



History Program
University of Northern British Columbia



History Master's Theses completed at UNBC



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“The Glamour and the Horror a Social History of Wartime Northwestern British Columbia, 1939-1945,”

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ABSTRACT

During the Second World War, the communities of Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columbia underwent a dramatic social transformation. Both towns were chosen as sites for Canadian and American military bases; the arrival of the military more than doubled the populations in these communities, created stress on existing recreational facilities, and brought the isolated inhabitants into contact with many different people. These were the circumstances surrounding daily wartime social relations in Prince George and Prince Rupert. This thesis is a social history of these two communities which became hubs where many segments of military and civilian society converged: Americans, Canadians, volunteers, conscripts, women in uniform, young civilian men, white civilian women, and Native women.

Through the use of oral history interviews and a variety of written sources, including newspapers, city council minutes, diaries and military records, this thesis argues that national wartime issues led to a segmentation of society in these base towns. People ceased to be seen as individuals, rather as representatives of the groups in which they were placed. This divisiveness of society affected social relations; it manifested itself everywhere – in the beer halls, ballrooms, and businesses of Prince George and Prince Rupert. By examining recreational events, gender relations and crime, this thesis demonstrates that the social relations borne out of segmentation were diverse, ranging from extreme glamour to the horrors of assault.