

DIVIDED

POPULISM, POLARIZATION & POWER
IN THE NEW SASKATCHEWAN

EDITED BY

JoAnn Jaffe

Patricia W. Elliott

Cora Sellers

Fernwood Publishing
Halifax & Winnipeg

Copyright © JoAnn Jaffe, Patricia W. Elliott, Cora Sellers

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Editing: Jenn Harris
Cover design: Evan Marnoch
Printed and bound in Canada

Published by Fernwood Publishing
32 Oceanvista Lane, Black Point, Nova Scotia, B0J 1B0
and 748 Broadway Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0X3
www.fernwoodpublishing.ca

Fernwood Publishing Company Limited gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism under the Manitoba Publishers Marketing Assistance Program and the Province of Manitoba, through the Book Publishing Tax Credit, for our publishing program. We are pleased to work in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia to develop and promote our creative industries for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.



Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Divided : populism, polarization & power in the new Saskatchewan
/ edited by JoAnn Jaffe, Patricia W. Elliott, Cora Sellers.

Other titles: Divided (2021)

Names: Jaffe, JoAnn M., 1954- editor. | Elliott, Patricia,
1960- editor. | Sellers, Cora, editor.

Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20210258853 | Canadiana
(ebook) 20210262141 | ISBN 9781773634807 (softcover) | ISBN
9781773634968 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781773634975 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Political culture—Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Polarization
(Social sciences)—Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Right and left (Political science)—
Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Populism—Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Culture
conflict—Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Public opinion—Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Social
psychology—Saskatchewan. | LCSH: Saskatchewan—Politics and government—
21st century. | LCSH: Saskatchewan—Social conditions—21st century.

Classification: LCC JA75.7 .D58 2021 | DDC 306.2097124—dc23

Contents

Acknowledgements	xii
Editors & Contributors	xiii
Preface: Spoiled Harvest: Sowing Division on the Canadian Prairie <i>Patricia W. Elliott, JoAnn Jaffe & Cora Sellers</i>	1

Part 1: Culture Wars / 23

1 The Stories We Tell and the Stories We Silence: The Myths of a “Neighbourly” Province <i>Brenda Macdougall</i>	24
2 “Make the Energy Sector Great Again”: Extractive Populism in Saskatchewan <i>Emily Eaton & Simon Enoch</i>	39
3 “Those People Don’t Vote for Us”: The Film Tax Credit and the Saskatchewan Divide <i>Leslea Mair</i>	52
4 The Hard Part: The Erasure of Queer and Trans Experiences in an Online Debate about Male-Only Barbershops <i>Evie Johnny Ruddy</i>	63
5 Which Side Are You On?: Between Yellow Vests and Migrant Rights in the New Saskatchewan <i>Andrew Stevens</i>	80

Part 2: Fraying the Fabric / 97

6 Not Your Grandparents’ Rural Saskatchewan <i>JoAnn Jaffe & Amy Quark</i>	98
7 “If They Don’t Farm It, They Should Not Own It”: Land Investments and the Divisions of Farming <i>Birgit Müller</i>	115
8 The Suburbanization of Saskatchewan Politics since 1982 <i>Ken Rasmussen</i>	126
9 Cutting the Lifeline: Shuttering the Saskatchewan Transportation Company <i>Cindy Hanson & JoAnn Jaffe</i>	135

- 10 Divide and Conquer: The Defunding of the Northern Teacher Education Program and the Northern Professional Access College *April ChiefCalf*..... 147
- 11 What's Wrong with Corporatizing Saskatchewan's Universities? Plenty! *Claire Polster & Janice Newson with Patricia W. Elliott* ... 158
- 12 Disability Doesn't Discriminate: But Programs and Policies Do *Terri Sleeva*..... 170
- 13 Division and Privilege in Our Advocacy *Cora Sellers*..... 184

Part 3: Power Plays / 199

- 14 The Politics of Power: A Wanton Attack on a Citizen's Reputation *William (Bill) Bonner*..... 200
- 15 Power Beyond Account: Saskatchewan Child Welfare versus Human Dignity *Tim Korol*..... 212
- 16 The Erosion of Workers' Rights in Saskatchewan: The Saskatchewan Party, Labour Law Reform and Organized Labour, 2007–2020 *Andrew Stevens & Charles Smith* 227
- 17 Who Killed the Public Surgery Centre? *Cheryl Stadnichuk*..... 246
- 18 Public-Private Partnerships: What Counts as Evidence of Claimed Value? *William (Bill) Bonner & Morina Rennie* 258
- 19 From Big Bad Wolf to Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: The Uranium Industry Manipulates Its Image to Stay Afloat and Faces Resistance along the Way *Don Kossick* 274

Part 4: A Fighting Chance / 291

- 20 Writing a New Song: Creating Conversations through Theatre *Joel Bernbaum & Yvette Nolan*..... 292
- 21 Challenging Hate and Discrimination with Awareness and Dialogue *Islamic Circle of North America Sisters Regina*..... 307
- 22 Study War No More: The Campaign against Military Training in Saskatchewan High Schools, 2014–2015 *Florence Stratton*..... 315

23 For the Love of Matthew *Christopher Campbell Gardiner, with contributions by Shannon Berard-Gardiner* 330

24 It's Time to Save the Prairie: Against a Bleak Climate Future, Our Grasslands Offer Hope *Katie Doke Sawatzky*..... 346

25 We Want a Future: Climate Change and How the Youth Are Fighting to Save the Province *Sydney Chadwick* 374

Index 364

EXCERPT

Editors & Contributors

JOANN JAFFE is a professor of sociology and social studies at the University of Regina and part-time organic crop and livestock farmer. She teaches and researches in the areas of development, rural societies, environment, gender, and social theory, and she has conducted research in the Caribbean, North America, Central America, East Africa and Israel/Palestine. A long-time activist, she has often collaborated or worked in partnership with non-academic or community groups, as well as pursued a more academic research program. Her recent research and publishing have been collaborative studies on the intersectional impacts of co-operatives in Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda; social practices related to food production and food security in Ethiopia; and the restructuring of rural life and agriculture in Saskatchewan. Jaffe was a review editor for the *Global Volume of the UN International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development* (IAASTD), co-editor and author of *Farm Communities at the Crossroads* (UR Press) and *Contesting Fundamentalisms* (Fernwood), and editor of the journal *Prairie Forum*.

PATRICIA W. ELLIOTT is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada, specializing in investigative journalism. As a faculty advisor to the Institute for Investigative Journalism at Concordia, she has helped pioneer collaborative journalism in Canada, including helping to coordinate local and national reporting for *The Price of Oil*, a multi-award-winning series on oil industry emissions, and *Clean Water, Broken Promises*, an investigation into the impacts of colonialism on drinking water in Indigenous communities. In addition to numerous works of journalism, she co-edited *Free Knowledge: Confronting the Commodification of Human Discovery* (UR Press 2015) and authored *The White Umbrella: A Woman's Struggle for Freedom in Burma* (Friends Press 2005). She is also involved in community-engaged scholarship and has often worked alongside community members in pursuit of decolonization and social justice. She grew up in Estevan, Saskatchewan.

