“IT HAPPENED TO ME IN BARKERVILLE:” ABORIGINAL IDENTITY, ECONOMY, AND LAW IN THE CARIBOO GOLD RUSH, 1862-1900

By

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ABSTRACT

"It Happened to Me in Barkerville" argues that aboriginal people were participants in many aspects of gold rush life in Barkerville and the surrounding region. Despite the fact that many of the records of aboriginal participation are restricted to the areas in which they came into contact with the British-influenced social elite, a critical examination of the existing documents partially reconstructs the experiences of aboriginal people living there. Letters and correspondence, mining company ledgers, newspaper accounts, and court records suggest that aboriginal experiences were complex and diverse. This was especially true of their integration into Barkerville society, opportunistic participation in the gold rush economy, and relationships with colonial administrators at the Richfield courthouse. These conclusions help provide a more complete history of the Cariboo gold rush at Barkerville, and contribute to a better understanding of the history of indigenous people in British Columbia.
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Introduction

On 10 July 1870, local “Siwash” prostitute “Lucy Bones” died suddenly in her Barkerville cabin, launching her private affairs into the public pages of the local newspaper, the *Cariboo Sentinel*. The story did not qualify as front page news, which was typically reserved for the newest mining ventures, but it was scandalous enough to warrant a fourth-page editorial that contained all of the sordid details, including the name and testimony of the White man who was in bed with her when she died. The incident provides a rare glimpse into the lives of the town’s aboriginal population and hints at their possible role in this booming centre of immigration and mining activity. Physically, Lucy’s cabin was located at the centre of the new gold rush town, directly across from the iconic Saint Saviour’s Church. In social terms, Lucy, her clients, and her “Siwash” friends were part of what local historian Richard Wright terms Barkerville’s “underside,” comprising the less savoury and rarely written-about elements of the frontier community.

By 1870, the year of Lucy’s death, Barkerville and the surrounding gold rush towns had exhausted the surface gold and had become an established location of shaft and tunnel mining with a supporting economy of goods and services providers, government offices, churches, a library, and a school. The region was at the heart of the Cariboo gold rush, which had begun in 1862 after a series of gold strikes along the creeks

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2 Nevertheless, as this thesis will demonstrate, aboriginal people tended to be more central than previously imagined. Richard Thomas Wright, *Barkerville, Williams Creek, Cariboo: A Gold Rush Experience* (Williams Lake: Winter Quarters Press, 1998), 45.
3 The Barkerville area refers to a collection of mining communities in the Cariboo mountain region, of which the town of Barkerville was the largest and the most central. Ibid, 17, 79. This included prostitution, which was established by at least 1862. Ibid, 43-44.
of the Cariboo Mountains including Antler, Lightning, and Williams Creek. The Cariboo gold rush closely followed the Fraser gold rush of 1858, which had led miners up the Fraser River’s gold-bearing bars. As a part of a series of nineteenth century gold rushes, the Cariboo gold rush was the extension of a broader global process of developmental and demographic change. At the same time as the town was founded, built, and eventually declined, aboriginal people across British Columbia were facing rapid settlement and encroachment, a brand new economic structure, and the vigorous application of a new code of law that claimed supersedence over their own justice and modes of living. By 1864, the population on Williams Creek alone had peaked at 10,000 people. These people were of a variety of different backgrounds and ethnicities, and from Lucy's story and others like it, we know that some of them were indigenous. Their stories are important for understanding history at Barkerville, but they are also significant for what they can contribute to understandings of aboriginal history in British Columbia as a whole.

Although aboriginal people used the Barkerville area in the pre-contact era, those who participated in the gold rush were mostly new arrivals. Once arrived in Barkerville, they were important and active participants in the Cariboo Gold Rush. Unfortunately, little evidence survives to inform historians of the nature of this participation. Indeed, the only aboriginal account of life in Barkerville is a narrative found inscribed on the wall of the Richfield Gaol in 1885. Signed by two inmates, “John” and “Nuti,” the brief lines

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lament their imprisonment: “Oh! I got real drunk! It happened to me here; it happened to me in Barkerville.”7 Yet, even small pieces like this one, when combined with stories like Lucy’s in the Cariboo Sentinel, court documents, archaeological evidence, and other archival records, confirms an aboriginal presence in the town and can provide glimpses of their lives and activities.

Most of the available evidence relates to aspects of aboriginal peoples’ lives that put them into contact with the town’s record-keepers, namely, the economy, in which they played a significant role, and the legal system, which served as the centre of colonial power in the province. Economically, aboriginal people were opportunists, participating actively in new wage work while continuing to use pre-existing subsistence hunting and gathering skills when it suited them. Their interactions with Barkerville’s law enforcement and court system demonstrate a similar adaptability as aboriginal people attempted to negotiate developing legal structures formed out of the particular circumstances and predominant racial ideologies of late nineteenth century British Columbia. Taken together, the evidence indicates that aboriginal people were a part of Barkerville’s past and, at the same time, that Barkerville was a part of aboriginal history. The sources from this area tell a complex story of negotiation, adaptation, and occasional conflict in British Columbia which deserves closer analysis and exploration.

7 This quote is part of a longer narrative. The full text reads: “December 20th, 1885; Oh! I got real drunk. It happened to me here; It happened to me in Barkerville; They say I was judged; They say I was judged. I [have to] stay here for three months; Oh! Liquor is very bad!; I’ve been here since August; here Barkerville jail; I am here; dumb bugger! This jail [is in] Barkerville; Signed John; It’s a small jail; Signed Nuti; It’s a small jail.” The board was taken from the gaol in 1914 by a member of the McKenzie family before the old building was torn down. It was stored in the attic of the town’s Assay Office until it was re-discovered by Barkerville curator Bill Quackenbush in 1993. It was translated by local linguist Bill Poser. “Carrier Symbols, Richfield Jail,” Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, RG 168.
Historians of British Columbia’s aboriginal people have not missed the significance of the Cariboo gold rush to the province. It was an event that had particular impact on aboriginal populations as newcomers flooded into their territories, intent on making their fortunes through gold extraction. All facets of life were transformed by this event, as law, order, and colonial control were exerted by authorities in direct response to the problems created by the influx of miners from a variety of ethnic backgrounds into the previously sparsely settled interior. Because the gold rush brought such rapid and significant change, scholars have seized on it as crucial to the development of the province. They tend to depict the years between 1858 and 1900 as an era of transformation in the lives of indigenous people in this broader context, emphasizing the gold rush as an event that altered newcomer/aboriginal relationships permanently, with repercussions to the present day.

Despite the established fact that British Columbia’s gold rushes represented important turning points for indigenous people, there is currently no academic work focused on aboriginal people in the Barkerville area during this era. The work that is closest to making a sustained argument about aboriginal history at Barkerville is Christopher Herbert’s “Unequal Participants: Race and Space in the Interracial Interactions of the Cariboo Gold Fields, 1860-1871.” Herbert explores the interactions

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8 Wright, Barkerville, 18.
between Chinese, White, Black, and indigenous people in Barkerville and its environs.\textsuperscript{10} He makes the important point that, despite a historiographical focus on newcomers and their institutions, gold rush towns cannot be understood unless they are placed in the context of complex racial interaction and the existence of the hinterland, against which newcomers frequently defined themselves.\textsuperscript{11} Herbert is particularly interested in what he calls the "British-influenced elites," who controlled positions of power in towns and were able to use that power to define and then impose their vision of how racial relationships should occur in urban (or aspiring urban) locations. Herbert notices that they were less successful in this endeavour in the sub regions of the mines or the hinterland, where rough mining culture and aboriginal culture continued to dominate.\textsuperscript{12}

Herbert makes an effort to include aboriginal people in his discussion of racial relations, but is hindered by a dearth of evidence. For Herbert the location of indigenous people in the Cariboo mountain region was outside the towns, where "Native dominance and a lack of state power in the hinterland meant that many Native-Newcomer interracial interactions were favourable to the Natives."\textsuperscript{13} While able to explore the role of aboriginal packers, suppliers, and prospectors, and detail their interactions with other ethnic groups in roadhouses, he cannot say much about aboriginal people in the sub regions of the towns and mines.\textsuperscript{14} According to Herbert, aboriginal people were considered the improper inhabitants of the towns, and therefore came to be equated with criminality.\textsuperscript{15} In the mines, Herbert is only able to state that aboriginal people were the

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\textsuperscript{10} Christopher Herbert, "Unequal Participants: Race and Space in the Interracial Interactions of the Cariboo Gold Fields, 1860-1871" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2005), 5.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 6.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 8.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 26.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 68.
\end{flushleft}
"missing presence," excluded by labour policy and the mining season's incompatibility with seasonal rounds. Herbert concludes that power relationships in the hinterland were far more balanced than in the urban and economic centers where newcomers were culturally dominant. Hindered by a lack of evidence and not centered exclusively on indigenous people, Herbert does not engage in analysis on this group outside of the hinterland. Nevertheless, his thesis is useful for understanding this topic because it provides an explanation of the power hierarchies in the area of study.

