomy that emphasizes intentionality and moral choice,

arguments is that Young stresses that his examination of the two periods in San Francisco focuses on the cultural and environmental differences, while Cranz's study is sociological in its treatment of ideas of the romantic and reform park. Also, Young uses the term 'rationalistic,' rather than 'reform,' for the second phase, inspired by Samuel P. Hays's book *Conservation and Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959). Young sees the second phase as one similar to the progressive conservation movement, in which planners sought a more efficient use and development of natural resources. David Schuyler also draws a similar comparison in *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar's *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992) provides one of the most comprehensive social and political histories of the first major landscape urban park in the US. Cranz's model of urban park history influenced early scholarly writing about Stanley Park, including W.C. McKee, 'The Vancouver Park System, 1886–1929: A Product of Local Businessmen,' in *Recreational Land Use: Perspectives on Its Evolution in Canada*, ed. Geoffrey Wall and John Marsh (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982) 299–310; Robert A.J. McDonald, '"Holy Retreat' or 'Practical Breathing Spot"?: Class Perceptions of Vancouver's Stanley Park, 1910–1913,' *Canadian Historical Review* 45, no. 2 (1984): 127–53; Mark Leirer, 'The Deadman's Island Dispute of 1899: A Monument to Stupidity and Vandalism,' *British Columbia Historical News* 26, no. 3 (1993): 22–4. More recent work includes the history of Stanley Park by Jean Barman in *Stanley Park's Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch and Brockton Point* (Vancouver: Harbour, 2006), which focuses on the removal of the settler families and aboriginal people who once lived in the park, but does not provide a detailed treatment of the role of nature itself in park policy or changing ideas of wilderness. Work by Renisa Mawani in 'Imperial Legacies (Post) Colonial Identities: Law, Space and the Making of Stanley Park, 1859–2001' (*Law Text Culture* 7 [2003]: 98–141) and 'Genealogies of the Land: Aboriginality, Law, and Territory in Vancouver's Stanley Park' (*Social and Legal Studies* 14, no.3 [2005]: 315–39) broadens the discussion of park creation to examine sociological aspects of making park space and the relationship between aboriginal peoples and the law.

an understanding of agency that overlooks the enormously important role of unintentional consequences in history. While non-human forces, such as earthquakes or hurricanes, may lack a sense of moral choice or intentional decision making, they unquestionably cause changes that have repercussions for human societies. As well, human actions undertaken with very specific intentions always produce unintended results, especially in relation to competing autonomous forces. Consequently, the criterion of intentionality in this case does not adequately define agency.[5]

Recent literature by environmental historians of national and provincial parks in Canada now places greater emphasis on the impact of non-human nature in the history of park development. Alan MacEachern's work on national parks in Atlantic Canada demonstrates how the natural landscapes of eastern Canada reshaped Canadian Parks Branch policy that, until the 1930s, was heavily influenced by western landscapes. Claire Campbell's analysis of the Georgian Bay archipelago convincingly explains the role of the natural environment in perpetuating human perceptions of this nationally iconic landscape as a wilderness area. Animals play a pivotal role in John Sandlos's recent narrative regarding wildlife management in national parks in Ontario.[6]

By building upon these trends in Canadian environmental history, we can examine the ways in which nature failed to fulfill human expectations for an ideal urban park landscape in Vancouver, and how the Vancouver Park Board designed policy to compensate for an uncooperative environment. The Park Board's restoration policies reshaped the public imagination of nature by eliminating evidence of natural disturbance and disguising human interventions

5 Carolyn Merchant, 'The Theoretical Structure of Ecological Revolutions,' *Environmental Review* 11, no. 4 (1987): 267; Donald Worster, 'Appendix: Doing Environmental History,' in *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, ed. Donald Worster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 290; for an excellent discussion of nature as an autonomous agent see Keekok Lee, 'Is Nature Autonomous?' in *Recognizing the Autonomy of Nature: Theory and Practice*, ed. Thomas Heyd (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 54–74.

6 Alan MacEachern, *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935–1970* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Claire Elizabeth Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind: Nature and History in Georgian Bay* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); John Sandlos, 'Federal Spaces, Local Conflicts: National Parks and the Exclusionary Politics of the Conservation Movement in Ontario, 1900–1935,' *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 16 (2005): 293–318.

on the landscape. Powerful non-human forces have always reshaped the landscape of Stanley Park, but the public's ideal park landscape relies on the image of an undisturbed wilderness. The conflict between ideal and actual shows a dialectical relationship between popular perceptions of nature in the park and Park Board forest restoration policies that reinforced the image of the forest as an untouched natural environment. Crucial to this perception was the idea that the forest was 'virginal,' a concept that embodied a sense of originality. By recreating a nature that was 'pristine' or 'virginal,' the Park Board's forest restoration work perpetuated the popular idea that the park was a piece of Vancouver's past. Furthermore, forest restoration was directly influenced by the regular occurrence of powerful windstorms on the Northwest Coast that uprooted and blew down thousands of trees in Stanley Park, beginning with a major extreme weather event in 1934. The Park Board created forest restoration policies to rein in the entropic and unpredictable natural forces that have always shaped the landscape of the Stanley Park peninsula. By deliberately erasing the dynamic and chaotic characteristics of non-human nature in the park, the board composed the illusion of a static portrait of a natural forest, one that was intended to recreate a vignette of primitive British Columbia. Forest restoration from the 1930s to the 1960s strove to return the park to a former state, informed by an imagined vision of nature's past, where the forest existed free from human disturbance. The Park Board aspired to satisfy the prevailing myth of Stanley Park – one that characterized the park as a pre-contact wilderness – by resisting the autonomous natural forces that continuously alter the appearance of the landscape, while simultaneously concealing its active management of the forest. The image of an undisturbed natural forest in Stanley Park depended on the board's elaborate restoration work.

These restoration efforts were so convincing that, by the 1960s, the popular perception of nature in the park as historically preserved was consolidated. When the hurricane-force winds of Typhoon Freda ravaged Stanley Park in 1962, the public was shocked by the transformation of the park landscape as well as by the Board's forest restoration efforts. The sounds and images of Park Board chainsaws and logging trucks in Stanley Park as the damage was repaired jarred a confused public, who were convinced that the park was supposed to be an untouched, natural environment. The Park Board's effective restoration efforts had produced a collective amnesia about natural disturbances in the park, but the reality is that there is a long history of storms tearing up the park's forest and leaving fallen timber strewn

about the woods. Although newspaper reports and editorials described Typhoon Freda as a rare and unusual occurrence, this characterization is belied by the history of repeated storms in Stanley Park. The gales of Freda had been preceded by the 1934 storm, and the Park Board had applied an extensive restoration program from the 1930s to the 1960s in order to return Stanley Park to its former condition. The reconstructed forest was such a powerful illusion of 'naturalness' that it obscured public memory, and past disturbances – by human and non-human forces – were largely forgotten. As a result, the public in the 1930s *encouraged* the Park Board to restore Stanley Park to the appearance of an undisturbed past condition, but by the 1960s, the public was more ambivalent about human interventions in the park.

OCTOBER 1962

Edward Lorenz might have found that the events on the Northwest Coast in October 1962 affirmed his soon-to-be infamous theory of the 'butterfly effect.'[7] While we may not be able to retrace the destructive path of Typhoon Freda to the flap of a butterfly's wings in a Chinese park, its origins were nearly as remote. The 1962 storm season had been particularly volatile in the southwestern Pacific. After recording twenty-four typhoons in 1962, the Joint Typhoon Warning Center[8] noted that '[a] record year for typhoons has gone into the climatology books,' the previous record being twenty-one typhoons in 1951.[9] Freda, the nineteenth and most easterly typhoon of the year, formed off the coast of Japan on 30 September (fig. 2). From 3 October until 10 October, the wayward cyclone twisted safely eastward across the Pacific, making it primarily a nautical threat. However, as the storm dissipated near the International Date Line, it lumbered slowly for a day before drawing further warmth and moisture from the

7 Lorenz developed the butterfly effect analogy in the 1960s to explain the complexities of weather prediction. He posited that there were an infinite number of minute factors that could produce an infinite number of meteorological outcomes; therefore, the flap of a butterfly's wings in Asia could theoretically cause a hurricane in the Caribbean. In essence, he argued that there were no ultimate predictable patterns in weather. This theory formed a foundation for the development of later chaos and complexity theories.