CORA SELLERS has worked in the area of community development/advocacy in Regina, specifically focusing on Indigenous social/economic issues for twenty years. She is currently senior director of housing for the Regina YWCA. Sellers contributed to *Beyond Homelessness: Solutions to Homelessness in Canada*, edited by James Hughes in 2018, authoring a chapter titled “The Community Hub.” As an interracial adopted Inuit woman growing up and living in Regina, she has a unique, painful and honest perspective on the polarization that exists in our province, having lived between worlds. In her daily work, she has witnessed the effects of colonization, including the polarized divide that leads to the poverty, violence, homelessness, addictions and mental health issues that Indigenous people valiantly struggle against every day.

JOEL BERNBAUM is a theatre artist, journalist and the founding artistic director of Sum Theatre. Joel’s produced plays include *Operation Big Rock*, *My Rabbi* (with Kayvon Khoshkam), *Home Is a Beautiful Word* and *Reasonable Doubt* (with Yvette Nolan and Lancelot Knight).

BILL BONNER is an associate professor at the University of Regina Faculty of Business Administration, with a research focus on the intersection of privacy, information technology, decision-making and situated context.

CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL GARDINER is a parent and artist who uses art to conceptually frame anxieties using process and ritual. Recent projects have focused on communal styled collaborations that assist others in transforming adversity through process. Most recently, he designed a project to help families grieve the loss of their children with disabilities. He is a graduate of the Alberta College of Art and Design (now the Alberta University of the Arts), received his master’s in fine arts from the University of Regina, is the recipient of numerous research grants and has work in several public and private collections across Canada.

SYDNEY CHADWICK was inspired by the Fridays for Future student climate strikes during her Grade 12 year in Lumsden, Saskatchewan. She is now studying at the University of Regina.

APRIL CHIEFCALF is a former faculty member of NORTEP/NORPAC, where she taught courses in educational foundations, women’s and gender studies, and Indigenous studies. She has also taught university courses throughout northern Saskatchewan for the Gabriel Dumont Institute and First Nations University of Canada. After living and working in La Ronge for nearly twenty years, she moved to Saskatoon, where she is

currently finishing her PhD and working for the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP).

KATIE DOKE SAWATZKY is a freelance journalist living in Regina. Her master of journalism project, *prairiecommons.ca*, published in 2018, is a multimedia website investigating the state of native prairie in Saskatchewan.

EMILY EATON is an associate professor of geography at the University of Regina, researching rural issues and energy transitions.

SIMON ENOCH is the director of the Saskatchewan office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He holds a PhD in communication and culture and is a widely published political researcher and analyst.

CINDY HANSON is a professor in the University of Regina's Department of Sociology and Social Studies. She is president of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education and, with JoAnn Jaffe, is a founding member of Save STC.

ICNA (ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF NORTH AMERICA) SISTERS REGINA is a group of Muslim women involved in numerous activities in the community and for the community.

DON KOSSICK is a Saskatoon-based community organizer, multimedia producer and host of *Making the Links* on Saskatoon Community Radio.

TIM KOROL is farmer, human rights investigator and former assistant deputy minister of child protective services under the Wall government.

LESLIE MAIR is president and CEO of Zoot Pictures Inc. Over the past twenty years, she has worked with a wide variety of Canadian broadcasters and international distributors.

BRENDA MACDOUGALL is a leading expert in Métis and First Nations history and is a university research chair in Métis family and community traditions. She is currently the director of the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies and the academic delegate for Indigenous engagement at the University of Ottawa, where she's worked for the past decade.

BIRGIT Müller is director of research with the Laboratoire de l'anthropologie des institutions et organisations sociales and professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris. Her current research explores how farmers, soils and seeds make out in the new global conjunctures of climate-smart agriculture.

JANICE NEWSON is a professor emerita and senior scholar at York University, as well as a vocal critic of the corporatization of universities.

YVETTE NOLAN is a playwright, director, dramaturg, actor and educator who has contributed substantively to the creation and performance of First Nations theatre in Canada. She has authored over twenty plays and has received numerous national awards for writing and direction.

CLAIRE POLSTER is a University of Regina professor of sociology, specializing in the sociology of education, and has written extensively on higher education issues.

AMY QUARK grew up on a farm in southern Saskatchewan and is now an associate professor of sociology at the College of William & Mary, where she researches shifting dynamics in food and agricultural systems.

KEN RASMUSSEN is a director and professor at the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, specializing in Saskatchewan politics and public enterprise management.

MORINA RENNIE is a professor of accounting and associate dean (undergraduate) at the University of Regina Faculty of Business Administration.

EVIE JOHNNY RUDDY (they/them) is a doctoral student in cultural mediations and holds a PhD fellowship with Carleton University's Transgender Media Lab.

TERRI SLEEVA is a community activist dealing with poverty, environmental, social justice and disability issues.

CHARLES SMITH is an associate professor in the Department of Political Science at St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan, specializing in political economy and labour law.

CHERYL STADNICHUK is a labour researcher who advocates for human and worker rights in Canada and internationally.

ANDREW STEVENS is a founding editor of RankAndFile.ca and an associate professor of industrial relations and human resource management in the University of Regina Faculty of Business Administration. His research focuses on collective action, migrant labour and labour relations.

FLORENCE STRATTON is a retired English professor, community activist and member of Regina's weekly Making Peace Vigil.

Preface

Spoiled Harvest

Sowing Division on the Canadian Prairie

Patricia W. Elliott, JoAnn Jaffe & Cora Sellers

On March 11, 2020, a debate erupted in the Saskatchewan legislature that laid bare the province's increasingly toxic and divided political landscape. In a world where "going viral" had become a powerful path to influence, it's no small irony that a virus held centre stage. Earlier that day, the World Health Organization had declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic.¹ Canada had by then recorded one hundred cases; the first Saskatchewan case hit on January 27 and epidemiological models warned of more to come. But in Saskatchewan, there were far different concerns on the horizon: Pipeline construction was stalled, and a Saudi-Russian price war had launched an assault on the price of oil. To speak of any other threat seemed heretical, even treasonous. Further, Saskatchewan Party leader and premier Scott Moe was toying with a snap spring election call. He seemed ready to present a budget in advance of the coming oil bust and press the flesh, virus be damned. Yet here was the leader of the Opposition, who was a physician, on his feet in question period, railing about a microscopic virus and seeking actions that would further slow a sputtering economic engine and forestall an election. "Will the Premier stop blowing these [pandemic] concerns off?" New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Ryan Meili implored.² Health minister Jim Reiter responded that a plan was in progress, then admonished Meili for "trying to scare and instill fear into the people of Saskatchewan."³ It was the finance minister who then took the debate to its most heated level. "Mr. Speaker, I find it rather interesting that the members opposite would panic, they would knee-jerk react," Donna Harpauer shot back. "And the other pattern from the members opposite is yet again, prior to a budget, they fearmongered among the people of Saskatchewan."⁴ Referring to the province's oil-tethered AAA credit rating, she charged on: "They would change all of

it. They would create a billion-dollar deficit. They would have another billion-dollar deficit in promises ... Mr. Speaker, that would be their plan, and that would devastate the finances of the province for many, many generations, Mr. Speaker.”⁵