Other academic work tends to focus on the Fraser River or the lower mainland. Daniel Patrick Marshall has also written on the topic of indigenous people during the gold rush, but his thesis neglects the Cariboo rush in favour of the Fraser and Queen Charlotte rushes. Similarly to Herbert's thesis, Marshall focuses on power relationships between natives and newcomers during the gold rush. He argues that the Fraser rush cannot be understood unless it is considered as a part of a larger transboundary event which included the California mining frontier and other areas on the Pacific Slope. Like the broader British Columbia historians, Marshall sees the Fraser gold rush as a transitional moment in the history of the region during which colonialism officially started and the marginalization of indigenous people began. However, he also argues that indigenous people were participants in the gold rush in that they "actively mined the resource, adopted Euro-American technology when to their benefit, [and] provided guiding and other assistance to parties of miners." Furthermore, they "forcefully defended their lucrative claims to the land" against other gold seekers "through full-scale

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16 Ibid, 101.
17 Ibid, 7.
18 Marshall, "Claiming the Land," 20
19 Ibid, 21-23.
20 Ibid, 18.
His work is methodologically important for understanding events at Barkerville for the connections that it provides between British Columbia and the rest of the Pacific Slope. Particularly in regard to aboriginal relationships with the criminal justice system, the attitudes and events from south of the sixty-ninth parallel are essential for understanding history as it unfolded at Barkerville. Furthermore, his emphasis on aboriginal participation in mining and boom-town life helps to fill in the blank spaces left by Herbert.

Alternatively, there are several broad surveys of British Columbia’s contact period which include analysis of gold rush events, but these tend to touch on the Cariboo only briefly despite the region’s acknowledged importance as a population, legal, and economic centre in these crucial years. Most of these works are geared toward understanding the transition between the pre-contact and contact era, during which time aboriginal people came to be marginalized. The gold rush was a part of this process, although the degree of its importance is the subject of some debate amongst historians like Robin Fisher (Contact and Conflict), Rolf Knight (Indians at Work), and John Lutz (Makuk). Overwhelmingly, discussions of gold rush events are restricted to the Fraser River and lower mainland. Although the Barkerville region sometimes makes a brief appearance in these narratives, there is no sustained analysis of the aboriginal people there. In addition, both Knight and Lutz focus almost exclusively on aboriginal people in the economy, which they use to explain social, political, and cultural changes. Despite their neglect of the study area, the broader theories described in these works can be tested against evidence from Barkerville, and are useful for the information they provide on the

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21 Ibid.

22 That exception being Christopher Herbert’s "Unequal Participants."
events occurring in similar settings in indigenous peoples' lives at the same time Barkerville was developing.

Robin Fisher's *Contact and Conflict: Indian Relations in British Columbia 1774-1890* was one of the first narratives to tackle the question of the effects of the fur trade and subsequent settlement on the province’s aboriginal population. He argues that “in British Columbia there was a sharply definable shift from fur trade to settlement.” This shift is evident in the fact that the fur trade caused “only minimal cultural change…and it was change that they could control and adapt to,” while the settlement era “introduced major cultural change so rapidly that the Indians began to lose control of their situation.” He defines the settlement frontier as including all groups that “required the Indians to make major cultural changes.” This list includes gold miners of the 1858 Fraser gold rush, which Fisher calls the “advance guard of the settlement frontier.” Gold miners contributed to the loss of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s monopoly, and were the first group to directly compete with aboriginal people for resources, and the first newcomers with the power and incentive to seize these resources against aboriginal peoples’ will. The miners were replaced by settlers who were to have “an even more profound influence on the Indians.” Therefore, Fisher sees the province’s gold rushes and the subsequent settlement period as being a defining point in the lives of aboriginal people in British Columbia, after which time they lost control of their own lives to the advancing frontier.

23 Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, xxviii.
24 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid, 102.
Although Fisher’s work has been criticized by the historians who came after him, it is an important pioneering piece that contains a number of arguments that are useful for understanding the primary evidence from Barkerville. First, Fisher introduces the important point that neither aboriginal people nor newcomer society “was monolithic, and therefore, neither was uniform in its response to the other.”

Barkerville in particular is an example of the diversity that could exist in both newcomer and native society. Newcomers had a variety of origins, from upper class British society to the rough California mines, to rural China. Similarly, as is argued in Chapter One, aboriginal people at Barkerville came from a variety of different places and backgrounds in the province, for a variety of different reasons. As Fisher argues, the result of a lack of unity on both sides meant that “the degree of contact and the pace of change” varied greatly in Barkerville from individual to individual.

Fisher is important for understanding the dangers of generalizing when discussing Barkerville’s aboriginal past.

Second, Fisher is methodologically important for this study. “Since the historian relies largely on written, and therefore European, sources,” Fisher argues, he is inevitably limited “in his appreciation of the Indian side of the story.” This is particularly true in Barkerville, where there are hardly any examples of documentary evidence created by an aboriginal person. Any history based on such documents is by necessity a history of contact. As a result, this thesis will focus on two realms in which aboriginal people and newcomers interacted and therefore left documentary evidence, economic exchange and

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28 Ibid, xxviii.
29 Ibid.
30 Ibid, xxvii.
31 With the exception of the syllabic writing found on the slab of wood taken from the Richfield gaol, mentioned previously. “Carrier Symbols, Richfield Jail,” Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, RG 168.
32 Fisher, Contact and Conflict, xxvii.
law and order. As Fisher points out, sources written by the newcomers can “still reveal much about what Indians were doing...and about what they were thinking,” despite these sources’ inherent problems.\footnote{33} This principle will guide interpretation, meaning that, although confined by the nature of the evidence to primarily economic and legal history, “It Happened to Me in Barkerville” will fill in some of the blanks left in the documentary record through extrapolation and comparison.

Since Fisher wrote his pioneering work, John Lutz and Rolf Knight have called some of his conclusions into question with their own broad histories of contact in British Columbia. Both Knight and Lutz’s works are economically focused, and both are critical of the idea that aboriginal people became irrelevant after the 1858 Fraser rush. In order to counter Fisher’s argument, both Knight’s \textit{Indians at Work} and Lutz’s \textit{Makuk} describe the participation of aboriginal people in the gold rush, and later in the important canning and logging industries, among other primary industries. Both historians argue that the turning point for aboriginal people occurred much later than the gold rush, as a part of the decline of jobs in the primary resource sector, rather than as an effect of settlement following the gold rush. Both narratives are based on the idea that economic marginalization was related to social, cultural, and political marginalization. Although neither Knight nor Lutz have incorporated the Barkerville region into their work, their conclusions about indigenous people in the rest of British Columbia have important implications for understanding Barkerville’s past, as some of their research on aboriginal lives in other parts of the province can be extended and compared to the study area.\footnote{34}

\footnote{33} \textit{Ibid.}\
\footnote{34} Rolf Knight mentions the Barkerville rush briefly, but is not clear on indigenous peoples' role in this event. Knight, \textit{Indians at Work}, 88. Lutz uses a photograph and poem from Barkerville, but does not specifically discuss Barkerville in his analysis. Lutz, \textit{Makuk}, 178.
Knight's *Indians at Work* is an attempt "to outline the history of native Indians as workers and independent producers in the primary resource and other industries of British Columbia between 1858 and 1930." Knight acknowledges the fact that most popular histories treat indigenous people as a pre-colonial phenomenon, and argues that the historical evidence instead indicates that they were active participants in the emerging wage economy after 1858. Knight traces indigenous labour in various sections of the economy including agricultural industries, canning, mining, and forestry. He points out that being an "Indian" and being a "labourer" were not mutually exclusive identities, and that native people could easily maintain their connections to their "traditional values" while still remaining relevant in a wage economy. Indeed, Knight points out that they were involved in mining throughout the province from the 1850s until the 1930s in various capacities. In his only discussion of the Barkerville region, Knight argues that Indians worked in transport and building in addition to mining after gold was discovered in 1862. These ideas are important for understanding the complexity of the history of the Barkerville region because they demonstrate that indigenous people and the gold rush economy are not incompatible, and that traditional subsistence work and wage work could go hand in hand. In addition, Knight demonstrates the extent to which aboriginal economies expanded and diversified after the gold rush as individuals and groups adapted to the new opportunities provided by the unique circumstances of the rush.