8 The JTWC is a joint task force of the United States Navy and Air Force that provides tropical cyclone warnings for American protectorates and military bases in the Asia-Pacific region.

9 Fleet Weather Central/Joint Typhoon Warning Center, *Annual Typhoon Report, 1962*, 29.

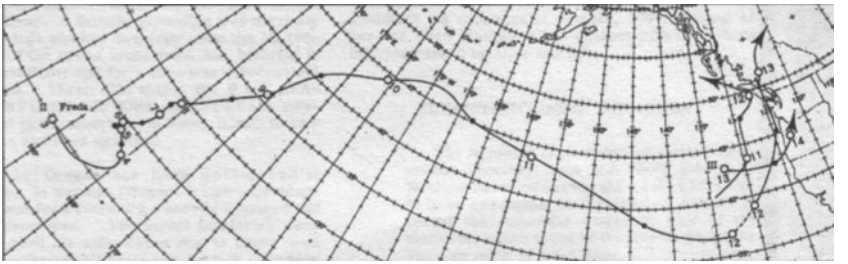

FIGURE 2. The storm track of Typhoon Freda from 3 October 1962 to 13 October 1962. The storm was regenerated on 10 October 1962 as an extra-tropical cyclone and cut up the Pacific coast of North America from California to British Columbia, causing millions of dollars of damage and killing several people. Source: *Mariners' Weather Log* 7, no. 1 (1963): 16.

mid-Pacific waters. The additional moisture reinvigorated the typhoon as an extra-tropical cyclone that picked up speed and turned north toward California on 12 October.[10] The storm travelled up the US coast through Oregon and Washington before striking Vancouver in the late evening of the same day and into the early morning of 13 October, finally passing the city and moving further north.[11]

The circuitous path of the storm cut a swath up the Pacific coast of North America with devastating results. The storm reached its peak intensity on 12 October over Brookings, Oregon, causing an estimated $225–260 million worth of damage before continuing northward. Thirty-one people in the United States were killed as a result of the storm, and damage included overturned boats and airplanes, minor

10 Although the storm was commonly referred to as a 'typhoon,' the characteristics of this storm system were quite different from a typhoon. The storm was an extra-tropical cyclone, that is to say, a weather system that usually occurs in the mid to high latitudes in regions of large horizontal temperature variations known as frontal zones. They vary in intensity from ordinary cloud cover to extreme winds and thunderstorms. The term 'typhoon' refers to tropical cyclones that occur in the western Pacific.

11 Fleet Weather Central/Joint Typhoon Warning Center, *Annual Typhoon Report, 1962*, 29; Jerome Namias, 'Large-Scale Air-Sea Interactions Over the North Pacific from Summer 1962 through the Subsequent Winter,' *Journal of Geophysical Research* 68, no. 22 (1963): 6171–86; Fred W. Decker, Owen P. Cramer, and Byron R. Harper, 'The Columbus Day 'Big Blow' in Oregon,' *Weather wise*, December 1962: 238–45; Robert E. Lynott and Owen P. Cramer, 'Detailed Analysis of the 1962 Columbus Day Windstorm in Oregon and Washington,' *Monthly Weather Review* 94, no. 2 (1966): 105–17.

damage to buildings, and significant power outages and disruptions to communications. The lumber industry suffered the greatest economic devastation, as Freda blew down an estimated 10 billion board feet of timber in Oregon and Washington. This powerful extra-tropical cyclone, according to one weather report, 'took the greatest toll in death and destruction of any wind storm in the history of the Pacific Northwest.' Although the storm was weakening by the evening of 12 October, it still caused considerable damage in Vancouver.[12]

A smaller windstorm first struck Vancouver on the evening of 11 October, before the arrival of Freda, and brought winds strong enough to cause significant power outages in parts of the Lower Mainland. Meteorological forecasters failed to predict the subsequent havoc Freda would cause, their only warning coming the day before that '[a] disturbance moving inland this evening should bring a return to the showery weather of the past few days.' During the advance storm, one man was killed when he stepped on a downed power line, while falling trees in Stanley Park trapped cars on the causeway connector leading to the Lions Gate Bridge. Letitia Williams of North Vancouver was luckily left unharmed when a collapsing park tree crushed the hood of her car. With reports of the storm damage in northern California, forecasters warned that the larger storm would eventually reach Vancouver later that night.[13]

12 Lynott and Cramer, 'Detailed Analysis of the 1962 Columbus Day Windstorm in Oregon and Washington,' 105; Arthur Daley, 'Storm Damage,' *New York Times*, 16 Oct. 1962, 68; Decker, Cramer, and Harper, 'The Columbus Day 'Big Blow' in Oregon,' 241.

13 *Vancouver Sun*, 11 Oct. 1962, 3; 12 Oct. 1962, 1–3. The failure to provide adequate weather forecasting was merely a by-product of the state of weather prediction in Canada in the 1960s. The Meteorological Service of Canada had been in operation in some form since the 1840s and kept apace with developments in the field of weather prediction in Western Europe and the United States. British Columbia established its first forecast office in 1890. While the Meteorological Service had grown into a more sophisticated network for weather prediction and started to use new radar technologies developed during the war, weather forecasting in 1962 had only recently started to apply computer technology for more accurate numerical predictions. Even though the Meteorological Service failed to provide adequate warning of the first storm, officials in Vancouver should have been more prepared for the second. For a comprehensive administrative history of the Meteorological Service of Canada and a succinct history of developments in meteorological sciences, see Morley Thomas, *The Beginnings of Canadian Meteorology* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1991); *Forecasts for Flying: Meteorology in Canada, 1918–1939* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1996); *Metmen in Wartime: Meteorology in Canada, 1939–1945* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2001); John D. Cox, *Storm Watchers: The Turbulent History of*

At about 11 PM on 12 October, the extra-tropical cyclone struck Vancouver and battered the city until it finally passed by 3 AM the following morning. The weather station at Sea Island reported maximum gusts of up to 126 kilometres per hour. Although the storm had been in decline since it passed over Oregon, it still maintained hurricane-force winds powerful enough to rip off the steeple of the Evangelical Tabernacle on Tenth Avenue. The turbulent weather killed five people overnight: Two men died of heart attacks while attempting to repair rooftop television aerials; one man was killed when his car skidded off the road; another was crushed beneath a tree in Richmond. A woman was killed when yet another tree fell on a car in Stanley Park on the causeway connector: Renee Archibald was killed when a two-foot-thick hemlock toppled over onto her car as she rode through Stanley Park with her daughter and son-in-law. The All-Canada Insurance Federation estimated approximately $10-million-worth of damage for private property in the Lower Mainland. City council estimated that the city's clean-up efforts would cost the taxpayer about $176,700, most of which would be directed toward reconstruction efforts in Stanley Park.[14]

While the remnants of Typhoon Freda caused death and destruction throughout Vancouver and the surrounding region, the greatest cost for the city arose from the cleanup and restoration of Stanley Park. Freda was defined as a disaster in part because of its impact on nature in the park. Reporters described the park as 'a sight to shock any Vancouverite as the 1000-acre peninsula lies beneath tons of splintered wood.' Others bemoaned the loss of the park's trees, and described the event as a 'slaughter.' Even the national media described 'Stanley Park, normally one of the city's most picturesque spots, [as] one of the ugliest in the midst of the storm.' High winds cleared vast tracts of tree cover (an estimated 3000 trees were lost), and dramatically altered the park's landscape (fig. 3). The visceral and immediate reaction of the community was to see the storm

Weather Prediction from Franklin's Kite to El Nino (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2002).

14 Environment Canada, *Daily Data Report for October 1962*, http://www.climate.weatheroffice.ec.gc.ca/climateData/dailydata_e.html; *Vancouver Sun*, 13 Oct. 1962, 1–3; 15 Oct. 1962, 1; 16 Oct. 1962, 1. Despite the facts that a similar incident had occurred the night before, and that forecasters warned that a second storm was approaching, city officials irresponsibly permitted traffic to travel through Stanley Park to the Lions Gate Bridge. Forty vehicles were trapped in the park while emergency service workers struggled to make their way through the debris.