As editors of a collection on political division, we took immediate note of the moment. Just when it seemed provincial politics could become no more partisan, elected leaders had upped the game. The consequences were frighteningly dangerous. Yet from conversations we’d had with contributors to this volume, we knew the dangers of a divided province were already well familiar to vulnerable populations. Indigenous Peoples, women, immigrants, racial and religious minorities, environmentalists, prisoners, labour rights activists and gender-nonconforming people are among those who have already known the sting of name-calling and having their legitimate concerns dismissed as overstated, hysterical “fearmongering.” Past contagions have revealed the most vulnerable are the most endangered; during the H1N1 pandemic, Indigenous people comprised just 4.3 percent of the population of Canada but made up 27.8 percent of hospital admissions.⁶ In Saskatchewan, the first wave of COVID-19 saw 54 percent of deaths situated in the Far North and North, despite comprising just 30 percent of the population, and more than double the ratio of deaths to confirmed cases than in the south.⁷ While provincial and federal authorities stumbled, Indigenous communities moved quickly on their own to set up blockades to contain the virus.

In this light, perhaps the only thing the March 11 question period changed was to broaden the scope of an existing dilemma and put it on full display. Regardless of social circumstance or political affiliation, there was no looking away: Together we had become a people bereft of responsible governance to the point of physical endangerment. As well, it became clear in the following weeks that the decades of neoliberal privatization, tax cuts and stripped-down government services had left very little to fall back on in a time of crisis. One can hope these stark revelations will be a turning point; however, the contributions to this volume speak of a long road ahead.

In the weeks following that debate, the Saskatchewan Party (aka Sask Party) government came to understand the gravity of the pandemic, cancelled election plans and began shutdown measures — albeit lagging behind municipal governments and always with an eye for swift reopening, especially for activities popular with their base, such as golfing,

camping and recreational hunting. Ironically, though, when Premier Moe donned a mask and urged caution, he in turn attracted calls to “stop the fearmongering” from a far-right fundamentalist base that the Sask Party had engaged with since the party’s inception.⁸

The Sask Party is a relatively new provincial political party, created in 1997 out of the remnants of the then-discredited Devine-led Conservative Party and the few Liberal members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) still electable in the province. Representing a shift to right-wing populism among a broad swath of rural residents, the Sask Party speaks for a return to traditional values, translated in terms of a reassertion of Christian values and right to private property through, for example, outrage toward the growing assertions of Indigenous sovereignty, demands for genuine consultation and Indigenous Title. This political reaction to the more liberal NDP — formerly considered the “natural governing party” of Saskatchewan — has further dovetailed with the interests of the growing coalition of large farmers, suburban voters, real estate developers, small business owners, oil and gas companies and corporate interests intent on doing away with state intervention and public ownership, reinforcing the movement toward free trade and free markets. The Sask Party government adheres to the neoliberal truism that “bootstrappism” is the best program for development and echoes now-hotly contested theories⁹ that privatization and the market are the best solution to the problems of poverty and exclusion. This twin emphasis on natural resources and development through the market is perhaps best demonstrated through former premier Brad Wall’s well-publicized statement in reference to uranium mining giant Cameco: “You know, the best program for First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan is not a program at all — it’s Cameco.”¹⁰

FRACTURED LANDSCAPE: ASSESSING THE WALL-MOE LEGACY

Our inspiration for *Divided* was sparked by an informal gathering of women in the spring of 2019. Rural sociologist JoAnn Jaffe brought forth the idea that there had not been a book-length accounting of broad political trends in Saskatchewan for some time. In the early 1990s, two books — *Privatizing a Province: The New Right in Saskatchewan*¹¹ and *Devine Rule in Saskatchewan: A Decade of Hope and Hardship*¹² — closely examined the Conservative Party years of the 1980s. Together, these works changed the framing of many political arguments and helped unseat the government of Grant Devine. In 2009, Howard Leeson offered an edited

collection, *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre*, which examined a decade of centrist-leaning NDP governance under Roy Romanow and Lorne Calvert. His introduction argued that debatable differences had faded in a uniformly neoliberal landscape. He also foreshadowed the future under a newly elected Saskatchewan Party government, led by a young lifetime politico, Brad Wall, writing: “Part of the mystique and the myth of Saskatchewan involves its rural past. For most Canadians who have not visited the province, there is a general belief that it is mostly rural farmland, with happy rural socialist small towns. However, as we know, the reality of the province is now quite different.”¹³

In the years since, we have come to know that difference in many ways. There has been a tremendous transformation of the dominant political discourse that no longer crowds the centre as much as it reaches to the edges for support, with disturbing consequences. We have witnessed the rise of hate speech on the dark web and social media, often inflamed by bots and paid political operatives. An interim report into right-wing extremism online, released in 2020 by the Institute for Global Strategic Dialogue, found significant involvement by Canadians in white supremacist groups such as Fascist Forge and Iron March.¹⁴ The contributors to *Divided* reveal that such phenomena do not arrive out of the blue, unbidden. The past decade has brought about a fraying of economies and social supports that has pitted populations against each other, most notably rural against urban, settlers against First Nations, suburbs against centre and, ultimately, rich against poor. Thus, we argue there is a clear geography and economy underlying increasingly public expressions of hate, carried forward in policies and political interventions that cleave social divisions ever wider.

Left largely unchallenged by those in leadership positions, such divisions have grown increasingly volatile. Witness a labour dispute at a Regina refinery that attracted bomb threats and other forms of violence against union blockades.¹⁵ Consider a pro-pipeline lobby swept into a widening melting pot of conspiracy theories that connects a sense of social dislocation and diminished livelihoods to, for starters, the United Nations, pedophiles, vaccine manufacturers, medical masks from China, immigrants, Jews, 5G wireless networks and the dark forces behind creating body-double replacements for Mark Zuckerberg and Bill Gates. Swirling throughout this discourse are threats of a coming storm of violence. “The New World Order has started. Will you die as a slave or fight like a

warrior?” asks one internet meme circulating in Estevan, an oil patch city, while another post promises: “Men[,] in the coming months you may need to sacrifice your life to protect those you love,” accompanied by reader comments such as “ready in a heartbeat” and “my army is ready.”¹⁶ The tone of Prairie populism has shifted toward discourse that is increasingly fascistic and violent. This form of populism, while intensely nationalistic, apes the language and ideology behind the US Capitol building insurrection of January 6, 2021. This is a legacy for which the Saskatchewan Party — and other right-wing governments around the world — have yet to fully answer.

Divided looks primarily at the last fifteen years, during which time Wall’s Saskatchewan Party government, first elected in 2007, sought to reforge the province’s

The tone of Prairie populism has shifted toward discourse that is increasingly fascistic and violent.

image into the New Saskatchewan: brash, rich, highly competitive and aggressively partisan. This rebranding and its accompanying policy expressions have come to define and divide a society that was already in the process of being disrupted by broken treaties, a changing rural economy, unregulated communication platforms and a global-scale ascent of right-wing populism, to name a few of the factors addressed in this volume.