Lutz makes a similar argument to Knight in his book *Makuk*, but takes the idea a step further by examining the exchange of work for pay between non-aboriginal and

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35 Knight, *Indians at Work*, 3.
36 A phenomenon that is also found in the popular literature from Barkerville. Ibid, 4-5.
37 Ibid, 8.
38 Ibid, 16.
aboriginal people in an effort to better understand the process of displacement of aboriginal people resulting in their eventual incorporation into the modern welfare state. Like Knight, Lutz points out that “the European economy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended on aboriginal labour” rather than rendering it irrelevant as Fisher argued in Contact and Conflict. Like Knight, Lutz lists a number of capacities filled by aboriginal people during colonization in an effort to demonstrate their centrality to the developing economy. His list includes mining, packing, canoe transport, fire fighting, prostitution, mill work, and commercial fishing in the context of the Fraser rush. Such descriptions are extremely useful for a study of Barkerville, since the Fraser rush was so close to the Cariboo rush in both time and geography. In addition, Lutz describes trends such as the large population movement of the mid-nineteenth century in the province’s lower mainland. Understanding this trend is useful for understanding aboriginal peoples’ subsequent arrival in Barkerville. Although Lutz does not extensively discuss Barkerville or even the Cariboo gold rush in his analysis, he does include occasional pieces of primary evidence from the area to support his argument, suggesting that he sees his conclusions as extending over these regions. Together with Knight’s Indians at Work, Lutz provides a broader framework from which to begin an examination of the Barkerville region’s past. Both of these historians provide useful tools

40 Lutz, Makuk, 4.
41 Ibid, 8. In an earlier article for the Journal of the Canadian Historical Association Lutz made a similar argument with a focus on the West Coast, stating that aboriginal people were “the main labour force of the early settlement era, essential to the capitalist development of British Columbia.” Makuk also tends to lean towards the west coast for its evidence, most of which is economic in nature, reflecting the focus of Lutz’s past research. Lutz, “After the Fur Trade: The Aboriginal Labouring Class of British Columbia 1849-1890,” Journal of the Canadian Historical Association 3 (1)(1992), 70.
42 Lutz, Makuk, 163-190.
44 For example, he quotes a Mary Augusta Tappage poem about the Lilooet Indians travelling to Barkerville for work. Ibid, 176.
of analysis for examining Barkerville, although in many instances their broader projects and arguments in regard to British Columbia’s aboriginal past are of limited applicability in the study area.

The Barkerville region is the subject of a number of popular histories by prolific local historians, but these tend to ignore aboriginal history in favour of the adventure stories of White, male miners who "struck it rich" on the creeks. Nevertheless, popular works fulfill an important role in filling the gaps left by the academic literature, and are one of the few places where there area’s published history mentions aboriginal people at all. Most of these works target the public, and emphasize stories of gold mining and adventure. Recently, more of these works, as well as the interpretation provided at Barkerville historic town, have broadened to include minority groups that the popular narrative has historically neglected. Richard Wright's popular history Barkerville: Williams Creek, Cariboo, widely considered the foremost authority on Barkerville's gold rush past, includes a discussion of many of the diverse people who lived and worked in Barkerville, including women and Chinese. Similarly, Bruce Ramsey's Barkerville: A Guide to the Fabulous Cariboo Gold Camp states from the outset that the region housed "all types of humanity," which are listed at length. Despite this growing inclusiveness, neither of these publications includes any mention of indigenous people, who remain absent from popular interpretations to the present day. These works are nevertheless extremely useful for their descriptions of Barkerville’s history more generally, and the details that they provide on the minutia of peoples’ lives which is not touched on by the academic literature. Wright’s book in particular provides a wealth of technical detail and

45 Wright, Barkerville, 19.
careful primary research not widely available in academic understandings of the Barkerville area.

Some of the less well-known popular historians have attempted to include aboriginal people in their narratives, but have been hindered by a lack of readily available evidence and by their tendency to see settlement and aboriginal people as incompatible. Therefore any description of the area’s first inhabitants tends to focus on explaining their disappearance. For example, one narrative suggests that disease, along with laziness, polygamy, and a particular method of digging up roots (which caused abortion in women) were the factors behind the absence of aboriginal people in the area by the time gold was discovered there.\(^\text{47}\) Although an extreme example, it demonstrates how aboriginal people are explained out of descriptions of the gold camps and are therefore absent from popular understandings of the area’s history. The more dominant popular narrative explaining aboriginal people out of Barkerville’s history continues to be that by the time of the gold rush, indigenous people had been eradicated by the effects of epidemic disease.\(^\text{48}\) For example, Chris and Jenny Harris, photographers and popular historians who have published numerous books on the Cariboo region, utilize this narrative tool. They have written what is currently the best description of the pre-gold rush indigenous past in the area, with a focus on nearby Bowron Lake. In the absence of information about the Bowron Lakes’ pre-contact population specifically, the Harrises draw on more general pre-existing geological and anthropological evidence about the Cariboo region and the Carrier people to put together a plausible picture of the pre-contact indigenous population. Yet, for the Harrises the indigenous presence stops when the first outsiders


arrived: Their account of the region's indigenous past ends with the first White men witnessing the death of the last remaining aboriginal woman from smallpox.\textsuperscript{49}

Contradicting their own description of Bowron's complex and thriving pre-contact population, they eventually conclude that "successive waves of human occupation...left little mark on the Bowron Lakes."\textsuperscript{50} For the Harrises, aboriginal people actually living, working, and interacting with newcomers at Barkerville and Bowron is not considered a possibility.

A few histories have done a better job at incorporating aboriginal people into their descriptions of Barkerville and the surrounding region. For example, Bill Hong's anecdote-based book \textit{And So ... That's How it Happened} includes several descriptions of aboriginal individuals who lived and worked in the area.\textsuperscript{51} Elliot Mane's \textit{Gold and Grand Dreams} contains the best popular account of indigenous people's lives in Barkerville, arguing that they worked as packers, guides, and suppliers for miners, but did not prospect a great deal.\textsuperscript{52} Mane also accurately observes that indigenous peoples' involvement in the gold rush is under appreciated, despite the fact that their presence can be traced back about five thousand years.\textsuperscript{53} Although Mane's book provides more insight into indigenous history in the Barkerville region than any other narrative, aboriginal history is not the book's focus and anecdotes and memories sustain Mane's conclusions, rather than primary evidence. Moreover, the information contained in Mane's book is not widely circulated in other public literature or in any of the displays set up in the


\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 81.

\textsuperscript{51} Bill Hong, \textit{And So... That's How it Happened: Recollections of Stanley-Barkerville 1900-1875} (Coquitlam: W.M. Hong, 1978), 55, 71.

\textsuperscript{52} Elliot Mane, \textit{Gold and Grand Dreams: Cariboo East in the Early Years} (Victoria: Horsdal & Schubard, 2000), 37.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
reconstructed historic town, nor is it recognized in the broader academic writing on gold rush history.

Indigenous people are present in Barkerville’s primary sources, despite their absence from both popular histories and from the academic historiography. Since historians agree that indigenous groups participated in other aspects of nineteenth century development in British Columbia, their absence from Barkerville and the Cariboo gold rush is unlikely. Williams Creek had a large immigrant population in 1864,\(^{54}\) at a time when aboriginal people were involved in considerable demographic change and were moving towards new urban settlements.\(^{55}\) Moreover, historians have examined and accepted that aboriginal people had a significant role in the slightly earlier Fraser River rush of 1858.\(^{56}\) Finally, the Barkerville and nearby Bowron regions are accessible by river and are rich in natural resources such as salmon, berries, and big game which were essential aspects of indigenous life both before and after contact with Europeans.\(^{57}\) Predictably, they appear in the primary documents as both permanent and transitory residents, as labourers, as criminals, and as participants in daily life in the northern gold fields.

Yet the primary documents are not without their own problems. Foremost among these is their scarcity. Amongst thousands of pieces of evidence related to Barkerville and Bowron during the gold rush, most were produced by newcomers and only a few relate to aboriginal people. Moreover, since the economy and the courts were the primary forums

\(^{55}\) Lutz, Makuk, 167-171.
for aboriginal peoples' interactions with newcomers, these are the locales where the
documentation is disproportionately weighted. Finally, much of the documentary
evidence is anecdotal and some is retrospective. Thus, the surviving evidence permits
only an incomplete reconstruction of the past, but a thorough and careful analysis of the
primary sources does allow a better understanding of some dimensions of this history.

Some of the most important sources for understanding the pre-contact history of
the Barkerville area are letters, diaries, and personal correspondences between non-
aboriginal members of the Barkerville community. Each of these sources comes from a
particular perspective and resulted from a variety of circumstances, but one of the best
eramples is a letter written by Hazel Kibbee to Louis Lebourdais in 1934. The letter is
one of the few pieces of evidence related to the Barkerville area’s pre-contact history, and
it is also a perfect example of the anecdotal, contradictory, and Euro-centric evidence that
typifies sources at Barkerville. Hazel Kibbee was the daughter of Frank Kibbee, a well-
known hunting guide and eventually the game warden at Bowron Lake. Written
approximately eighty years after the events described actually occurred, it contains
Kibbee’s re-telling of a history that was first related orally to her by old-timer Kenneth
McLeod, a friend of her father, when he was eighty-four years old.\(^{58}\) Thus, the history
that the letter records is distorted to an unknown extent by time and the faulty memories
of both McLeod and Kibbee, both of whom were describing events that occurred much
earlier in time. Moreover, Kibbee did not write her letter with the goal of recording a
basic narrative of Bowron Lake history. Her letter was rooted in a very specific request
from Louis Lebourdais for more information on a companion of McLeod nicknamed

\(^{58}\) Hazel Kibbee to Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, MS-0676, Lebourdais Fonds, Royal British Columbia
Archives, Victoria.
“Swampy” for the purposes of an article he hoped to write.⁵⁹ Lebourdais asked specific questions of Hazel (including “what he looked like, where he died, when he came to Bear Lake, how, etc”) that shaped of her reply.⁶⁰ He did not acknowledge or ask for an indigenous history, and the reply written by Kibbee therefore does not have an indigenous focus. Indeed, the fact that Kibbee included an indigenous past in her response at all is significant in itself, indicating that she saw their history as an important part of the White history she had been asked to tell. In Kibbee's account aboriginal lives are closely associated with White ones, a nuance that is not expressed in Lebourdais' resulting article.⁶¹ His request was the result of his deep historical interest in the region, which ended up being the topic of numerous articles on the Barkerville region focused predominately on White pioneers.