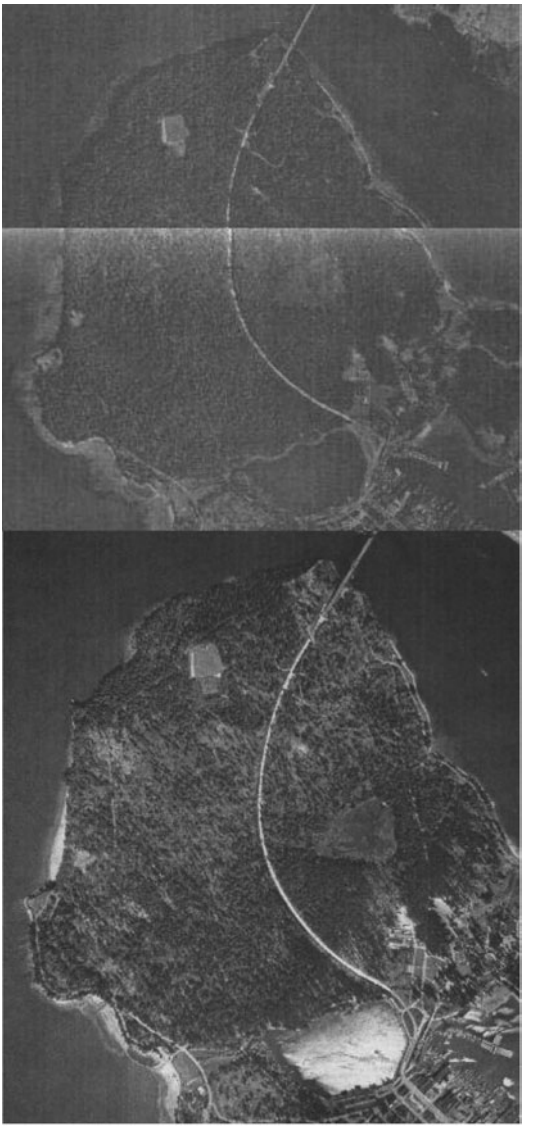

FIGURE 3. The image above is a composite of two aerial photographs of Stanley Park taken in 1957 before the storm. The image below shows the park landscape in 1963, less than a year after Typhoon Freda struck Vancouver. Considerable portions of the park were cleared and thinned of tree cover. Source: UBC Geography Air Photo Library, 1957 BC2350:50, BC 2350:51; 1963 BC5059:231.

simultaneously as a tragedy and an anomaly. The meandering track that had taken Typhoon Freda along an 'anomalous easterly flow' was used as evidence that the destruction of the trees in Stanley Park was an unprecedented fluke. However, a survey of Stanley Park's storm history reveals that while Typhoon Freda may have been the most powerful storm to hit Vancouver in recorded memory, it was not an entirely unusual event.[15]

STORM PARK

One astute writer for *The Province* newspaper saw in the 1962 storm a reflection of a similar event that occurred nearly thirty years earlier. As he wrote about the efforts to clear away fallen trees and debris in order to recover the 'dignity' of the park, Jack McCaugherty also reminded his readers of the ravages of a storm three decades before Typhoon Freda. That storm occurred on 21 October 1934, and was described in hauntingly familiar terms. Wind gusts with speeds of up to eighty kilometers per hour were recorded, which 'threw mainland telephone, telegraph and electrical systems into a confusion of broken wires and fallen poles.' The city was battered and damaged in almost the same fashion as the 1962 storm, where '[r]oofs were blown off buildings, electric signs were hurled to the streets, hundreds of trees were blown down, streetcar service was interrupted, and scores of small boats were dashed ashore.' And, not unlike the gales of Freda, the 1934 storm laid waste to an estimated 2000 trees in Stanley Park, 1000 short of the losses in 1962 (fig. 4). The park superintendent estimated that nearly $4500 (a considerable portion of the Park Board annual budget in 1934) would be needed in the first year alone to clean up and restore just a small portion of the damaged park.[16]

The 1934 storm was the most powerful recorded storm to hit the Northwest Coast to that time, and its record was not surpassed until 1962. Like Freda, the storm of 1934 also passed over Oregon and Washington, leaving a trail of death, destruction, and debris. However, without radar and weather observation records, we will never know whether or not the 1934 storm was also an extra-tropical cyclone caused by an errant typhoon in the western Pacific, like Freda.

15 *Vancouver Sun*, 16 Oct. 1962, 10; *The Province*, 15 Dec. 1962, 4; *Globe and Mail*, 15 Oct. 1962, 2; Raymond A. Green, 'The Weather and Circulation of October 1962: A Warm Month with a Mid-Month Circulation Reversal,' *Monthly Weather Review*, January 1963: 46.

16 *The Province*, 7 Jan. 1963, 5; *Daily Province*, 22 Oct. 1934, 1; CVA. Board of Parks and Recreation Fonds, *Annual Reports 1934*, PDS 12.

FIGURE 4. The images above from the 1934 storm are only differentiated from scenes in 1962 by the make of the car and the clothing of the man in the picture. Source: CVA, Photograph Collection, CVA 392–1616; CVA 392–1621.

The renowned meteorological researcher Jerome Namias of the US Weather Bureau produced a study of Typhoon Freda that suggested that the events of 1962 were part of a cyclical storm pattern in the Pacific Ocean. Namias specifically cited the abnormally warm sea-surface temperatures in the eastern Pacific in 1962 that

contributed to the reinvigoration of Freda. He concluded that 'the formation, growth, decay, and subsequent redevelopment of typhoon Freda along a most peculiar path were probably prescribed well in advance by interactive large-scale patterns of temperature and circulation in the ocean and atmosphere.' This study contributed, along with many others, to the study of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomenon.[17] If the storm track of Typhoon Freda was related to the warm sea-surface temperatures produced by ENSO, then storms like Freda could, theoretically, occur cyclically along with these larger atmospheric and oceanographic patterns. The notion of such storm cycles forces us, then, to rethink the term 'anomalous' in reference to Typhoon Freda. The storm was the most powerful ever to hit the region, so certainly it can in some respects be described as unique, but the storm history of Stanley Park suggests that this was a punctuated event on a continuum of windstorms over a long period of time.[18]

The storms of 1934 and 1962 were two of the most powerful extreme weather events to hit Stanley Park in the twentieth century, but were part of a larger pattern of windstorms. Figure 5 shows a timeline of all the storms recorded in the Park Board minutes and annual reports from 1900 to 1960 that caused significant damage to the forest of Stanley Park, and required clearing and reconstruction. During this sixty-year period, Stanley Park was struck by nineteen separate windstorms powerful enough to blow down dozens to hundreds of trees throughout the park. The first storm, recorded on Christmas Day in 1901, was said to have done 'more felling of trees in the park and on the park road than men with axes could accomplish in two or three years work.' The park superintendent estimated that the big storm on 31 December 1912 destroyed up to seventy-five trees around Ferguson Point and Second Beach. Smaller storms, like the ones in 1915, only knocked over a couple dozen trees but had the potential to cause considerable danger by tossing trees across paths and roadways. A report from 1915 noted that the falling trees were 'a very real danger to the public who may happen to be in this neighbourhood, and should an accident occur, the question of

17 ENSO commonly refers to 'the active ocean component of a vast, Pacific basin-wide oscillation in air mass and ocean temperature.' Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2002), 17.

18 Jerome Namias, 'Large-Scale Air-Sea Interactions Over the North Pacific from Summer 1962 through the Subsequent Winter,' *Journal of Geophysical Research* 68, no. 22 (1963): 6180.