Editors JoAnn Jaffe, a rural sociologist, Patricia W. Elliott, a journalism professor, and Cora Sellers, a front-line community service director, approached this volume as a way to not only examine the Sask Party era, but also as a means to understand wider social currents from a localized perspective. In many respects, Saskatchewan stands as an incubator and testing ground for the politics of a divided world. As noted by J. McCoy et al., political polarization is a relational process whereby normal divisions in society — such as those based on geography, education and race — increasingly gravitate toward “us” versus “them” discourse.¹⁷ A growing body of scholarly work has tracked this phenomenon on a global scale, with particular attention to the United States. Comparatively little has been published in Canada, although research on Canadian election studies data from 1992 to 2015 “suggest Canada has experienced a surge in partisan sorting that is comparable to that in the US.”¹⁸

The style of hyper-partisan sorting that currently grips Saskatchewan draws from a populist base in a province where populism holds deep roots. Gagnon et al. note that forms of populism are driven by reaction to

crises and can fall across a wide spectrum of responses, from democratic people's movements to authoritarianism and xenophobia.¹⁹ Appearing in many forms across the political spectrum, populism can be described as a response to social change that positions "ordinary people" in opposition to "elites" who are determined to stop the ordinary people from gaining their just deserts.²⁰ In 1892, one of its first organized political incarnations, the People's Party of the United States, more commonly known as the Populist Party, penned a platform containing points that would read well at a modern-day leftist rally, with its cry against "homes covered with mortgages, labor impoverished, and the land concentrating in the hands of capitalists."²¹ In answer, the party pledged "to restore the government of the Republic into the hands of the 'plain people,' with which class it originated."²²

Early Saskatchewan populism followed a similar bent, steeped in anti-capitalism, agrarian socialism, trade unionism, social gospel and disenfranchisement from the centre, through which the left propelled Tommy Douglas's Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to power. However, John F. Conway, one of the province's most prolific political thinkers, noted that the "left" nature of the CCF and other agrarian political organizations was never entirely clear, veering between socialism and conservatism in outlook. "Clearly populism can be 'left' or 'right,' but usually a particular populist movement is both simultaneously, never clearly one or the other," he observed.²³ He challenged the idea of populism as a viable future project for the left, regarding it as a retrogressive setback from building a vision that strengthens and deepens democratic forms. Indeed, as subsequent CCF/NDP governments steered toward the centre while social unionism declined, and corporate agriculture became the new power in rural Saskatchewan, so, too, did left populism fade from mainstream political influence, left to small, grassroots organizations to take up.²⁴

Into this void stepped Brad Wall's folksy demeanour and laser-like focus on growing the province's extractive industries by any means necessary. This goal relied on an outward picture of a population united behind cultural touchstones such as football, pickup trucks and oil pipelines. However, Wall's ability to deepen and sustain this vision relied on new forms of populism rooted in highly sectarian religious fundamentalism and social conservatism, much of it flowing north from the United States through the Christian right and the gun lobby and amplified through

Saskatchewan's evangelical churches and private schools. This vision tends to marry political and economic issues to deeply held moral values that are unlikely to change through reasoned give-and-take debate on either side of a given issue. The Sask Party was able to find a strong foothold in an increasingly overheated political environment, finding political gain in ramping up anger and division through its social media operatives. Thus, while claiming the economic legacy of a runaway oil patch, another legacy lies unclaimed but no less transformative. From yellow vests to trespass laws, from Indigenous incarceration to anti-intellectualism, from climate wars to federal-provincial standoffs, from anti-mask rallies to marathon municipal debates over LGBTQ2S+ rights, Saskatchewan people today stand at a crossroads of rapidly deepening social and political fractures.

In preparation for this collection, the co-editors put out a call for contributors who have experienced and/or studied the impacts of political and social polarization. The responses were immediate and came from many corners, often accompanied by suggestions of additional voices. As well, within the texts submitted, we found threads that called out for deeper follow-ups, further widening our quest for authors.

In an effort to encapsulate multiple experiences and perspectives, the essays are presented in four parts. The first, Culture Wars, examines the current state of political discourse in Saskatchewan and its impact on targeted people and communities. The second, Fraying the Fabric, takes a long view of how we came to this point through decades of social dislocation amid the ascendance of neoliberalism. The third, Power Plays, examines a decline in democratic norms and subsequent power abuses by governments and corporations alike. Finally, the section titled A Fighting Chance presents community responses and strategies to confront and heal our divided world. Together, the contributors represent a broad cross-section of voices, including community activists, artists, journalists, academics, decision makers and youth. The tone ranges from the academic to the lyrical, from the personal to the political. The topics raised by no means capture all that has come to pass.

The Sask Party was able to find a strong foothold in an increasingly overheated political environment, finding political gain in ramping up anger and division through its social media operatives.

CULTURE WARS

Picking up where Leeson left off, Part 1, *Culture Wars*, challenges the myth of a harmonious, bucolic land. The opening chapter, “The Stories We Tell,” by Brenda Macdougall, contrasts the dominant colonial narrative of friendly, hard-working rural neighbours against starker realities of racism and violence. Saskatchewan in fact has a history steeped in colonialism and extreme-right political organizations such as the KKK, offering an important study of how these historical forces are never far below the surface and are readily unleashed in today’s political climate.²⁵ Surveying a barrage of racist social media posts in the aftermath of a young Cree man’s death in a farmyard, Mcdougall writes, “Saskatchewan was, and is, the site of multiple acts of settler colonial violence as much as it’s the home of those hardy pioneers and their descendants who forged a living on the Prairies. These two stories are not mutually exclusive.”

The settler narrative is lately marked by a desperate quest to hang on to its long-privileged space amid the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty, shifting demographics and the downside of peak oil. As noted by Gagnon et al., such currents of change drive reactions that can fall across a wide spectrum of responses, from democratic people’s movements to authoritarianism and xenophobia. Indeed, Saskatchewan’s populism today has a different flavour from its antecedents. The symbol of the yellow vest demonstrates the “shape-shifting”²⁶ nature of populism; its meaning is vastly different in the streets of Paris than in the oilfields of Saskatchewan. In “Make Energy Great Again,” Emily Eaton and Simon Enoch proffer the term “extractive populism” to explain the type of populism on display at yellow vest rallies that took place in Saskatchewan in 2019 and continue today under new patriot-themed names. In this case, the crisis is “very real anxieties and uncertainties within the Saskatchewan oil patch,” masterfully captured and exploited by industry communicators and politicians alike as a means to counter the imposition of policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Similar rhetoric has been exploited in other spheres. In “These People Don’t Vote for Us,” filmmaker Leslie Mair describes how a budgetary debate over a film tax credit suddenly flared into a narrative of hard-working farmers versus the “Hollywood elite.” She and her colleagues had never imagined social media would be the battleground, a place where carefully marshalled economic arguments held no sway. “Saskatchewan has been politically split along rural and urban lines for a long time. Up

to this point in my life, though, it had always been more of an abstract idea,” writes Mair. “As we got further into our fight to keep our industry alive, that divide — conservatives in the rural areas, centre and left in the cities — became increasingly evident.” Similarly, Evie Johnny Ruddy never expected to be at the centre of a hate-filled social media storm when they publicly challenged a barbershop’s refusal to cut their hair. Overnight, a declined request to purchase a service from a local business “became lost in the din of a polarized debate” that erased Ruddy’s non-binary gender identity and supplanted it with the identity of a “feminazi” who threatened men’s rights. “I was publicly humiliated, shamed, harassed, and threatened, with people targeting my sexed body parts. In the days that followed, I was afraid to leave my house,” writes Ruddy in “The Hard Part.” The threats were heightened when a commercial radio host took up the barbershop’s position as a *cause célèbre*, broadcasting highly personal attacks on Ruddy across Saskatchewan.