Beyond its problems of origin, the content of Kibbee’s letter is contradictory. She indicates that both Wilson and McLeod associated with Indians at Bowron, particularly a man named “Old Paul” and his brother. According to Kibbee, “Old Paul claimed that Swampy was a nice old fellow and he was always a favourite among the Indians” but “claimed that Kenneth was not so well-liked by the Indians.” This apparently bothered Swampy, who “had always liked, and got along fine with the Indians.”⁶² Although such descriptions are evidence of relatively intense interaction with an indigenous group, their dates are difficult to pin down. Kibbee claims that Kenneth McLeod left Bowron in 1910 at age eighty-four, after living and trapping in the area for forty-three years. This would

⁵⁹ “Swampy’s” real name was Neil Wilson. The request reads “Dear Hazel, would you do something for me? I’d like to get some more data on old “Swampy.” In fact, I’d like to get a lot of information about him, and Ken. McLeod too...anything at all about him will be of interest.” Louis Lebourdais to Hazel Kibbee, 7 December 1933, MS-0676, Lebourdais Fonds, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria.
⁶⁰ Ibid.
⁶² Kibbee to Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, Lebourdais Fonds.
put his arrival at 1867, at age forty-one. It would also mean that there was a local indigenous population still residing at Bowron after the worst of the mid-nineteenth century epidemics. However, Kibbee also claims that McLeod arrived in the area when he was still a "boy," suggesting that he was probably younger than forty-one and placing the date of his arrival and the dates of his interactions with the local Indians significantly earlier and negating its significance for post-rush aboriginal history. For these reasons, use of her letter is not without challenges. Its intended purpose and its distance from the events it records have shaped its content and limited its usefulness as a source. Nevertheless, a cautious analysis of the letter is essential to understanding the Bowron region's contact-era history. Similarly, other letters and correspondences can be read for their particular nuances and motivations if they are to be useful for understanding the area's indigenous past.

The *Cariboo Sentinel* is another source that comes with inherent problems. The paper was owned and operated by no fewer than three different editors during its tenure on William's Creek. All three of the paper's editors were of European descent, and their audience was the middle and upper classes of Barkerville. Concerned primarily with gold mining and all the nuances of the industry, the paper rarely commented on indigenous people. When not preoccupied with descriptions of the gold mining industry, the newspaper was discussing affairs in Victoria, the United States, and Europe, which would have interested its immigrant readership most. As the voice of this elite

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63 Ibid.
64 *Wright, Barkerville*, 59-61
65 "[The Williams Creek Bedrock Flume] promises to do a great deal for claim holders on the upper part of Williams Creek," reads a typical front-page story, "...that the flume will ultimately become a profitable speculation there is no manner of doubt." "Williams Creek Bedrock Flume," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 June 1865.
66 The paper included a regular "Items from Victoria" section. It also ran a "California News" section.
group, the paper had no interest in challenging established ideas about aboriginal peoples' place in society. Instead it often reinforced these ideas and only took interest in indigenous affairs that directly affected its intended audience. It tended to be derogatory in its descriptions of all non-White ethnicities, as was typical of prejudiced upper-class society. The paper could also be sensationalist and rarely concerned itself with accuracy when it came to these descriptions, occasionally having to correct itself on published misinformation, such as it did during the imprisonment of Nikel Palsk during his murder trial in 1867. Although the paper is useful for understanding how indigenous people were perceived by the paper's elite editors and their readership, like Hazel's letter it must be used as a source of such history with extreme caution.

Another source of aboriginal history that comes with some important problems is the Cariboo district census. As Lutz notes in Makuk, "when it comes to Aboriginal people, the decennial census has to be treated with more than the usual degree of scepticism." The first census, in 1881, was primarily concerned with recording the numbers of aboriginal people in the province, but these were significantly underestimated. Moreover, names and occupations were not diligently reported. As Lutz notes, "most enumerators just wrote 'Indian' in the space provided for names and either made no entry under occupation or took little care with this category." The 1891 census is the most useful for the purpose of this project, since it provides more detailed

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67 For example, packers from Fort Ogden were described as having "uncouth appearance and manners," so that "the savages attracted much attention and considerable amusement." "Stewart's Lake Indians," Cariboo Sentinel, 14 August 1869.

68 During the murder trials of Nikel Palsk and James Barry, the paper was corrected twice by the local reverend for making untrue statements about the accused men. Untitled, Cariboo Sentinel 15 July 1867; "Correction," Cariboo Sentinel, 19 August 1897.

69 Lutz, Makuk, 217.

70 Ibid, 41.

71 Ibid.
information in regard to occupation, and tended to differentiate aboriginal people with a
preface of (Ind) or "Indian" although there was technically no category for ethnicity
provided.\textsuperscript{72} By 1901 aboriginal people were put on a separate schedule, and occupation
was not recorded at all.\textsuperscript{73}

In all three of the relevant censuses, the labelling of aboriginal people is
problematic. How the census taker arrived at the decision to record an individual as
"Indian" is a mystery. The label may have been an invention of the person being
enumerated, his or her acquaintances, the census-taker or any combination of these
people, and might have been based on skin colour, occupation, heritage, or self-
identification. Moreover, none of the three census reports identified aboriginal people as
residents in the Barkerville, Richfield, Lightning Creek, or Keithley Creek, despite the
fact that the primary evidence definitively shows that aboriginal people lived and worked
in these locations. Their absence from the census may reflect the idea that many of the
aboriginal people in the area had migrated there from other parts of the province, and the
census taker chose to list their original home territory as their home locations. There was
no reserve established at Barkerville, the closest being the reserves at Quesnel and
Alexandria, which were established in 1881.\textsuperscript{74} Because of the census' limited use in
Barkerville specifically, the entire Cariboo District has been drawn upon in order to
identify broader trends in aboriginal lives that can be measured against their applicability
to Barkerville.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Dominion of Canada, \textit{Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st
December 1881} (Ottawa, Maclean, Roger & Co., 1882), 271.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
A further problem of the census is that, of the 995 total aboriginal people listed in the Cariboo district in 1891, only 299 have recorded occupations. This figure does not necessarily reflect reality, since most adult aboriginal men and women were occupied in some way to support themselves and their families. Many of these forms of work, particularly foraging, may simply have been invisible to the census-takers (or not considered "work"), since they occurred away from population centers. Indeed, of the listed occupations, the most commonly named were trapping, farming, and labouring, which would have been most visible to census takers. In addition, the single space allocated for recording occupation was not conducive to recording multiple occupations, a common strategy for indigenous people who continued to engage in subsistence activities while negotiating the emerging wage economy. Although more thorough than 1881, 1891's census was still vague and inexact in regard to the specifics of aboriginal lives.

Court records are equally fraught. The late nineteenth century was a period of rapid development of the court and legal system in British Columbia as administrators attempted to keep up with the rapidly expanding population of newcomers, many of whom expected the British justice system's protection. Moreover, legitimate British ownership of the territory depended on a demonstration of British presence and authority that, prior to 1858, had yet to be established. In reality, the recently formed colony had

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75 Census takers sometimes solved this problem by listing double occupations ("Farmer/Trapper"), but rarely recorded more than two jobs.
77 Tina Loo notes that, with the flood of 25,000 predominately American miners into the new colony's interior, "British dominion over the mainland was tenuous at best, and perhaps only theoretical." Tina Loo, Making Law, Order, and Authority, 54. Indeed, in many mining towns Americans, or "Californians" were
only just appointed its first judge in 1858, the same year that the first wave of miners arrived, and had not yet constructed any of the institutions necessary for any functioning justice system such as jails and court facilities. Moreover, aboriginal people still vastly outnumbered newcomers in 1858, and many aboriginal people were not yet even aware of European-style law, let alone ready to obey it. Thus, British Columbia's early courts existed in a precarious position between newcomers who expected them to administer European justice and a largely ambivalent aboriginal population over whom they had limited control.

As a result of their precarious position in British Columbia, colonial administrators such as Matthew Baillie Begbie were forced to strike a balance between authority and diplomacy, and the necessity of maintaining this balance is a constant undercurrent in court records from the province during this time. An important part of maintaining the balance was the projection of authority. Begbie traveled his lengthy circuits with his full wig and robe despite the potential inconvenience, and appears to have consciously attempted to create and maintain court rooms that resembled those in England despite their distance from the metropole. Although the Begbie as the "hanging judge" is largely a construction of the twentieth century, he was known to articulate strong opinions in the court room that were frequently repeated by newspapers like the Sentinel. According to Begbie, those that appointed him from England informed him that "they wanted to send out a man who would not hesitate to try a criminal under a tree

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78 Government buildings came after the establishment of miners cabins, dance-halls, and saloons. During his early circuits, Begbie often held court in the open air. Williams, *A Man for a New Country*, 41.
79 Foster, "The Queen's Law is Better than Yours?", 77.
80 Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, 66.
and hang him up to a branch of it, and that I was expected not to hesitate to do so." The circumstances demanded a judge that could project all the authority of British law while balancing the realities of a new and tenuously controlled frontier.