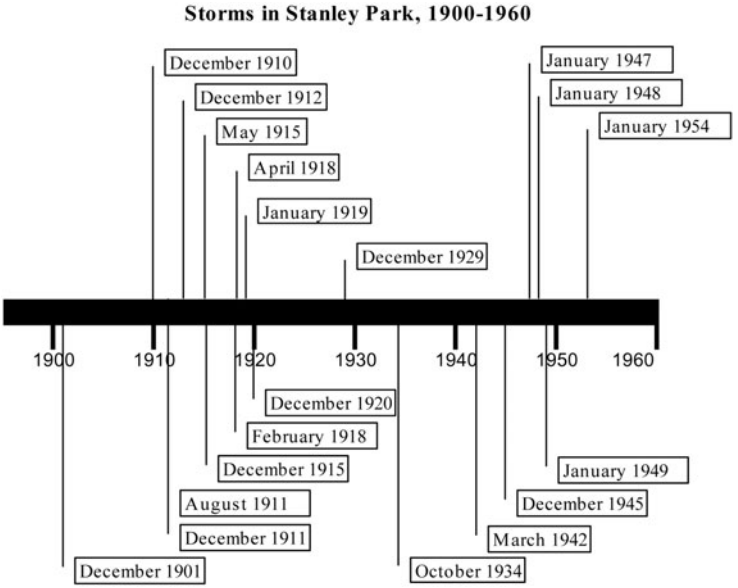

FIGURE 5. Timeline of storms that caused disturbance to the forest in Stanley Park from 1900 to 1960. Sources: CVA, Board of Parks and Public Recreation, *Board Minutes*, MCR-47; CVA., Board of Parks and Recreation Fonds, *Annual Reports*, PDS 12.

responsibility would undoubtedly arise.' Given the frequency of such events, the occurrence of severe windstorms in Stanley Park should not be considered unusual or surprising, especially in light of the most recent storms to strike the park in 2006 and 2007.[19]

The extra-tropical cyclone that stuck Vancouver in 1962 may have been the largest storm to disturb the park, but it certainly was not out of the ordinary. In fact, it fit quite neatly into a pattern of disturbance by extreme weather in Vancouver for more than half a century. The storm history of Stanley Park demonstrates that natural weather forces have been primary agents in shaping its landscape. The public's shock and dismay in 1962, however, suggest that this pattern of regular windstorms in Stanley Park was absent from public memory. Why, if the park had been hit by nineteen different windstorms prior to Typhoon Freda, did the public find this storm so surprising?

19 *The Province*, 30 Dec. 1901, 4; CVA, Board of Parks and Public Recreation, *Board Minutes*, MCR-47–1, 8 Jan. 1913; *Minutes*, MCR 47–2, 22 Dec. 1915.

The answer is rooted in the surreptitious restoration policies of the Park Board that aimed to erase signs of natural and human disturbance from the landscape of Stanley Park.

RESISTING THE AUTONOMY OF NATURE

The restoration policies of the Park Board, developed after the 1934 storm, represented a concerted effort to resist the random and autonomous forces of nature that altered the landscape of the park.[20] When the park was created in the late 1880s, the Park Board largely conceived of its own role as a steward for the preservation of nature in Stanley Park. The board sought to improve nature by opening up roadways and paths so the public could access the solitude of the forest. An acute insect outbreak of hemlock loopers and bark beetles in 1910 forced the Park Board to take a more active role in the management of the forest through the application of new forest conservation measures that included the use of insecticides, more elaborate fire suppression techniques, and debris removal. The board readily accepted this new role as an active manager for the improvement of nature in Stanley Park; however, nature very quickly proved to be a non-compliant partner in this endeavour. Regular windstorms created a messy and untidy tangle of fallen trees, rotting stumps, and moss-covered logs strewn about the park; the 1934 storm left such an indelible mark on the forest that it compelled the Park Board to consider a new restoration policy.

Ecological restoration today is one of the most controversial responses to the modern ecological crisis. Two of the leading voices in support of ecological restoration, William R. Jordan III and Frederick Turner, both view this approach as a superior method of stewardship to older methods of conservation and preservation. They see a fundamental flaw in preservation efforts that seek to eliminate all human interventions in nature to keep the environment 'pure,' and reject this approach because it defines nature as homeostatic and separate from humans. As Turner asserts, '[o]ur job is not to leave nature alone or to coexist peacefully with it; we *are* it, we are its future, its promise, its purpose.' Jordan sees hope in ecological restoration,

20 For more discussion and debate on nature as autonomous, see Thomas Heyd, ed., *Recognizing the Autonomy of Nature* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2005). Keekok Lee, in her essay 'Is Nature Autonomous?,' very clearly lays out the theoretical foundation for defining nature as autonomous. In *Recognizing the Autonomy of Nature: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 54–74.

in part because it 'asks not how nature may be kept pure and uncontaminated but rather just how it is actually being affected by human activities, and how this influence can be reversed.' Together, they view restoration as an instructive means of re-evaluating and realigning our place in the natural world.[21]

Jordan and Turner, of course, have their detractors. Eric Katz and Robert Elliot see ecological restoration as a potential environmental threat. Katz infamously refers to restoration as a 'big lie' that could potentially be given as justification for unrestrained environmental degradation on the grounds that the earth can always be restored to a healthy condition at a later time. Elliot echoes this warning in regard to what he sees as 'faking nature.' He warns that '[i]f natural value can be and will be restored, then the obligation to leave wild nature alone is weakened, perhaps to the point where it has little force, provided, of course, that restoration of natural values is later accomplished.' Katz and Elliot both rely, in part, on a perspective that accepts a rigid dichotomy between nature and culture. An artificially restored environment can never truly be 'natural,' by their measure, because it is has been changed by human intervention.[22]

The history of environmental restoration began long before the current debates. Marcus Hall demonstrates that the idea that humans can convert 'damaged lands into former ideal states is part of a tradition that is as old as maintaining a garden,' one of the most ancient traditions in Western civilization. Richard Grove's research reveals that Western concern over the restoration of degraded forests has its origins in the earliest European colonization projects, particularly on tropical islands. The crucial point in both these works is that humans have approached the restoration of degraded environments differently over time. Hall adds that Americans and Europeans have historically pursued environmental restoration in significantly different ways. He contends that Americans have sought to restore landscapes to an indigenous, pre-European condition, where nature exists as an untouched wilderness, while Europeans have aimed

21 Frederick Turner, 'The Invented Landscape,' in *Beyond Preservation: Restoring and Inventing Landscapes*, ed. A. Dwight Baldwin Jr., Judith de Luce, and Carl Pletsch (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 51; William R. Jordan III, '"Sunflower Forest": Ecological Restoration as the Basis for a New Environmental Paradigm,' in *Beyond Preservation*, 17–34.

22 Eric Katz, 'The Big Lie: Human Restoration of Nature,' in *Nature as Subject: Human Obligation and Natural Community*, ed. Eric Katz (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997) 93–108; Robert Elliot, *Faking Nature: The Ethics of Environmental Restoration* (London: Routledge, 1997), 76.

to restore landscapes of the past that incorporate humans. The past that Americans seek to restore is an ahistoric re-creation of mythic wilds that never existed, while Europeans attempt to '*renature historic* conditions [italics in original].'[23]

Following the American model of environmental restoration, the Park Board's approach to restoring Stanley Park after the 1934 storm was to re-create an ideal version of nature with the past in mind. After an inspection of major storm damage in the park in December 1901, the chairman of the Park Board, Robert Tatlow, offered his opinion on the condition of Stanley Park. He believed that 'it [would] cost a considerable amount of money to restore the park to its former condition,' assuming that restoration was the most obvious course of action. His remark captures the foundation of future restoration efforts, which aimed to restore the park to some condition preceding the natural disturbance that changed the appearance of the landscape. Given the financial constraints on the Park Board in its early years, it did not embark on a concerted restoration policy until after the 1934 storm.