Although not directly addressed by Ruddy, it is worth adding that the neoliberal trend of industry self-regulation has left citizens without an independent authority to protect them from commercial news media abuses; complaints to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), nominally the federal body charged with monitoring and disciplining broadcast media, are immediately forwarded to an industry-run association, the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, for adjudication.²⁷ This mirrors the regime of oil industry self-regulation that now holds sway over emissions and spills in Saskatchewan’s oil patch. Ruddy’s case also illustrates the gendered nature of today’s right-wing populism, which is riding currents of fear of change, solidified into discourse/rhetoric about the nature and naturalness of gender roles, as well as a deep moral panic that erupts into accusations of Satanism — reaching back to charges of Satanic ritual abuse at a daycare centre in Martensville, Saskatchewan, in the early 1990s — to today’s Pizzagate conspiracy theory, linking Hillary Clinton and other high-profile US Democrats to child sexual slavery rings, now expanded by QAnon followers in Canada to include Trudeau as well.²⁸

The final chapter of Part 1, “Which Side Are You On? Between Yellow Vests and Migrant Rights in the New Saskatchewan,” offers a glimpse of an alternative scenario to rising culture wars. Andrew Stevens describes how governments and business and labour leaders, recognizing the need to fill labour shortages and grow the provincial population, have worked jointly



A truck with a Q-Anon sticker drives down the highway just outside North Battleford. Photo by P.W. Elliott.

to establish and protect the rights of migrant workers in Saskatchewan. In this sense, the chapter stands out as an island of potential sanity, but one Stevens warns is threatened by the government's flirtation with yellow vest caravans and by ongoing barriers to citizenship that leave migrants in precarity.

FRAYING THE FABRIC

Part 2, Fraying the Fabric, takes a deeper look at what lies behind the examples offered in Part 1, including the ongoing impacts of colonialism and rise of neoliberal economics under the watch of parties of both the left and the right in Saskatchewan. The chapters examine how these broad trends have contributed to a fraying of human relations that — while greatly accelerated by today's hyperbolic communications platforms — reach back further in history.

Among settlers, there have been seismic shifts in the economy and population patterns that have wrought a sense of social dislocation and threatened futures. The chapters referring to these trends delve into particular practices and policies related to neoliberalism, including the government's redefinition of its role as aiding the direct accumulation of specific sectors and promoting particular enterprise forms. This is partly

a reflection of historical trends in capitalism's relationship to society and how discourses about the state have changed across North America and the globe. But the ways in which Saskatchewan has responded to these trends reflect its history and social, political and economic makeup. Saskatchewan is a hinterland in Canada and should be understood as an underdeveloped, dependent region using many of the same concepts we would use to understand countries and regions of the Global South. Hallmarks include political and economic subordination, domination by foreign transnationals, resource dependence, too little diversification and a culture of cronyism. Thus, the province continues its role as a "hewer of wood and drawer of water" — or, in this case, as a grower of grain and oilseeds and extractor of natural resources.

Within this frame, however, there has been momentous change. King Wheat no longer rules the economy. That honour is now given to oil, gas and mining, which, according to the most recently available (2019) data, at 27.1 percent of the province's GDP was nearly three times the next largest sector of real estate, renting and leasing (9.2 percent). Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting now comprise only 8.4 percent of the economy and construction comes in a close fourth at 7.2 percent.²⁹ Together, these four sectors now account for over half the provincial economy; they are highly cyclical, boom-bust and capital intensive, as evidenced by a 17.7 percent drop in oil production in the first quarter of 2021.³⁰

In "Not Your Grandparents' Rural Saskatchewan," JoAnn Jaffe and Amy Quark track the hollowing-out of the middle of rural communities via these seismic economic shifts. Neoliberal constraints have scraped away at basic rural services such as education, health care and public transportation, fraying the fabric of community life, they write. At the same time, the erasure of borders has introduced large, extra-provincial landowners into the mix. As farming has transformed from a humble way of life to an exercise in corporate entrepreneurship, there has been a fundamental realignment of relationships in rural Saskatchewan, not only between rural dwellers and their governments, but also among each other. "Solidarities among producers are breaking down as the interests of

Among settlers, there have been seismic shifts in the economy and population patterns that have wrought a sense of social dislocation and threatened futures.

farmers of different sizes continue to diverge and farmers overtly compete with each other over land and labour,” they observe.

This trend is further explicated by Birgit Müller in “If They Don’t Farm It, They Should Not Own It.” Müller’s multiple conversations with farmers in a rural Saskatchewan village reveal a collective distress over the practices engendered by absentee corporate landowners. Müller examines the loosening of ownership rules and, using census data, quantifies a relatively swift progression from mid-sized, locally owned farmland to sprawling operations owned by out-of-province corporations, often lacking prior experience in agriculture or a sense of mutual aid. “They used to come with their sprayers into town to fill up their chemical tanks with water at the town water supply. It is the town’s drinking water . . . they don’t feel any responsibility,” says a retired farmer whose land was absorbed by Alberta-based interests. Where the previous chapter paints a broad picture of the breakdown of social solidarity, in Müller’s study we see up close how the erosion of trust and cooperation plays out in a rural community.

Ken Rasmussen argues that the unmooring of past economies has in fact simply coalesced around new issues and generated new solidarities. Rasmussen’s influential 1991 work, *Privatizing a Province: The New Right in Saskatchewan*, co-edited with James Pitsula, described a time, Rasmussen writes today, “when it was no exaggeration to suggest that there was a battle taking place for the very soul of the province.” That time has passed, he observes in “The Suburbanization of Saskatchewan Politics since 1982.” Major ideological differences between the province’s two main political parties, the Sask Party and the NDP, have been smoothed over by the need to capture key swing ridings in the province’s expanding urban suburbs. As a result, suburban issues have become default provincial issues, with a focus on middle-class pocketbook concerns and stability. The overwhelming voter choice of the Sask Party as the best equipped to tackle these concerns, across several elections, suggests the province is far more united than it is divided, Rasmussen concludes.