Symbolism was doubly important in regard to the relationship between the new laws and aboriginal people. Since aboriginal people were simultaneously perceived as "naturally" inclined to criminal behavior and the group with the least incentive to obey colonial law, they were frequently the targets the justice system’s symbolic assertions of power. At the same time, there was a conscious effort to demonstrate that aboriginal people were being treated fairly, that White men were subject to the same rules, and that British law was capable of stamping out savagery regardless of its origin. Such nuances are apparent in the court documents from this era. For example, when Begbie addressed accused murderers Nikel Palsk (indigenous) and James Barry (White), he openly made the point that men were equal before the law. "Beside you stands a man with no common tie of blood or color [sic] who slew a man, actuated with the like pernicious avarice;" he told Barry, "the same fate that dogged your footsteps awaits him; you have both dyed your hands in blood and both must suffer the same fate." The direct links between the two men's crimes made explicit by Begbie indicate the need for symbolism in the administration of law during this era in order to produce an image of authority and fairness. Records of arrests and prosecutions must be examined with this context in mind.

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82 Williams, A Man for a New Country, 132.
Such interactions were often less the result of actual guilt or innocence, and more the product of the particular opportunities and needs of the courts at the time they occurred. Despite the potential problems associated with the primary evidence, these sources are also incredibly rich in the detail that they can provide about aboriginal people residing in and around Barkerville in the late nineteenth century. Used carefully and critically, these details begin to fill the gaps in our knowledge of their history. A variety of strategies mitigate their shortcomings. For example, corroborating Hazel Kibbee’s letter with documents such as Thomas and Elinor McCabe’s scholarly work on Bowron’s natural history creates a more consistent narrative. More recent archaeological reports from the region, climatic data, and the work of historians in comparable regions confirm the details and lend these stories further validity.

The census, although flawed in many ways, is useful for providing a glimpse into the way that aboriginal people engaged in these more visible forms of work in the areas surrounding Barkerville. For example, in 1891, 12% of aboriginal people with listed occupations had multiple jobs, indicating that the combination of different forms of work was almost certainly practiced. Moreover, when contextualized with other evidence, indigenous activities in the area can be fairly accurately deduced. For example, although

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the 1891 census lists 28% of aboriginal people as “farmers,” the reports of the Indian Agent for the Cariboo District indicate that aboriginal people at Alexandria and Quesnel did not adopt agriculture during the late nineteenth century, meaning that agriculture in Barkerville, which was even more mountainous than these locations, is unlikely.\textsuperscript{90}

Similarly, the \textit{Cariboo Sentinel} and court documents can be compared against each other for accuracy. In the case of the \textit{Sentinel}, the ways in which stories about aboriginal people were told are often more informative than the factual details, since they reflect a particular attitude and a set of ideals that had an important impact on aboriginal peoples’ lives. For example, the explicit wording around the trials of murderers James Barry and Nikel Palsk reveal a tenuous relationship between colonial authority and a numerous and powerful aboriginal population.\textsuperscript{91} By acknowledging these sources’ shortcomings and developing an argument that reflects their strengths, “It Happened to Me in Barkerville” will mitigate the problems associated with the primary documents in the study area. Thus, by approaching these sources critically and corroborating them with other evidence, they can contribute to the piecing together of Barkerville’s aboriginal past.

Divided thematically, the project conforms to the nature of the available evidence, which tends to be concentrated on the areas where document-writers interacted with aboriginal people. Thus, the first chapter will address the place aboriginal people occupied in Barkerville society, while the second will address their participation in the

\textsuperscript{90} Dominion of Canada, \textit{Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1884} (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger, & Co., 1885), 185; Dominion of Canada, \textit{Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1891} (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1892), 170; Dominion of Canada, \textit{Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30th 1900}, (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1901), 346.

economy and the third will address their relationship with the legal system. In identifying
the place of aboriginal people in Barkerville society, the first question concerns their
origins. While many of British Columbia’s towns and cities were built at or near
indigenous villages, this was almost certainly not true of Barkerville which was
established based on its proximity to high-elevation gold-bearing creeks. Furthermore,
the effects of disease and migration in the mid-nineteenth century meant that the
population living at nearby Bowron probably was not using the future Barkerville town
site before the first gold strikes. This explains why aboriginal people are absent from
most historical accounts of the Barkerville rush. Historians seem to have been unable to
imagine that the changes of the mid-nineteenth century may have provided incentive for
many aboriginal people to migrate to Barkerville in order to make a living even as it
drove others away from Bowron. Indeed, aboriginal people migrated to Barkerville from
many places, including Lillooet and Vancouver Island. Once they arrived in Barkerville,
aboriginal people were thought of as being separate from the rest of society. However,
there is considerable evidence that aboriginal people were in fact well-integrated into the
town, participating actively in social events, engaging in gold mining, and building
homes and business alongside those of Whites. There is also considerable evidence of
aboriginal people interacting extensively with the Chinese population. Thus, despite a
contemporary historiography that ignores them and a past society that attempted to
relegate them to the periphery, aboriginal people were active participants in Barkerville’s
society in the late nineteenth century.

Once the place of aboriginal people in Barkerville’s society has been established,
their participation in other aspects of gold rush life can be examined. Barkerville owes its
existence to a primarily economic event, the rush for gold. The economy was such an important shaping factor in Barkerville that some historians have suggested that even the economic motives underlay even the legal system.\textsuperscript{92} For aboriginal people, the rush for gold in Barkerville meant a variety of new economic opportunities that they were particularly well-placed to take advantage of. The rush produced a new market for older subsistence products, and aboriginal people often continued or even expanded their hunting and foraging activities in the context of the gold rush. Hungry miners were a lucrative market for some traditional products, and many people were able to combine subsistence work with wage labour in order to sustain themselves. Indeed, the rush produced new wage labour in areas such as packing, couriering, and mining, and for aboriginal women, the sex trade. Although these new sources of income sometimes fit well with seasonal rounds and may have brought some individuals increased wealth, they also came with new problems, particularly as the settlement frontier advanced and aboriginal people found themselves in competition with newcomers and new technologies. Ultimately, the economic activities of aboriginal people in Barkerville during the gold rush indicate a significant degree of opportunism, in which they adapted to the changing circumstances of the gold rush and made use of the resources available to them.

Aboriginal relationships with the courts were in many ways as diverse as their participation in the gold rush economy. The 1867 murder trial of Nikel Palsk is used in Chapter Three to explore the implications of the newly arrived legal system and the establishment of authority in the context of anxieties about authority and legitimacy amongst colonial administrators. Barkerville became one of the most important centres of

\textsuperscript{92} Tina Loo, \textit{Making Law, Order, and Authority}, 11.
colonial and provincial justice in the nineteenth century, with a prominent assize court established in nearby Richfield. Colonial ideals are prominent in the prosecutions of aboriginal people. The fear of aboriginal “savagery” combined with paternalism is evident in both the Palsk trial and other cases tried at Richfield during the late nineteenth century. Yet, aboriginal agency was also an important factor in their relationships with the courts. While there are some examples of intense participation in the legal system, there are also examples of aboriginal people subverting the courts, demonstrating the lack of power that colonial administrators really possessed. Aboriginal relationships with the courts seem to have been shaped by the anxieties of administrators on one hand, and their lack of ability to assert tangible control over aboriginal people in Barkerville on the other.

Taken together, the primary evidence related to aboriginal people in the Barkerville area indicates that they were active and important participants in the gold rush. Contrary to the popular narrative that argues that they were absent during the development of the town, it appears that aboriginal people were present and played a complex role in the history of the area. An examination of this history provides a more accurate understanding of Barkerville and the Cariboo gold rush. Of equal importance, events at Barkerville can contribute to a more complete understanding of aboriginal history in British Columbia generally. As aboriginal people negotiated, adapted to, and occasionally came into conflict with the new structures of gold rush Barkerville they left an important legacy of participation that deserves attention and consideration by historians.
Chapter 1: Identifying Aboriginal People in Barkerville during the Cariboo Gold Rush

I remember Indian Mary...she lived with Joe Moore in Stanley. She used to go trapping and get a little fur, some caribou meat, and catch a few fish. She didn’t drink much, but Joe Moore do quite a bit of drinking. I don’t know much about Joe Moore.¹

Recollections such as this one, from Bill Hong’s And So... That’s How it Happened, appear frequently in the primary documents from Barkerville, giving fleeting glimpses into lives and events previously unexamined by historians. Hong’s account of Indian Mary is emblematic of the binary nature of such descriptions. Indian Mary and Joe Moore were central members of the gold rush community. They were long-time residents who contributed to the local economy, had a home in town, and were recognizable characters in society. However, they were also “Indians” who engaged in “Indian” activities such as hunting and trapping. In addition, although Mary was relatively well-known and familiar, Joe Moore was reportedly a drinker and was both unfamiliar and vaguely threatening. This presence of indigenous people as both outsiders and insiders in gold rush society is a continually repeated theme in the primary evidence.