The restoration of Stanley Park after that windstorm solidified the forestry policies that the Park Board had adopted in 1931 in response to a series of insect outbreaks that began in 1910. The Park Board developed these forest conservation policies based on years of research conducted by federal forest entomologists. These scientists promoted the clearance of dead trees, the complete removal of hemlock and spruce species, and recommended the reconstruction of the forest through extensive planting of Douglas fir. James Malcolm Swaine, chief of Forest Entomology, believed that fir was less susceptible to insect infestations and would prove a more durable tree species for park purposes. He recommended, 'that for the sake of the scenic effect in the Park the dying tops of the cedars be cut off.' He also encouraged the board to purge the park of red alder, a deciduous succession species that typically colonized areas of recent disturbance in Pacific Northwest coniferous forests. These measures would effectively erase the disturbance landscape by eliminating stages of ecological succession and replacing them with the appearance of a more stable condition – what ecologists call a climax landscape – more in keeping with popular perceptions of nature in Stanley Park.[24]

23 Marcus Hall, *Earth Repair: A Transatlantic History of Environmental Restoration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 218, 6; Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

24 CVA, Board of Parks and Recreation Fonds, Correspondence, Stanley Park, 1920–1921, *Forestry in Stanley Park: Extracts from Superintendent's Annual*

Following the 1934 windstorms, the Park Board began to apply this forestry policy to the work of restoration. The October storm and a particularly harsh snowstorm in January 1935 left the park in disarray. By February, the board had done very little to clear away the debris from the two storms and the public grew concerned. Public reaction to the storms in the 1930s reveals that popular perceptions of nature in Stanley Park relied on the belief that a natural forest should appear undisturbed, and that the Park Board had a responsibility to restore that appearance when nature proved uncooperative. *The Province* published an urgent plea for emergency funds to clean up Stanley Park. While the newspaper was dismayed by the devastation, it remained optimistic, claiming that '[i]t can be reclaimed; it can be restored; it can be made more glorious than ever.' But, with the dry summer season approaching, some feared that the fallen debris would fuel a massive fire that would destroy Stanley Park. The newspaper's plea launched a 'Save the Park' campaign with broad support throughout the city. Speaking in support of the campaign, former mayor Louis D. Taylor remarked, 'In the past in times of great emergency Vancouver has always found a way to meet it. The same should hold true today and there should not be any delay in righting the menacing situation in the park.' A joint delegation of the city council and Park Board secured $20,000 from the provincial government for a relief project to restore Stanley Park to its former condition, contingent upon the city providing an additional $5000. The board also produced a film of the park to display the destruction to the federal government in an effort to obtain more funding for reforestation.[25]

Expert foresters played a prominent role in determining environmental restoration policy for Stanley Park in the 1930s. P.Z. Caverhill, chief forester of BC, produced a report for the Park Board that embodied several key components of the Park Board's 1931 forestry policy. He argued that the fallen trees posed a threat to the park because they increased the risk of fire, provided breeding grounds for insects, and lessened the aesthetic value of the park. Caverhill's chief concern was the perceived aesthetic values of the forest in Stanley Park:

> To my mind the question is not one of controversy as to the number of trees that have been destroyed (I saw enough to state positively that they

Reports, 49-B-5, files 2–6; CVA. Board of Parks and Public Recreation. *Board Minutes*. MCR 47–4, 10 Nov. 1920.

25 *Daily Province*, 6 Feb. 1935, 1; 8 Feb. 1935, 1–2; 20 Feb. 1935, 4; 22 Feb. 1935, 3.

can be numbered in thousands), but how the esthetic [sic] value of the Park can best be restored, and it must be borne in mind that unless this debris is removed the depressing effect will grow worse instead of better.[26]

The 'depressing effect' was the impact of a visually disturbed landscape upon the public mind. By Caverhill's estimation, Stanley Park's natural value as a world-renowned park was based on the appearance of an undisturbed, ancient, coniferous forest. It was incumbent upon the Park Board to restore this effect by clearing away the debris and reforesting the park with Douglas fir.

Even federal officials believed that the value of Stanley Park lay in its condition as a pristine forest. The Minister of the Interior wrote to the Minister of Labour to seek federal dollars for the restoration effort, claiming, 'this area transcends in importance the value of an ordinary city park because it contains one of the few remnants of virgin forest typical of Pacific coast conditions.' His remarks embodied the popular perception that Stanley Park was a pre-contact specimen of a Northwest Coast forest. The eventual funding agreement between the Park Board and the federal government had the stated goal of 'preserving and restoring park values,' which were based on the re-creation of the appearance of a virginal forest.[27]

At its most basic level, the Park Board's approach to environmental restoration in the 1930s amounted to a form of landscape gardening. Under pressure from a public that envisioned nature in the park as an undisturbed wilderness, the Park Board set out to erase the disturbed landscape by clearing the fallen trees and reforesting cleared areas with Douglas fir. It never occurred to Park Board officials to leave the fallen trees to decompose on the forest floor. According to

26 CVA, Board of Parks and Public Recreation, *Board Minutes*, MCR 47–5, 21 Feb. 1935; Library and Archives of Canada (hereafter LAC), Dominion Unemployment Relief Commissioner, Department of Labour, Correspondence with British Columbia re Dominion–British Columbia Agreement, 1935 respecting improvements to Stanley Park, Vancouver, Letter from P.Z. Caverhill, Chief Forester of British Columbia, Department of Lands, Forest Branch, to Chairman of the Board of Park Commissioners, RG27-H-1. File Y1–8-11, Feb. 13, 1935.

27 LAC, Dominion Unemployment Relief Commissioner, Department of Labour, Correspondence with British Columbia re Dominion–British Columbia Agreement, 1935 respecting improvements to Stanley Park, Vancouver, Letter from T.G. Murphy, Minister of the Interior to W.A. Gordon, Minister of Labour, RG27-H-1. File Y1–8-11, 2 May 1935; Memorandum of Agreement entered into this sixth day of November, 1935 between the Dominion of Canada and the Vancouver Board of Park Commissioners.

Seth R. Reice, this assumption is consistent with an ecological equilibrium paradigm, or 'balance of nature' perspective. He argues that from this perspective, 'climax communities are good and disturbed communities are less desirable or somehow spoiled.' The notion of the ecological climax was based on the work of Frederic Clements, who developed the model in the 1930s. Some ecologists today argue that disturbance can be beneficial to an ecosystem and contribute to its long-term stability by enhancing species diversity.[28]

The Park Board treated natural disturbances as aberrations. Rather than allow the forest to generate new growth by natural means, the board sought to speed up the process. The Park Board's restoration policies had the effect of resisting the spontaneous entropic forces of nature, like windstorms, which reshaped the park landscape. This kind of environmental restoration embodies combined elements of what Marcus Hall labels 'maintenance gardening' and 'reparative naturalizing.' The latter approach seeks to restore nature to a pristine, untouched condition, usually envisioned as a pre-European landscape, but sees *cultural* forces as the primary agent of ecological disturbance. A 'maintenance gardening' approach to restoration sees human intervention as essential to prevent the degeneration of the landscape by *natural* forces. In the case of Stanley Park in the 1930s, the Park Board's restoration policy sought to recreate a virginal forest that had been degraded, not by human activity, but by natural processes. In effect, nature disappointed Vancouverites with its failure to meet their expectations for an ideal park landscape. Therefore, it was incumbent upon humans to compensate for nature's erratic behaviour.[29]

The public response to the restoration of the park in the 1930s was largely supportive. The 'Save the Park' campaign, mentioned previously, fully endorsed the restoration of Stanley Park to its former condition. 'Let us preserve the natural beauty of Stanley Park by all means,' one editorial read in 1936, '[b]ut it is only reasonable to improve and beautify as much as we can of it without jeopardizing the illusion of natural wilderness.' Furthermore, there was an expectation that the public should 'trust the eminently responsible citizens who compose the Park Board to safeguard the people's interests in that respect and take whatever measures they deem necessary.'[30]

28 CVA. Board of Parks and Public Recreation. *Board Minutes*, MCR-47–1, 9 Dec. 1901; Seth R. Reice, *The Silver Lining: The Benefits of Natural Disasters* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 15.

29 Hall, *Earth Repair*, 214.

30 *Vancouver Sun*, 4 Jun. 1936, 4.