This presents an interesting challenge to a major premise of this collection; however, subsequent chapters present a picture of who has been left outside the social consensus described by Rasmussen. Indigenous people, seniors, youth, the disabled and women are among those who have suffered greatly on the road to transforming Saskatchewan into a land of reduced corporate taxes and privatized public services. Over the past three decades, Saskatchewan has been structurally adjusted,

subjected to austerity and held hostage to the ratings of the bond markets. Problems of transfer pricing, tax evasion and illicit financial flows, and policies that favour accumulation by business over social spending have left many individuals and communities in a precarious state. In this state, the stroke of a budget pen can abruptly change lives for the worse. This occurred when the province's publicly owned, intra-provincial bus service was abruptly shuttered in 2017 on the promise that the private sector would provide transportation more efficiently. In "Cutting the Lifeline: Shuttering the Saskatchewan Transportation Company," Cindy Hanson and JoAnn Jaffe review comments from affected people who volunteered their experiences through an online storytelling portal and on the Save STC Facebook page. The commenters provide a clear view of who was left out of the province's financial equation: seniors who rode the bus to attend medical appointments and visit relatives, small-town business people and farmers who relied on package deliveries, Indigenous people who must travel outside their communities to receive basic amenities and services, people who can't drive because of physical disabilities and victims of family violence for whom the bus is a literal lifeline, taking them away to places of safety. "Despite the hardships discussed in the stories, the importance of organizing, creating dialogue and documenting the impacts cannot be overestimated," Hanson and Jaffe write. "For many, destroying the bus service is equated with tearing apart the social fabric of Saskatchewan."

Northern communities are part of that torn fabric — and not only in the loss of transportation. April ChiefCalf describes an equally sudden stroke of the pen that transferred the highly successful, Indigenous-managed Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) and Northern Professional Access College (NORPAC) to a provincially managed regional college, with little advance warning to students and faculty members. The transfer was delivered from on high by Scott Moe, then minister of advanced education and now provincial premier. In a chapter aptly titled "Divide and Conquer," ChiefCalf, a former NORTEP faculty member, describes how Moe's ministerial successor, Bronwyn Eyre, worked to play the local NORTEP Council against Northlands Regional College, with student funding falling through the cracks in the process. The loss of NORTEP/NORPAC was just the latest round in a long history of colonial control that has left the North economically marginalized amid great natural wealth, subject to ill-informed policy decisions made in Regina office towers.

Claire Polster and Janice Newson also examine the landscape of higher education. “A serious problem for progressive people nowadays is that neoliberal discourse has become so established, so commonsensical, that it is difficult to publicly question, much less challenge it,” they write in a chapter about the transformation of universities from being a public resource to a market-controlled asset. However, they add: “We can and should examine and question what has been done to our universities,” offering a succinct Q & A-style counterpoint to the myths of purely market-driven higher education. They also note, however, how difficult it has become to assert the values of the academy within the current political framework. To this we would further add that an atmosphere of anti-intellectualism and charges of “political correctness” also play into this scenario as a means to delegitimize the ability of those attacked to fight back against their dishonouring and undermine intellectuals and universities as centres of critique.

Such struggles and counter-struggles are being played out at multiple levels across the province. In “Disability Doesn’t Discriminate,” Terri Sleeva speaks from the perspective of many years as a disability and public transportation activist, representing two intertwined issues stymied by neoliberal austerity. One quarter of Saskatchewan residents have some form of disability, and the main means of support is a below-poverty-level social assistance program, Sleeva writes. Disability is thus intimately tied to poverty in a province that cares little for vulnerable populations and where popular “bootstrap” discourse belittles those who rely on social programs. “The Sask Party likes to download poverty issues to charitable community supports such as food banks instead of taking responsibility for the lives of residents of Saskatchewan,” observes Sleeva, who then provides a succinct list of program critiques and suggestions for a more inclusive province.

Cora Sellers rounds out the section by looking at the province from multiple angles: BC émigré, Sixties Scoop survivor, Inuit woman, domestic violence survivor, parent, former senior bureaucrat, racism target, academic, service agency director and, primarily, a dedicated activist and advocate for people facing deep-seated trauma and urban poverty in the middle of Saskatchewan’s capital city. In “Division and Privilege in Our Advocacy,” Sellers describes how leaving a government position for a struggling front-line agency opened her eyes to how severely Indigenous people had been abused and marginalized by an uncaring society — something

she had known intellectually and through personal experience, but not to the degree she witnessed every day at the Carmichael Outreach Centre. As she struggled from burnout, the experience also opened her eyes to the depth of her own trauma as an Indigenous person, hidden beneath a carefully constructed professional life. Sellers lays out in clear, searing language what truly lies at the heart of a province pulling apart at the seams, namely the subjugation and ongoing oppression of Indigenous people. Saskatchewan was founded on a fractured ground, where the original inhabitants and stewards of the land were removed from their territories, removed from their families and removed from all inherent rights and privileges in a settler-dominated society, despite the signing of treaties. This separation and subjugation remains today, not only amid “a sharp resurgence of stigma and hate toward the poor and oppressed, and anyone who advocated for them,” writes Sellers, but also within the movements meant to counter such conditions. In the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, Sellers witnessed a surge of “people who were calling themselves allies,” which she found equally exhausting, as allies began presuming leadership and speaking for Indigenous people. “No wonder I was tired,” writes Sellers, an apt segue to *Divided’s* next section, which looks at abuse of power over ordinary peoples’ lives.

Saskatchewan was founded on a fractured ground, where the original inhabitants and stewards of the land were removed from their territories, removed from their families and removed from all inherent rights and privileges in a settler-dominated society, despite the signing of treaties.

POWER PLAYS

Besides the more general market fundamentalism common to so many places caught in the grips of the neoliberal restructuring of society and economy, the Sask Party has relied on a few ideological themes particular to Saskatchewan to cudgel opponents and maintain its political advantage. One theme is rooted in an inferiority complex that comes with being the “younger sibling” to Alberta³¹ — a province with over four times the GDP and four times the population of Saskatchewan.³² Sask Party leaders consistently speak of a population exodus to Alberta under the NDP,

to the point that it has become a received truth, despite the fact that the greatest out-migration took place under Grant Devine's Conservative Party years, then levelled off and recovered under the NDP. The invented truth also belies the reality that out-migration has not decreased under

This Orwellian level of "newspeak" mirrors an increasingly Orwellian approach to government, where critics are cast as traitors and political operatives seek to expose and discredit anyone within the public service ranks who questions its policies.

the Sask Party but rather has been backfilled via the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program, which has attracted a steady stream of newcomers who may themselves in time leave the province. This Orwellian level of "newspeak" mirrors an increasingly Orwellian approach to government, where critics are cast as traitors and political operatives

seek to expose and discredit anyone within the public service ranks who questions its policies.

In "The Politics of Power," Bill Bonner highlights the case of health care worker Peter Bowden, who spoke publicly about conditions in a senior's care home in Saskatoon. A few weeks later, the premier's communications director sent emails alerting journalists that Bowden had been suspended, accompanied by dark hints of impropriety, including "sexual harassment for sure." When reporters chose instead to report on the privacy breach, Premier Wall defended his office's action, stating the email was circulated to a select group of journalists "for background only." Bonner writes, "The idea of having background information released in secret to the media with the expectation that it be kept secret, as revealed in this case, is deeply disturbing for how seemingly normal it has become."