Identifying aboriginal people and their place in Barkerville’s developing society is the first step in writing them in to the region’s history. Although there was a pre-rush aboriginal population that lived at Bowron, they were not necessarily the same indigenous people who participated in the 1862 rush. Rather, owing to the effects of disease and migration in the early nineteenth century, the pre-rush population was supplemented, and at least partially replaced, by a population of aboriginal migrants from other places in the province including Lillooet, Victoria, the Okanagan, and New

¹ Hong, And So... That’s How it Happened, 71.
indigenous people, along with other lower-class members of society, were used as a “savage” and “uncivilized” foil against which the “civilized” elements of emerging society could be favourably compared. However, their persistent presence in the primary evidence, rarely acknowledged by historians, demonstrates that such ideals did not represent reality. Categories like “Indian” or “Siwash” were extremely flexible and unevenly applied. Some aboriginal people escaped these labels and became long-standing and well-known members of the community without becoming associated with ethnic stereotypes. The secondary literature, arguing that aboriginal people were perceived as a “threat to the social order” or were “the missing presence” in the gold fields, overstates the peripheral nature of this group in Barkerville. The evidence shows that the indigenous people who participated in the Cariboo gold rush at Barkerville consisted of many migrants from other parts of the province, and although idealized as being separate from Barkerville, in practice they were active participants in the rush with an important role in society.

Pre-contact Use, Disease, and Gold Rush Migration in the Barkerville Region

The origin of Barkerville’s indigenous population needs to be identified before their places in gold rush society are established. Yet, even A.G. Morice, who wrote one of the first histories of Northern British Columbia and had a particular interest in its aboriginal past, neglects to examine the people on whose territory gold miners first staked their claims. “New discoveries followed one another in quick succession,” wrote Morice in his account of the beginning of the rush, “until the Cariboo Mountains, which so far had known hardly any other sound than the hoot of the owl, with the occasional stamp of

the deer and shrill notes of the Carrier’s love-song, were now alive with the thump of the miner’s pick and the rattle of his rocker.” Although Morice seems to insinuate that the contact period was simply the replacing of one way of life (Carrier) with another (miners), the reality is that the Cariboo Mountains were populated, utilized, and passed through on a regular basis both before and after the rush. The rush was but one event in a much larger and much longer story of land management, resource extraction, and human habitation in the region. The local pre-rush population of aboriginal people were using the Barkerville area long before the first outsiders arrived in the province, and this local aboriginal population experienced significant change over the course of the nineteenth century owning to emigration, immigration, and disease.

Evidence for the pre-contact use of the Barkerville area resonates in the experiences of the first prospectors to enter the region in 1861. It is likely that these men, “Doc” Keithly and I.P. Diller, were following pre-established trails between the Fraser-Quesnel River confluence and the Cariboo Mountains. Aboriginal people made regular use of these watersheds in all directions. When Simon Fraser first passed through the area in 1808 he noted the presence of “several houses of the Nasquitins” at the mouth of both the Cottonwood and the Quesnel Rivers, both of which emerge from the Cariboo Mountains. On his return trip he “procured some furs, plenty of fish and berries” from the people, indicating that these waterways were an integral part of the subsistence economy and seasonal rounds. Between 1872 and 1881, government surveyor John Macoun said that he was following what he called “Indian trails,” although it is unclear

4 Simon Fraser, Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Dundurn: Toronto, 2007), 84.
5 Ibid, 148.
where exactly these trails were located, other than being somewhere near Quesnel. There may also have been a route from the Bowron region north-east through the Cariboo Mountains to the Goat River. In 1869 indigenous people reported that a large lake to the north east (probably Isaac Lake in Bowron Lake Provincial Park) was only fifteen miles from Tete-Juane-Cache, and the same distance to the Fraser River. The Sentinel stated that “it is a well-known fact that the Indians have trails and communication between Bear River and lake and Tete Jaune Cache.” Such “facts” suggest regular and known travel routes between Bowron and the northern parts of the province, possibly in connection with the land-based fur trade. There was almost certainly a connection to the south of Bowron as well. The Hudson Bay Company’s Fort Alexandria journals from 1827 reported that the Bowron area was a popular hunting ground, and complained about the arduous winter journey between the lakes and the post to visit the people there. Archaeological evidence confirms that a population resided at nearby Bowron and thus they would arguably have been connected to trade routes and neighbours by the same routes and water-ways along which the miners later travelled.

Even without archaeological evidence to confirm their presence, other evidence suggests that aboriginal people lived at or made use of the Bowron region before 1862.

7 This optimistic estimate was later proved inaccurate. The Sentinel seems not to have appreciated the distance between Barkerville and the lake in question. Nevertheless, the story indicates aboriginal knowledge of the local watersheds and their destinations, and the route may have been used by pre-contact populations.
8 “Overland Communication,” Cariboo Sentinel, 14 August 1869, 2.
9 This was a revelation to the rest of the Barkerville community, which subsequently proposed putting a wagon road through the area. “A Chain of Lakes,” Cariboo Sentinel, 28 July 1869.
Not only is there evidence of travel through the area from both the north and the south, but the Bowron Lakes are both mild in climate and abundant in a variety of resources. Bowron has a more temperate climate than elsewhere in the Cariboo Mountains, and enormous networks of easily accessible waterways. As a result the area boasts a large annual salmon run, big game, and plentiful edible plant life. In contrast, the Cariboo mountain creeks, where settlement was concentrated after 1862, must have had little appeal other than their proximity to mining operations. Barkerville is approximately 300 metres higher in elevation than Bowron, and Williams Creek, like many of the gold-bearing creeks in the area, is small, shallow, and runs down the middle of a steep sided valley. The salmon runs in these creeks are insignificant, and the winters cold. Snow can persist in Barkerville as late as July. The Bowron Lakes were therefore the most promising location for human habitation in the pre-rush era.

Chris Harris, who has written the most thorough secondary study of the first inhabitants of Bowron, draws on more general pre-existing geological and anthropological evidence about the Cariboo region and the Carrier (Dakelh) people, and extends this general evidence over the people who lived at Bowron Lake. Although highly speculative, Harris' narrative is nevertheless valuable for providing a picture of pre-contact history in a region that would otherwise have none. Harris traces the region's history back ten thousand years to the retreat of the glaciers. He describes these early

12 An 1863 report by the Royal Engineers stated that "the mining creeks are generally narrow, rocky, thickly wooded, and frequently swampy." Lieutenant II Spencer Palmer, Report on Portions of the Williams Lake and Cariboo Districts and on the Fraser River from Fort Alexander to Fort George (New Westminster: Royal Engineers Press, 1863), 12.
13 Harris, The Bowron Lakes, 81.
inhabitants as "hunters and gatherers [who] gradually formed more specialized local resource-based cultures."\(^\text{14}\) He speculates that the region was alternately inhabited by Carrier and Shuswap peoples who sustained themselves on some combination of big game and salmon.\(^\text{15}\) Because of the conveniently well-connected nature of the many lakes and rivers Harris' assertion that "canoes, both dugout and spruce bark, were used extensively" is very plausible.\(^\text{16}\) Unfortunately, like many popular historians of the Barkerville and Bowron area, he erroneously argues that indigenous history ended with the gold rush.\(^\text{17}\)

The archaeological studies completed for the Bowron region provide a more exact account of the pre-rush population, and corroborate Harris' speculative descriptions. In 1972, archaeologists Ken Martin and Mike Robinson did a survey of Wells Grey Provincial Park, Bowron Lake Provincial Park, and the upper Fraser River. They examined all of the known sites within Bowron Lakes Park, collected artefacts, and spoke with locals. Their report provides a basic outline of pre-contact archaeological evidence at Bowron. In 1976 Nancy Condrashoff created an "Archaeological Outline" of the area for the Interpretation Branch of the Provincial Parks Department. She based her work heavily on Martin and Robinson's report, but also made use of some broader secondary literature including Diamond Jenness, Morice, and G.R. Willey. Condrashoff's work provides more detail than Martin and Robinson's by fitting Bowron into wider understandings of British Columbian archaeology. A related report on Huckey Creek was released in 1973 in response to sensational stories about a series of limestone caves

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
\(^{15}\) Ibid, 81-82.
\(^{16}\) Ibid, 83.
\(^{17}\) Ibid, 8.
discovered by Simon Fraser University student Paul Griffiths. The resulting report was a detailed geographic survey of the area aimed primarily at debunking the myths associated with the caves and demonstrating the necessity of keeping the public away from them because of their location within a rich Grizzly habitat.

Condrashoff’s 1976 “Archaeological Outline” of Bowron Lakes Provincial Park notes that the park was located in the borderlands between the Shuswap and the Carrier, and that during “periods of good relations” the two groups might have shared the park as Harris suggests. Another possibility is that, like the nearby village at Alexandria, the population was of mixed Shuswap and Carrier heritage. The report argues that the existence of pit houses and salmon storage pits on Bowron Lake and at the headwaters of the Bowron River indicate “considerable use of the area.” According to Condrashoff, the presence of pit houses also meant year-round occupation, rather than simply being a seasonal location used for salmon fishing. Projectile points found near the storage pits apparently show attributes of the “Kamloops” phase, dated approximately 1250 to 1800 CE. This suggests that people were probably occupying the site during the contact period and fur trade, and may have abandoned it shortly before or during the subsequent gold rush, possibly in connection with broader demographic shifts that happened after first

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18 Griffiths reported that he had discovered giant footprints in the caves, and that he had explored them for several days. Headlines like “Grizzlies Guard Vast Secret Cave in Cariboo,” “Sasquatch Cave Sealed by Water,” and “May have Found Largest Cave in Canada” created excitement amongst the public and eventually prompted an examination by the parks branch. “Grizzlies Guard Vast Secret Cave in Cariboo,” Vancouver Sun, 19 August 1972, 1 and 14; “Sasquatch Cave Sealed by Water,” Vancouver Sun, 6 September 1972, 22; “May Have Found Largest Cave in Canada,” Kelowna Daily Courier, 7 August 1972.