The Park Board continued its restoration policy throughout the Second World War at a slower pace, due to the financial limitations of wartime conditions and labour shortages, but reinvigorated its work in the late 1940s. Forestry experts encouraged the Park Board to launch an extensive reforestation program that saw thousands of Douglas fir seedlings planted in the park every year. In a revealing moment, the park superintendent remarked in 1949 that '[s]trange as it may seem it takes quite a lot of work to keep a forest looking natural as a lack of such work soon allows the forest to get into a messy and untidy condition.' As the program expanded in 1952, the extent of the reforestation work caused the superintendent to once again reflect upon the meaning of his labour, when he noted 'that it takes a considerable amount of work to keep a forest area looking as though it were just as nature intended. Obviously if it were a truly natural forest the trees would be lying in all directions and the picture would be decidedly untidy so it is our job to maintain a balance between naturalness and tidiness.' His remarks almost buckle under the weight of the irony. The park superintendent was fully aware that the 'naturalness' of Stanley Park was entirely dependent on his labour. Like a shoemaker's elf, he covertly tidied the messy aspects of the park's forest in order to produce a more pleasing landscape. In doing so, he created the impression that nothing had ever happened and things were just as nature intended. The fiction of Stanley Park was that no one worked there.[31]

During the 1950s, the Park Board strove to limit public attention to its forest restoration program. A *News-Herald* report from 1951 attempted to unveil the program, proclaiming, '[c]ontrary to first impressions, there is very little virgin timber in Stanley Park.' After interviewing a number of park workers, the report portrayed the reforestation and landscape work as a ruse to create the impression that the forest was untouched. The park's Chief Forester, Harry Booth, admitted '[w]e try to do our work so that the public won't know the forest is being touched.' Booth strongly believed that human intervention was essential to the survival of the forest: 'If we didn't

31 CVA, Board of Parks and Public Recreation, *Board Minutes*, MCR 47–5, 19 Nov. 1931; CVA, Board of Parks and Recreation Fonds, *Annual Reports*, 1949, PDS 12; 1952 PDS 12. For an excellent examination of the perceptual disconnect between nature and human labour, see Richard White's essay '"Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?": Work and Nature' and William Cronon's essay, 'The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,' in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 171–85; 69–90.

put out new seedlings every year and keep the underbrush down,' Booth confessed, 'it would soon die.' The park forestry program received very little attention in these years because the Park Board deliberately kept a low profile. The purpose was to create the illusion of an untouched wilderness in Stanley Park – an illusion that proved very convincing.[32]

In the aftermath of Typhoon Freda in 1962, the Park Board embarked upon a project to clear away the fallen trees and to reconstruct the forest of Stanley Park in much the same way as they had done in 1934, in order to restore a balance between naturalness and tidiness. For several days following the storm, the park was closed to all visitors while Park Superintendent Stuart Lefaux and his assistant W.C. Livingstone surveyed the damage. Lefaux was not optimistic about the work ahead, stating that the 'job of clearing up in Stanley Park alone is almost overpowering.' He recommended that the board concentrate its immediate efforts on opening up roadways, while clearing trails and the interior of the park could be delayed for several months (or years, as was the case). The Park Board quickly cleared away all the trees that had fallen on the causeway connector to allow traffic to resume along the Lions Gate Bridge. The estimated cost of repairs to Stanley Park was $85,000. At first, both the provincial and federal governments refused to contribute money to the recovery effort, but eventually funds were transferred to the Park Board through the joint federal-provincial winter works cost-sharing programme.[33]

Although the clean-up effort in the 1960s was very similar to efforts in the 1930s, the public response to seeing logging crews in Stanley Park was very different. The secretive character of the Park Board's forest restoration work had caused people to forget the regular occurrence of windstorms in Stanley Park's history and the constant work required to maintain the forest. There was no public campaign to save Stanley Park; there was only despair. In fact, some considered the park irreparably ruined. One writer for the *Vancouver Sun* referred to the park as a 'logging camp' in the days after the storm as crews quickly worked to re-open park roadways, noting the unusual sounds of power tools and cracking tree branches (fig. 6). The sight of logging crews cutting up trees and hauling fallen branches out from the forest was 'enough to make the Lost Lagoon willows weep.' The writer also, inaccurately, stated that the park had not seen such logging efforts

32 *Vancouver Sun*, 14 Mar. 1950, 7; *News-Herald*, 9 Apr. 1951, 13.

33 CVA, Board of Parks and Public Recreation, *Board Minutes*, MCR 47–7, 15 Oct. 1962; *Vancouver Sun*, 15 Oct. 1962, 2; 16 Oct. 1962, 1; 17 Oct. 1962, 29.

FIGURE 6. Crews worked quickly in the days after the 1962 storm in order to re-open the causeway connector to the Lions Gate Bridge and other park roadways. Images of logging crews in Stanley Park startled observers, who were unaccustomed to witnessing human labour change the landscape of the park. Source: CVA, Photograph Collection, CVA-392–540.

since it was used for commercial logging in the nineteenth century. Ultimately, the writer concluded, Stanley Park could be cleaned up a little '[b]ut it will never be quite the same Stanley Park,' unaware of the massive effort to restore Stanley Park in the 1930s and the subsequent reforestation program led by Harry Booth and others in the 1940s and 1950s. *The Province* described the restoration efforts as creating 'an eerie scene,' but one that should be 'a sharp reminder that Stanley Park is a living forest.' The public was jarred by the active restoration work because it revealed that the forest was not 'virginal.' The curtains were opened, revealing the hidden work of Harry Booth and his forestry crew.[34]

34 *Vancouver Sun*, 20 Oct. 1962, 5.

THE NATURE MYTHS OF STANLEY PARK

The popular perception of nature in the park as a static environment was informed by what Hall calls nature myths. These myths are 'those collective beliefs and stories that help make sense of some crucial mystery of the natural world.' For Americans, and I would argue Canadians as well, the prevailing nature myth is of the notion of the virginal wilderness that European explorers allegedly witnessed prior to colonization of the New World. This vision differs from perspectives of nature in Europe, where the deep human history of European landscapes produces different nature myths. Despite overwhelming evidence that Native peoples lived in North America for thousands of years and modified their environments prior to the arrival of Europeans, the myth persists. M.J. Bowden argues that the tenacity of this belief shows it to be an invented tradition, 'a body of belief that is so deeply internalized by a nation/group that it is practically impervious to scholarship that shows it to be largely factitious.' As Europeans pushed further west, that tradition was replicated with modifications to conform to new ecological zones. The resettlement of British Columbia produced its own set of nature myths and the creation of Stanley Park was central to that process.[35]

The nature myths of Stanley Park were produced and re-produced for decades through popular literature. George Vancouver's *Voyages*, recounting his navigation of the eastern Pacific, was one of the first widely read works that propagated the notion that the Northwest Coast was a pristine wilderness. He described the landscape near Burrard Inlet as an 'impenetrable wilderness of lofty trees, rendered nearly impassable by the underwood, which uniformly incumbers the surface.' Vancouver's observations echoed the sentiments of dozens of other early European colonizers who gazed upon a landscape they assumed to be empty or, at most, thinly inhabited.[36]

In the late 1880s, people admired nature in the park for its aesthetic qualities, but saw it as something that required improvement. Reporters described the peninsula as a 'wild natural beauty' that would provide necessary relief for city dwellers with the aid of careful human improvements. For instance, at the opening ceremony for the

35 Hall, *Earth Repair*, 150; M.J. Bowden, 'The Invention of American Tradition,' *Journal of Historical Geography* 18 (1992): 3–26.

36 George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World, 1791–1795*, vol. 2, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984), 561.

park in 1888, Mayor Oppenheimer proclaimed his desire that 'art will unite with nature in making this the finest park on the continent.' Nature in Stanley Park was not inherently beautiful, but had the potential for greatness with the aid of human intervention. In 1888, Stanley Park represented latent possibility for the city's *future*, a perspective that soon changed at the turn of the century as the park became a representation of the city's *past*.[37]

Popular writing about Stanley Park began to portray the park as being valuable for its wild qualities as an untouched forested area in the midst of a city after a series of prominent debates over the development of the park in the 1910s. Controversies over Deadman's Island (a small tidal island adjacent to the park in Coal Harbour), electric tramways, and road construction produced a new consciousness about the role that humans played in nature in the park. In response to these controversies, writing about Stanley Park changed as writers began to describe the park as an untouched wilderness. In *The Province* alone, in the early part of the twentieth century, the forest was described variously as 'impenetrable,' 'unbroken,' 'primeval,' 'a jungle,' 'virginal,' 'untouched,' and 'pristine.' In the 1920s, park admirers sought to curb human intrusions in the park to prevent 'the destruction of miles of trees and shrubbery which it has taken centuries to produce.' Popular perceptions of the role that humans could play in improving nature changed over time in the 1920s and 1930s as people became more reluctant to intervene in the landscape of the park with the addition of adornments such as the fountain in Lost Lagoon. Souvenir literature, like Robert Allison Hood's 1929 book of 'legends and reminiscences,' describes the park as a 'tract of virgin forest.' C. Roscoe Brown's 1937 pamphlet trumpets the park as invaluable for its 'Virgin forest! Pristine beauty!' This pattern persisted into the mid-twentieth century, with reports admiring the park for its '1,000 acres of virgin timber.' Others warned against disturbing the park because '[t]hat natural charm and beauty must be kept unspoiled.' These changing perceptions of nature reflected broader shifts in thinking about parks in North America. As historians of national parks in the United States and Canada have argued, the notion that governments should make national parks to preserve wilderness did not emerge until the early twentieth century. Places like Yellowstone and Banff were not originally conceived as places of pristine wilderness.[38]

37 *Daily News Advertiser*, 13 Jun. 1888, 2.