The sense of being watched and controlled also pervades Tim Korol's chapter on child welfare services, not only among the civil service but also among service recipients. Korol is a former police officer and human rights investigator who served as an assistant deputy minister of child protection during the early years of the Wall government. His chapter, "Power Beyond Account," takes an inside look at how an intractable bureaucracy suppresses dissent through the ultimate power play: removal of children, a process harkening back to the residential schools era.

Andrew Stevens and Charles Smith examine how the Sask Party used its majority to rescind important legislative protections for working

people. “Most of these legal changes came from the inner workings of the Saskatchewan Party with almost no consultation with workers, unions and against many of the recommendations of numerous business allies,” note Stevens and Smith in “The Erosion of Workers’ Rights in Saskatchewan.” Although the Wall government’s blatant attack on the public sector’s right to strike ironically led to the Supreme Court constitutionalizing the right to strike, the loss of other related protections and provisions has transformed Saskatchewan from a labour bedrock to one of the most difficult places in Canada for workers to organize. Against this history, the authors challenge popular characterizations of the Sask Party government as a “moderate right.” Instead, they argue, the Sask Party has used blunt force to pave the way for corporate interests that rely on a workforce that has greatly reduced bargaining power over wages and working conditions.

In “Who Killed the Public Surgery Centre?” Cheryl Stadnichuk uses freedom of information requests and statistical data to uncover the intriguing story of how plans for an innovative public initiative were buried to make way for a private sector-oriented program that ultimately failed to reduce surgical wait times. A similar note is sounded in “What Counts as Evidence of Claimed Value?,” Bill Bonner and Morina Rennie’s examination of public-private partnerships (P3s). Looking at the Regina Bypass project and the Regina Wastewater Treatment Plant, Bonner and Rennie describe the process by which inflated risk factors are used to obscure the true economy of construction projects and provide governments with arguments that P3s are better value for money than publicly owned and managed infrastructure. Their study also observed how quickly the government would step in to “correct the record” in the face of any public criticism of the P3 model, creating the image of a seamless connection between government and corporate interests through shared talking points.

This symbiotic relationship between political power and capital is also evident in a review of uranium mining and development in Saskatchewan. In “From Big Bad Wolf to Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing,” Don Kossick highlights how Cameco was able to take over public assets and avoid taxation with impunity in Saskatchewan, as well as how the government has consistently pushed small modular nuclear reactors as a ready market for Cameco’s uranium at a time when nuclear plants are being decommissioned elsewhere. Kossick’s chapter also introduces the concept of purchased social licence, noting Cameco’s donations to the

arts and community projects. This phenomenon is not restricted to uranium development. Natural resource companies have come to support many services that government used to fund, as seen in the donations given by oil and gas companies to small-town recreation centres, fire and emergency services and public education.³³ As Kossick notes in the case of Cameco, social licence is, in essence, a sleight-of-hand that directs the attention of Saskatchewan citizens away from problems created by the dominant industries of Saskatchewan and casts those who question those industries as opponents of the people. Yet still people resist, as described in this chapter and in the book's next section.

A FIGHTING CHANCE

One of the most difficult aspects of the current age is the overwhelming scope of issues we face: climate change, global pandemics, militarization, environmental degradation, widening inequality and a seemingly unstoppable fascist resurgence. The Saskatchewan government has not made credible steps to counter any of these trends, despite the perilous edge of survival we now travel. Instead, they have aligned themselves wholly with narrow market interests and have propagated divisive rhetoric to defend

The doors to a more harmonious, balanced and secure future seem wholly closed. Yet still people fight to turn history around.

the status quo. Thus, the doors to a more harmonious, balanced and secure future seem wholly closed. Yet still people fight to turn history around.

We do not want to say *Divided* ends on a note of "hope" because hope has itself become a media trope that pacifies. Rather, it ends with strategy. On numerous fronts, Saskatchewan people have successfully countered the Sask Party narrative with alternative narratives and actions. "Writing a New Song," by Joel Bernbaum and Yvette Nolan, reflects back on our opening chapter, with an examination of the process of creating a community-authored theatre production about the death of Colten Boushie. The musical play *Reasonable Doubt* looked toward creating new Indigenous-settler relationships in the wake of the Stanley trial, a process that was transformational not just to audiences but also to the operations of a mainstream theatre company.

A chapter submitted by the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) Sisters Regina also looks at the importance of dialogue, under the title

“Challenging Hate and Discrimination with Awareness and Dialogue.” Followers of Islam face religious discrimination, over-policing and false media representations that make them objects of suspicion in Canadian society, they write. In response, the Sisters have joined in numerous community-service actions and set up booths in shopping malls so that they can have the face-to-face conversations that they feel are lacking and sorely needed. Florence Stratton’s chapter, “Study War No More,” further emphasizes direct conversation and attendance at public events as key elements in bringing about an end to military training in high schools. Research into the financial costs and incisive questions pricked the balloon of a manufactured consent, contributing to the program’s closure.

“For the Love of Matthew” by Christopher Campbell Gardiner, with contributions from Shannon Berard-Gardiner, speaks to a more personal battlefield, in this case the quest to continue caring for a profoundly disabled foster child who had “aged out” of social service assistance. The chapter brings life to Tim Korol’s previous observations of the child welfare system, portraying a recalcitrant bureaucracy that did not like to be challenged in its decision to move the young man to a group home that could not offer the same level of one-on-one care as a family home. Matthew’s foster parents used legislation to gain traction, aided by high-profile media coverage and the gathering of thousands of supporters through social media.

The final two chapters of *Divided* focus on no less than planetary survival and the role Saskatchewan can play in mitigating a climate crisis. Katie Doke Sawatzky meticulously tracks the loss of Prairie grasslands in “It’s Time to Save the Prairie.” Grasslands have tremendous potential as carbon sinks, she notes. While examining the role of commonly held pasturelands in grasslands preservation, she shares the story of a rural couple’s struggles to turn cropland into a semblance of native prairie, knowing the original version can never be fully restored.