20 Ibid, 7.

21 Ibid, 8.

22 Ibid, 1.
contact in connection with trade and the emergence of wage economies.\textsuperscript{23} Although the earlier Martin and Robinson report suggests that an examination of the limestone caves on Huckey Creek might contain evidence of earlier habitation, the later report found no evidence of cultural use.\textsuperscript{24} This does not necessarily mean that there was no use of the area prior to 1250 however, as vast areas of the park remain unexamined by archaeologists. Moreover, both the Condrashoff report and the Martin and Robinson archaeological survey reported large private collections of points and other artefacts gathered from various locations throughout the park by local residents, many of which have since been lost or destroyed.\textsuperscript{25} These artefacts have not been catalogued or dated, and the pre-history of the area remains largely a mystery beyond these preliminary reports.

Following contact and preceding the gold rush, European disease took a heavy toll on the people who occupied and used the Bowron Lakes region. According to historical geographer Cole Harris, measles and influenza hit the interior of the province in 1848 and 1849, and the region experienced “massive depopulation” by 1850. Smallpox further reduced the population in 1862, the first year of the Cariboo gold rush.\textsuperscript{26} The devastating effect of smallpox on the Bowron Lake natives is relatively well-documented in the primary documents, adding weight to the theory that this local population was significantly reduced by the time miners and other outsiders arrived in search of gold. In a 1934 letter to newspaper reporter Louis Lebourdais, Barkerville resident Hazel Kibbee

\textsuperscript{23} Lutz defines the moditional, or “modified traditional” economy as a process whereby “people have engaged in multiple modes of production at different times of the day and year: they hunted, fished, farmed, fathered, raised their children, and exchanged their labour in different combinations, and as opportunities presented themselves.” Lutz, \textit{Makuk}, 23.

\textsuperscript{24} Tony Bryne et al., “A Report of Cave Studies,” 67.


wrote that “few Indians survived” an epidemic that swept the region shortly after the arrival of Neil ‘Swampy’ Wilson and Kenneth McLeod, the first White trappers in the area.27 She even claims that Wilson may have witnessed the epidemic: “I have never known anyone who pretended to be old enough to know where old Swampy came from. He was brought up among the Indians and was here when the Indians were dying of smallpox.”28

Further evidence of the reduction of the local aboriginal population in 1862 comes from Thomas and Elinor McCabe, who were naturalists in the Bowron region in the 1920s and 1930s. The McCabes speculated that the death of indigenous people owning to mid-nineteenth century disease was a major contributing factor to the spread of moose to Bowron. Their 1928 article titled “The Bowron Lake Moose: Their History and Status” quotes oral information provided by William Boyd, a resident of Cottonwood who allegedly visited the Bowron Lakes on a regular basis. Boyd claimed that “the older Indians who frequented the northern moose country in the winters [hunted] moose for food for themselves and their large following of dogs.”29 In other words, the indigenous population’s subsistence hunting kept the moose population in check. The McCabe article goes on to explain that there was a “passing of great numbers of Indians in some of the late epidemics,” and as a direct result the moose population exploded. Therefore, according to the McCabes “the vanishing of the old native culture ... [was] probably the chief [factor] in the increase of the moose.”30 Although written several decades after the events that they describe, the McCabes’ account is further testimony to a strong local

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27 Kibbee to Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, Lebourdais Fonds.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
narrative of devastation by epidemic disease in the mid-nineteenth century. The lack of any mention of a local indigenous population at Bowron after record-keepers arrived in 1862 adds further strength to this idea. Only indigenous people of a variety of other origins feature regularly in these later accounts, meaning that the aboriginal population in Barkerville after 1862 probably consisted of a large number of migrants.

The descriptions of epidemic disease in the primary documents has influenced the secondary literature, which often uses the story of disease at Bowron as a transitional narrative between the region’s pre-contact and its gold rush history. The idea that the group at Bowron was completely eradicated by disease is often cited as the reason that the region’s gold rush history does not include indigenous people. For example in his history of region Harris argues that “successive waves of human occupation ... left little mark on the Bowron Lakes.”31 Likewise, Richard Wright’s history of Bowron states “it appears that by [1862 Indians] no longer fished the lakes nor canoed the river,” and his history of Barkerville contains no description of indigenous people at all.32 For writing aboriginal people out of the region’s history, the “last survivor” narrative has proven to be a popular tool.33 The story probably originated from the article published by Louis Lebourdais based on information obtained from Hazel Kibbee who remarked in her letter that Wilson and McLeod arrived in Bowron to encounter a woman who was “the single survivor of a scourge of smallpox that had wiped out the rest of the tribe, numbering several hundred people.”34 Although she later contradicts this statement by describing Wilson and McLeod’s interactions with aboriginal people, Lebourdais chose to focus on

31 Harris, *The Bowron Lakes*, 81.
32 Wright, *Bowron Lake Provincial Park,* 16.
33 Harris, for example, describes first residents Neil “Swampy” Wilson and Kenneth McLeod encountering a woman, the last survivor of the smallpox epidemics, on their arrival. Harris, *The Bowron Lakes*, 84.
34 Kibbee to Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, Lebourdais Fonds.
the idea of the “last survivor.” Working from Kibbee’s description, Lebourdais described how Kenneth McLeod and Neil “Swampy” Wilson found the last aboriginal woman “weeping amongst the fresh-made graves on lower Bear River.” Highly embellished and based more on imagination than on Kibbee’s information Lebourdais’ account explains that the woman’s entire tribe had been wiped out by smallpox, which she thought was punishment for the tribe’s efforts to prevent the gold rush. Hoping to keep their pristine lake community from being settled and mined by invaders, the tribe had supposedly murdered a White man who had come down Antler Creek in 1860. In Lebourdais’ story, the old woman was gently led away, “her shrunken shoulders shaking with sobs” as she said goodbye to her homeland, physically and metaphorically making room for newcomers and their narrative of exploration and gold hunting. When cited as a reason for the lack of aboriginal presence in Barkerville during the rush, Lebourdais story is overly simplistic and unsatisfactory; however, this has not prevented its use as an explanation for aboriginal peoples’ absence in the subsequent rush.

Although estimates for population loss in epidemics range as high as 90% in parts of British Columbia, disease cannot account for the completeness of the group’s disappearance, since it is unlikely that all were killed. Cole Harris offers some insight into where the survivors of the epidemic may have gone. In his article “Social Power and Cultural Change in Pre-Colonial British Columbia,” Harris comments that the extent of

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35 For example, Neil Wilson is reputed to have been “raised amongst the Indians” and both Wilson and Mcleod make use of aboriginal packers to transport goods from Bowron to Barkerville for sale to miners. Ibid.
36 Lebourdais’ article is probably also to blame for the myth that surrounds “Dead Man’s Island” at the headwaters of the Bowron River. Popularly, the area is thought to have been a location where aboriginal people abandoned smallpox victims or buried their dead. However, archaeological reports found only storage pits at this site, not graves. Lebourdais, “Bear Lake,” Lebourdais Fonds, 2; Martin and Robinson, “System “E” Survey,” 17.
demographic change in British Columbia between 1770 and 1850 resulted from two factors: Epidemic disease and the fur trade. For example, on the Fraser he points out that there were no longer enough people to maintain the salmon fisheries after the epidemics, forcing the remaining individuals to move to other locations or to change their modes of subsistence. At the same time, people relocated to take advantage of the commercial fur trade economy, which was established and relatively stable by 1850. Harris points out that many groups moved their winter villages to be closer to trading posts, abandoned small village sites for larger ones, and in general occupied far fewer sites in 1850 than they had only 100 years earlier. The result was that the population shifted as people moved to core or favoured areas previously unavailable to them, and coalesced into new groups. Bowron's status as a borderland between the Carrier and Shuswap people probably made it particularly susceptible to this sort of demographic change. Survivors of the epidemic may have found it impractical to remain in the area and moved to locations where population centres remained and new modes of making a living were possible. The fur trade forts of Fort George and Fort Alexandria, both accessible by river from the Bowron region, are likely candidates for such a movement. It is also possible that, like many others in North America and around the world, the rush drew these people from their homelands. Lutz’s Makuk describes migrations on a similar scale to Harris’ but occurring later, in the 1850s, in response to rising employment opportunities associated with the gold rush. According to Lutz, aboriginal people were

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39 Ibid, 79.
40 Ibid, 55.
41 Ibid, 79.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid, 67.
44 Lutz, Makuk, 167-171.
increasingly engaging in mixed wage or "moditional" work, which required them to alter pre-existing patterns of subsistence in order to take advantage of new economic strategies.\textsuperscript{45} Although he focuses on the movement of aboriginal people to Victoria in order to make his case, Lutz also mentions that aboriginal people "were relocating to the gold-mining communities at Fort Hope, Lyton, Yale, Wild Horse Creek, and New Westminster."\textsuperscript{46} The new economies in these towns acted to draw aboriginal people away from subsistence homelands like Bowron toward employment centres like Barkerville where they found new sources of income and new markets for trade.