38 *The Province*, 7 Feb. 1903, 14; 28 Jul. 1906, 13; 20 Dec. 1907, 1; 13 Feb. 1915, 6; 1 Dec. 1906, 12; 17 Oct. 1926, 8 (magazine section); Robert Allison Hood,

The size and age of some of the largest trees in Stanley Park authenticated the pristine condition of the forest. Beginning with the work of E. Pauline Johnson, several trees in Stanley Park became culturally produced monuments. The Seven Sisters, as discussed at the beginning of this article and said to have been some of the oldest and tallest trees in the park, were a popular landmark featured in numerous photographs and stories reproduced in nearly all popular literature about Stanley Park. Robert Allison Hood claimed that the preservation of these trees 'enables us to form an idea of what the original stand of timber must have been before the hand of man depleted it.' Hood went on to describe another large tree in the park, located along Tatlow Walk, known simply as 'The Big Tree.' He claimed that the enormous cedar trees could be much as 1000 years old. Catherine Mae MacLennan claimed that '[o]ne feels very tiny standing beside the base of the Big Tree, not only by comparison with its gigantic form but as one measures his brief span of life with the long series of eventful centuries of whose slow march it bears testimony.' [39]

This tradition of admiration for ancient trees carried on in writing about the park even into the 1950s. For example, Allan Roy Evans said of the Seven Sisters that '[t]he trees were splendid giants before Columbus caught sight of the New World and they were close to their present proportions when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth.' Nature in the park, represented by these trees, was valuable for its perceived connection with the past. Claire Campbell notes a similar phenomenon in Ontario where '[h]istorical imagery was unusually powerful in Georgian Bay because the archipelago *looked* like a wilderness, and because of its associations with the explorers and frontiersmen of Canadian history.' Where Georgian Bay shared landscape associations with Champlain, Stanley Park was often linked to the voyages of George Vancouver.[40]

By Shore and Trail in Stanley Park (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1929), 16; CVA, C. Roscoe Brown, *Stanley Park and Its Environs* (1937), PAM 1937–46; *Vancouver Sun*, 28 Sept. 1955, 25; 17 Jul. 1951, 4; Theodore Binnema and Melanie Niemi, '"Let the Line Be Drawn Now": Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada,' *Environmental History* 11, no. 4 (2006): 724–50; Kathy S. Mason, *Natural Museums: US National Parks, 1872–1916* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2004).

39 Hood, *By Shore and Trail in Stanley Park*, 112; Catherine Mae MacLennan, *Rambling Round Stanley Park* (Vancouver: Roy Wrigley, 1935), 13.

40 *The Province*, 12 January 1957, 8 (magazine section); Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 96.

This cultural production of monumental trees in Stanley Park was a revival of an older North American tradition of finding historical and spiritual significance in nature. Since Euro-Americans stumbled upon the big trees of Yosemite Valley in the 1850s, the towering height and girth of the trees of western North America have stood as historical relics to rival the ancient cathedrals and castles of Europe. As Simon Schama suggests, the sequoias of Yosemite 'proclaimed a manifest destiny that had been primordially planted; something which altogether dwarfed the timetables of conventional European and even classical history.' Claire Campbell finds that Canadians have historically found solace and validation in the antiquity of the rock of the Canadian Shield. Trees and other natural features of the landscape gave Euro-Americans not only a link to a distant past, but also a spiritual connection to the Creator. Emily Carr, the best-known artist to paint Stanley Park, chose the giant trees of the peninsula as her subject because, to her, they were the holiest things she had ever experienced. Her early watercolours of Stanley Park reveal her struggle to capture the illusive character of the diffused light in the tree branches, which she felt revealed sublime and holy evocations (figs. 7 & 8). Carr's work

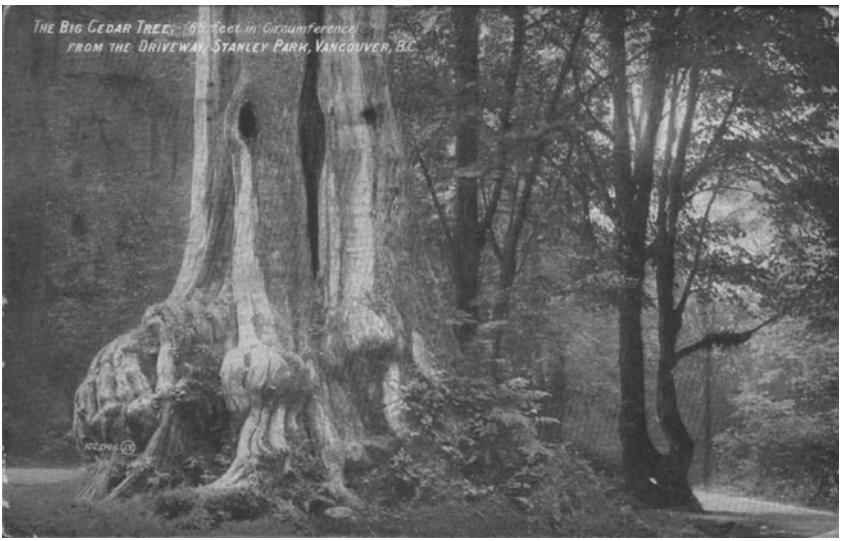

FIGURE 7. Postcard, dating from 1908, celebrating the large trees in Stanley Park, with the caption 'The Big Cedar Tree, 65 feet in circumference from the Driveway in Stanley Park, Vancouver, BC.' Source: Author's Collection.

popularized the giant trees of Stanley Park for the rest of the province and, eventually, for the nation.[41]

Vancouverites developed such strong sentimental attachments to the big trees of Stanley Park that they almost forgot the impermanence of these plants. When some of the trees died, the Park Board

FIGURE 8. *Wood Interior* (1909). Emily Carr's earliest work on the Northwest Coast included watercolour paintings of the deep woods of Stanley Park from the days when she lived in Vancouver. Source: Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust, VAG 42.3.86.

41 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 188; Campbell, *Shaped by the West Wind*, 128; Maria Tippett, *Emily Carr: A Biography* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1979), 72–3; Emily Carr, *Growing Pains: The Autobiography of Emily Carr*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Co., 1966), 207–8.

strove to preserve the remains by topping the trees, leaving only the tall trunks. The Hollow Tree, a long-time popular site for tourist photography, is one of the most extreme examples of this practice, as when, in 1965, the Park Board fitted the tree with a steel truss, cables, and a cement base to prevent the tree from decaying (fig. 9). When large trees were toppled in windstorms or simply fell over, they were mourned in the press through arboreal obituaries. As the Seven Sisters were rotting in the 1940s, one report lamented the loss, predicting that the *Vancouver Sun* 'will probably record that many of the hoary monarchs have had to be removed and 'tamer' trees substituted.' Another report on a fallen cedar claimed that Vancouver had lost one of its 'oldest inhabitants' and noted that 'it was not cut down – that would have been sacrilege. Nor was it blown down, for there had been no gale. That moment in its age old life had arrived – as it does in many advanced human lives – when nature took an instantaneous toll and the monarch collapsed.' The monumental trees of Stanley

FIGURE 9. Today the Hollow Tree is merely a stump held together by steel cables. Source: CVA Photograph Collection, CVA 677–153; Author's Photograph.