The final chapter is penned by student Sydney Chadwick. Its title — “We Want a Future” — is a cry for sanity in a troubled world. Reflecting on her experience as a Fridays for Future high school activist living in a small town, she writes, “Fighting for climate change has become incredibly politicized, which is inevitable, but ultimately it must be a matter of science, not opinion.” In that light, Chadwick describes how she set about to learn the science and to listen to those who fear job loss. “I have family who have worked in the oil industry for decades; they are not the

problem and are not who we are fighting against,” she states. She and her generation imagine a future where they can enjoy the benefits of a healthy planet. “Maybe it is selfish, but I want a future. I am entitled to that,” she concludes. This statement leaves a heavy burden on us all to end our current state of polarization and to work in solidarity toward a common future.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the last several years, cracks in the colonial paradigm have brought forward a reassertion of Indigenous sovereignty. Through round dances in the streets and teepees on the lawns of power, Saskatchewan’s original inhabitants are forcing conversations long suppressed and, in many cases, still suppressed. Premier Moe’s refusal to visit the teepee of Tristen Durocher, who had walked from Air Ronge to protest the lack of action on suicide in the North, contrasted with the positive public reception, media coverage and legal support that Durocher’s hunger strike gained over forty-four days in 2020. The neoliberal paradigm is likewise cracking, as governments and corporations have “burnt the furniture,” “eaten the seedcorn” or “drawn down the principal” to the point where they can no longer rely on using these reserves to keep things going. That initial flush of good fortune, where the Sask Party government was able to rely on previous investments without making new ones, made it look as though prosperity could continue without taxation and public outlays, thereby undermining both society and ecology. In the case of environmental issues, powerful technologies can temporarily mask the degradation that emerges in these contexts, but it is more difficult to do so with people. The people of Saskatchewan have serious choices to make about their future, including whether we will stand together or continue to allow short-sighted political games to drive us apart.

In closing, we thank the chapter authors who so generously contributed their thoughts, time and toil to creating this collection. We have no words to fully express the depth of our gratitude and the importance of your work to Saskatchewan’s future.

Notes

1. World Health Organization, *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report 51*, March 11, 2020 <[who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200311-sitrep-51-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=1ba62e57_10](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200311-sitrep-51-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=1ba62e57_10)>.

2. Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, *Hansard*, March 11, 2020, Regina: Queen's Printer: 6862.
3. Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly: 6883.
4. Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly: 6883.
5. Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly: 6883.
6. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, *The 2009 H1N1 Influenza Pandemic among First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada: Epidemiology and Gaps in Knowledge* (Prince George: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, 2016) <nccah-ccnsa.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/174/NCCAH-FS-InfluenzaEpidemiology-Part01-Halseth-EN-Web.pdf>.
7. Phil Tank, "How Saskatchewan's 13 Zones Compare Six Months into COVID-19 Pandemic," *Regina Leader-Post*, September 22, 2020 <leaderpost.com/news/local-news/how-saskatchewans-13-zones-compare-six-months-into-covid-19-pandemic>.
8. Scott Moe Facebook page, September 12, 2020, post and comments <facebook.com/PremierScottMoe/posts/3523984640979240>.
9. c.f. Fred Block and Margaret R. Somers, *The Power of Market Fundamentalism: Karl Polanyi's Critique* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
10. Brad Wall, *Speech to the Premier's Dinner*, Art Hauser Centre, Prince Albert, SK, March 21, 2013.
11. James M. Pitsula and Ken Rasmussen, *Privatizing a Province: The New Right in Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: New Star Books 1991).
12. Leslie Biggs and Mark Stobbe, *Devine Rule in Saskatchewan: A Decade of Hope and Hardship* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1991).
13. Howard Leeson, *Saskatchewan Politics: Crowding the Centre* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center/U of R Press, 2009): 7.
14. Jacob Davey, Cécile Guerin and Mackenzie Hart, *An Online Environmental Scan of Right-wing Extremism in Canada: Interim Report* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2020) <isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/An-Online-Environmental-Scan-of-Right-wing-Extremism-in-Canada-ISD.pdf>.
15. Arthur White-Crummey, "Bomb Threat Was Made Against UNIFOR Blockades in February," *Regina Leader-Post*, May 19, 2020 <leaderpost.com/news/local-news/bomb-threat-was-made-against-unifor-blockades-in-february>.
16. Jay Reidel Facebook page, September 9 and September 10, 2020, posts and comments <facebook.com/jay.riedel>.
17. Jennifer McCoy, Tahmina Rahman, and Murat Somer, "Polarization and the Global Crisis of Democracy: Common Patterns, Dynamics, and Pernicious Consequences for Democratic Polities," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 62, 1 (2018) <doi:10.1177/0002764218759576>.
18. A. Kevins and S. Soroka, "Growing Apart? Partisan Sorting in Canada, 1992–2015," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 51, 1 (2018): 105 <doi:10.1017/S0008423917000713>.

19. J. Gagnon, E. Beausoleil, K. Son, C. Arguelles, P. Chalaye, and C.N. Johnston, "What Is Populism? Who Is the Populist?" *Democratic Theory*, 5, 2 (2018) <doi:10.3167/dt.2018.050201>.
20. Octavia Bryant and Benjamin Moffitt, "What Exactly Is Populism and Why Does it Have a Bad Reputation?" *The Conversation*, February 5, 2019 <theconversation.com/what-actually-is-populism-and-why-does-it-have-a-bad-reputation-109874>.
21. Populist Party, "Populist Party Platform," *Omaha Morning World-Herald*, July 5, 1892: Preamble para 2 <wwnorton.com/college/history/archive/reader/trial/directory/1890_1914/12_ch22_04.htm>.
22. Populist Party, "Populist Party Platform": Preamble para 5.
23. John F. Conway, "The Nature of Populism: A Clarification," *Studies in Political Economy*, 13, 1 (1984) <doi:10.1080/19187033.1984.11675644>.
24. John W. Warnock, *Saskatchewan: The Roots of Discontent and Protest* (Montreal: Black Rose 2004).
25. B. Perry and R. Scrivens, *Right-Wing Extremism in Canada: An Environmental Scan* (Ottawa: Public Safety Canada 2015).
26. J. Gagnon et al., "What Is Populism?": v.
27. CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television Communications Commission), "How to Make a Broadcasting Complaint" (2020) <crtc.gc.ca/eng/info_sht/g8.htm#who>.
28. Joan Baxter, "QAnon Knows No Borders," *Halifax Examiner*, September 13, 2020 <halifaxexaminer.ca/featured/qanon-knows-no-borders/>.
29. Saskatchewan, "Economic Overview" (2020) <saskatchewan.ca/business/investment-and-economic-development/economic-overview>.
30. Saskatchewan, "Saskatchewan's Dashboard: Business and Economy," May 2, 2021 <dashboard.saskatchewan.ca/business-economy>.
31. J. Emery, C. Herbert, and Ronald D. Kneebone, "Socialists, Populists, Resources, and the Divergent Development of Alberta and Saskatchewan," *Canadian Public Policy*, 34, 4 (2008).
32. Eric Duffin, "Canada: Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), by Province 2019," *Statista*, June 2, 2020 <statista.com/statistics/463905/canada-real-gross-domestic-product-by-province/>; Statistics Canada, "Table 17-10-0009-01 Population Estimates, Quarterly" (2020) <doi.org/10.25318/1710000901-eng>.
33. JoAnn Jaffe and Amy A. Quark, "Social Cohesion, Neoliberalism, and the Entrepreneurial Community in Rural Saskatchewan," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 50, 2 (2006) <doi:10.1177/0002764206290634>; Emily M. Eaton and Simon Enoch, "Oil's Rural Reach: Social License in Saskatchewan's Oil-Producing Communities," *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 43, 1 (2018) <doi:10.22230/cjc.2018v43n1a3305>.