Park were used as temporal benchmarks for the park's ancient history.[42]

Writers like E. Pauline Johnson associated nature in Stanley Park with Native lore to authenticate the antiquity of the park. These types of legends and other tales were replicated in tourist promotional literature, such as George H. Raley's *Our Totem Poles: A Souvenir of Vancouver* (1937) and B.A. McKelvie's *Legends of Stanley Park* (1941). The Art, Historical, and Scientific Association of Vancouver had long promoted the construction of totem poles in Stanley Park, and once proposed to operate a model 'Indian Village' to draw further connections between nature and Native peoples. The fact that Stanley Park was once the site of one of the largest Native settlements on Burrard Inlet was also used to confirm its ancient status.[43]

While the park may originally have been conceived as a natural retreat from the city that required human intervention to improve nature, its perceived status as a pristine wilderness area solidified as Vancouverites increasingly became conscious of the extent to which human intervention could disturb that wilderness. This perception of nature in the park was also a reflection of how Vancouverites interpreted the city's past. In 1939, the *News-Herald* claimed that Stanley Park was necessary because '[a] city that has been carved out of the forest should maintain somewhere within its boundaries evidence of what it once was, and so long as Stanley Park remains unspoiled, that testimony to the giant trees which occupied the site of Vancouver in former days will remain.' The nature myths of Stanley Park provided an imagined version of the past that allowed the public to reflect on the city's history. The park stood as a living metaphor for Vancouver's origins and progress. It also represented a spirit of atonement for the environmental destruction that was necessary to build the city.[44]

Typhoon Freda momentarily disrupted the popular perception that nature was unspoiled in Stanley Park. In the years following this storm, the Park Board and public began to re-evaluate the human impact on nature while simultaneously pursuing a means to restore

42 *Vancouver Sun*, 30 Mar. 1965, 8; *Sun*, 1 Jun. 1943, 4.

43 B.A. McKelvie, *Legends of Stanley Park: Vancouver's Magnificent Playground*, (n.p., 1941); George H. Raley, *Our Totem Poles: A Souvenir of Vancouver* (Vancouver: n.p., 1937); Rev. John C. Goodfellow, *The Totem Poles in Stanley Park* (Vancouver: The Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver, 1923). See Barman's *Secrets of Stanley Park* for more information on the aboriginal inhabitants of the Stanley Park peninsula.

44 *News-Herald*, 30 Oct. 1939, 4.

what Freda had ruined. What emerged was a mixture of resistance to further human encroachments on the park and the application of renewed restoration strategies to defy the undesirable forces of nature.

CONCLUSION

In the years after Typhoon Freda, the Park Board's foresters quietly set out, with federal and provincial funding, to restore Stanley Park once again. Just as they had done in the 1930s, park workers stealthily removed the debris from the storm and replanted cleared areas with Douglas fir. Some areas were transformed into new recreational attractions, such as the miniature railway. In a 1968 interview, the park's Chief Forester, Harry Hutchings, assured readers of the *Vancouver Sun* that '[t]he park's woodland is slowly being renewed. The people who tremble at the thought of even one tree being cut down have nothing to worry about.' But an increasingly ecologically conscious (or self-conscious) citizenry had grown resistant to human intrusions into Stanley Park. Debates over proposed bridges, roadways, and apartment developments that might encroach on the park in the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated the enhanced sense of public protection of Stanley Park. By the late 1980s, the public even called into question the Park Board's restoration forestry work.[45]

In anticipation of the park's 100th anniversary in 1988, the corporate industrial forestry giant MacMillan-Bloedel offered to donate $1.5 million toward a ten-year forest restoration plan that would plant up to 250,000 new Douglas fir and spruce seedlings in the park. MacMillan-Bloedell intended to remove up to 5000 deciduous trees, mostly alders and maples, which were said to have invaded the park following Typhoon Freda. Company representatives and most Park Board commissioners saw the plan as a means to restore the park to the condition known a century previous. As one Park Board spokesman said, 'Stanley Park has been known as a coniferous forest since the 1870s, and we want to keep it that way.' Local environmental groups vigorously opposed the program and pressured the Park Board to abandon their plans. They questioned the hubris of the proposed restoration project, and claimed that '[p]eople come from all over the world to see Stanley Park in its natural state, but we think we're going to fix nature by being better than nature.'

45 *Vancouver Sun*, 8 May 1968, 15.

The debate continued until 1990 when the Park Board, in response to public opposition, abandoned the ten-year restoration plan.[46]

No matter how hard the Park Board tried to restore Stanley Park to a more desirable past condition, their task was as futile as that given to Sisyphus. As punishment for the hubris of his belief that he was cleverer than Zeus, Sisyphus was compelled to perpetually roll a large boulder up a hill. Before he could reach the summit, the rock would always escape him and he would be forced to start again. Like Sisyphus, the Park Board strove to undo the disorder in the forest brought by numerous windstorms only to lose its grip on the boulder once again when a series of powerful storms ripped through southwest British Columbia in late 2006 and early 2007. The storms rivalled their predecessors of the past 100 years, and gave Stanley Park a shakedown of a ferocity not known since the 1960s. Vancouverites stood in awe of the autonomy of nature and its capricious power.

Popular reaction to the recent extreme weather echoed the sentiments of witnesses to the aftermath of Freda in 1962. Shock and dismay filled the pages of the local newspapers and magazines in the days following the storms. The *Vancouver Sun* proclaimed the most powerful of the windstorms to hit Vancouver on 15 December 2006 to be 'One For the History Books.' Once again, the event was described as anomalous or 'freakish weather,' as it had been in 1962 and 1934. The most startling effect of the weather was its impact on the landscape of Stanley Park, where 'trees that had stood for centuries had their limbs ripped off. Hundreds more trees fell, from Garry oaks to giant cedars seeded before Captain George Vancouver's voyage of discovery in 1791.' Reporters claimed that the city lost many of its 'ancient trees' in this tragedy. All of this anguish reveals not simply an attachment to the memory of a park, but an attachment to a vision of a timeless and undisturbed forest – an illusive quest for a stable 'balance of nature.'[47]

But nature rarely provides such stability. Today, the Park Board faces numerous challenges concerning the management of Stanley Park after the most recent storms. It is under incredible public pressure to make things 'right.' Hundreds of British Columbians have donated money to restore Stanley Park to its former condition. There is also a significant group, led by the Stanley Park Ecological Society, which wants the board to allow the forest to regenerate by natural means. Still others see an opportunity to expand usable facilities in the park now

46 *Vancouver Sun*, 4 May 1989, B5; 13 Feb. 1990, B1; *The Province*, 11 Sept. 1989, 5.

47 *Vancouver Sun*, 16 Dec. 2006, A1, A8.

that nature has fortuitously cleared away so many obstructive trees. Judging from the immediate reactions to the latest windstorms to hit Stanley Park, public memory of past disturbance remains just as foggy as it was in 1962; The twisted branches and splintered trunks of Freda's collateral damage have drifted quietly into the fog of the past, leaving behind no trace or fingerprint of nature's powerful capacity to randomly undo all of our best intentions. The instant public desire to instantly restore the park to its former condition reveals the continuation of a view of ideal nature in the park as balanced and unchanging. Disturbance is treated as an aberration. Ecologists have long since rejected the notion of a 'balance of nature' and 'climax communities' first theorized by Frederic Clements in the 1930s; chaos and complexity theories now guide new thinking in the ecological sciences. Yet popular perceptions of ideal nature (as represented in parks) continue to rely on the notion that the best landscape is that which remains undisturbed by both human and non-human forces. What remains to be seen is whether the Park Board will once again strive to restore the park by undoing the effects of the storm or forge a new policy that reconciles unruly non-human forces with the inseparable place of humanity in nature.

The story of urban park development in Canada is incomplete without consideration of the role that non-human forces have played in the past. The politics of park design were not just a struggle between competing political and social forces, but were a complicated series of interactions between ecological history and the socio-economic history of humanity. Windstorms shaped human responses and approaches to forest restoration in Stanley Park in the twentieth century, and forest restoration policies distorted public memory of the natural history of the park and reshaped human perceptions of ideal park landscapes in consequence. The case of Stanley Park demonstrates how powerfully public memory can shape environmental policy. In order to develop more effective policies, Canadians must better understand the human history of nature's past.

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