The documents do not indicate conclusively whether the aboriginal population at Bowron migrated to Barkerville, although such a move fits with the broader trends described by Lutz. It is also possible that an aboriginal population remained, at least seasonally, in Bowron into the twentieth century, unnoticed or not remarked upon by document writers of the these years. Neither the McCabes' writings (1920s-1930s) nor documents pertaining to the creation of the Bowron Lake Game Reserve (1928) indicate that there were aboriginal people there. Documents from after 1862 do not differentiate between aboriginal people who might have been indigenous to the area and those who migrated from elsewhere. This is either because gold rush authors were uninterested in the difference between local and migrant aboriginal populations, or because they had no way of knowing from where the aboriginal people who populated their town had originally come. As a result, the post-contact history of the local aboriginal population of the Bowron/Barkerville region is impossible to differentiate from the history of

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 169.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 177.
aboriginal migrants from other parts of the province, and the fate of the people who made up the Bowron Lake community remains unknown.

Indeed, despite the disappearance from the documents of a distinct local aboriginal population from the documentary evidence, the story of indigenous participation in the Cariboo gold rush did not end in 1862. Whether or not this local group migrated to Barkerville, aboriginal people from a variety of other locations certainly migrated there, forming a new population of permanent and semi-permanent aboriginal residents in the years following the rush. A 1971 poem by a Shuswap woman named Mary August Tappage tells part of the story of indigenous peoples' movement.

That was big cloud of dust 'way down
To the south in the spring yes,
It was the Lillooet Indians coming north,
Coming north to the goldfields
Up by Barkerville.

... they come back in the fall, these Lillooets,
Tired I guess, but lots of money, lots of fish,
Not minding snow or mud. They laugh
Thinking of summer, yes,
up by Barkerville.47

In the mid-nineteenth century, local historian Alvin Johnston claimed that that Lillooet people had been travelling to the Barkerville region for the purpose of gathering huckleberries since the gold rush,48 an observation that is confirmed by newspaper accounts of the annual “migration” of Lillooet people to Barkerville beginning in the early twentieth century.49 Other evidence puts Lillooet people in Barkerville during the summers as well. For example in September of 1899, a charge of supplying “an Indian woman of the Lillooet tribe, known by the name of ‘Nancy’, with an intoxicant” was

49 Untitled, The Cariboo Observer, 14 June 1913.
filed against John Stevenson. The same charge was laid against W.J. Powell and John Lyne. In July of 1907 Indian Agent E. Bell wrote of a Lillooet man named John Scotchman who shot an indigenous man from Cayoosh Creek named Edward. This evidence strongly suggests that many Lillooet people migrated to Barkerville during the rush.

The Cariboo Sentinel reveals the varied origins of Barkerville’s post-1862 indigenous population. For example in 1874 the newspaper claimed that that “Indians” would be gathering in Barkerville “from all parts of the province to witness the [Dominion Day] amusements,” and then afterwards commented on the results of “Indian”-specific competitions such as the “Siwash races.” Known to be a gathering place for indigenous peoples, Barkerville received funds from Indian Commissioner Lieutenant Colonel Powell donated funds specifically for the purposes of putting on these games. Also in the Sentinel in 1874 an “Indian” brought news of a death to Barkerville from Boston Bar. On 11 October 1866 the Sentinel commented on an “Indian” man accused of murder at Soda Creek, whose trial was eventually held in Richfield, and was reported to be at large in the Okanagan. In 1867 the Victoria Colonist mentioned the death of an aboriginal woman by the curious name of “Captain John” who was originally

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52 “Indian Sports” Cariboo Sentinel, 27 June 1874.
53 Ibid.
54 “Yale,” Cariboo Sentinel, 29 August 1874.
55 “Still at Large,” Cariboo Sentinel, 11 October, 1866.
from Victoria, but had been living on William's Creek for two years. Finally, when an aboriginal woman named “Full Moon” was assaulted in Barkerville in 1871, “two Indians—a Lillooet and Hydah,” were implicated. These references indicate that aboriginal people travelled considerable distances to participate in the rush, and that the aboriginal population after 1862 was composed of a significant number of aboriginal migrants.

“Indians” and “Siwashes” in Gold Rush Society

 Typically historians have approached British Columbia’s indigenous past as being the story of a pre-existing population invaded by outsiders arriving in territory where the indigenous group had previously dominated demographically. For example, when Lutz discusses aboriginal people who mined in the Fraser River alongside non-aboriginal miners, he refers to the “few thousand aboriginal inhabitants” that pre-existed in the area. Similarly, Christopher Herbert assumes that the aboriginal people he is discussing are the original “Cariboo Mountain Band” despite evidence to the contrary. Barkerville was occupied by many aboriginal migrants, and therefore does not fit neatly under the framework of invader versus invaded used by these historians. This is not to suggest that the Cariboo region somehow entirely escaped the broader processes emerging in British Columbia at the time, but rather that it was more complex than has previously been imagined. An examination of the evidence shows that indigenous people were far more integrated into gold rush society in the Barkerville and Bowron area than scholars have

56 “Births and Deaths,” Victoria Colonist, 6 July 1867. She was probably the daughter of a well-known Indian man named Captain John who supposedly made a fortune running boats between Hope and Yale during the original stages of the Fraser rush. Marshall, “Claiming the Land,” 85.
58 Lutz, Makuk, 174.
59 Herbert, “Unequal Participants,” 10
recognized. Herbert’s postulation that aboriginal people “had a very different perception of the space the Newcomers labelled the Cariboo” is challenged by the fact that many of Barkerville’s aboriginal residents came as a part of the same population movement as other newcomers in this era, often for the same purpose. Ultimately the evidence shows that, as Herbert and others have argued, indigenous people at Barkerville and Bowron were relegated a peripheral place by the elite members of gold-town society. However, the presence of many of them at the very centre of gold rush society, combined with the apparent fluidity of “Siwash” identity meant that they were not necessarily confined by these social ideals.

Historians have come to understand “Indian” identity as a newcomer construction used to categorize and separate aboriginal people as different from themselves. “Indian” identity originated from the distinctions made by the first White explorers between themselves and the people that they encountered. Phenotypical characteristics came to be associated with social characteristics like barbarism, sloth, and laziness. These characteristics became a part of what Lutz calls “the imperial definition of the ‘other,’” used to differentiate people of European origin from those that they encountered in new territories. Bringing this idea to Barkerville, Herbert argues that a select group of British or British-influenced elites utilized the constructed “Indian” as a way of

60 Ibid, 7.
61 These distinctions were based on partially on phenotype, but Lutz argues that the category “Indian” had more to do with “the relationship Europeans wished to have with Aboriginal peoples” and their status as the residents of “newly encountered lands.” Lutz, Makuk, 31-32.
62 For his own purposes, Lutz is particularly interested in the attribute of laziness as it came to be applied to aboriginal people in British Columbia. Ibid, 32.
63 Ibid, 33.
controlling and defining social norms and behaviours in Barkerville.⁶⁴ The failure of these social norms created considerable anxiety for the elite classes,⁶⁵ who dealt with their fears by dichotomizing the idealized town against the hinterland’s “savagery.”⁶⁶ The elites’ efforts to curb “roughness” in the towns, which they saw as being an attribute of the indigenous-dominated hinterland, meant that aboriginal people became seen as “improper inhabitants of the gold field towns.”⁶⁷ Consequently aboriginal people often faced a number of obstacles to participation in Barkerville society. The “Indians” and “Siwash” that appeared in sources like the Cariboo Sentinel therefore tended to be described in derogatory terms focused on their particularly “Indian” traits, such as criminality, poverty, or drunkenness.⁶⁸ For example, Indian Mary’s partner Joe Moore was referred to in these terms and fit easily into the category of “Indian” defined and propagated by elite Barkerville society.

The general lack of evidence in regards to indigenous people in the archival sources supports the narrative laid out by historians, suggesting that the record-keepers of Barkerville tended to separate indigenous people from narratives of their own experiences and lives. Where they do appear in the evidence, they are separated from the

⁶⁴ Herbert, “Unequal Participants,” 9. A quick glimpse at Richard Wright’s list of note-worthy members of Barkerville society, including names like Matthew Begbie, John Bowron, Billy Barker and James Anderson, is enough to confirm the dominance of this group. Wright, Barkerville, 20-36.
⁶⁷ Ibid, 12.
⁶⁸ Lutz argues that such descriptors were an important way of defining indigenous people in British Columbia during this era. Lutz, Makuk, 31.
Indigenous people are almost entirely absent from sources such as the *Cariboo Sentinel*, except when it came to discussions of crime. The majority of all the total evidence pertaining to this social group comes from court documents or relates to criminal activity, reinforcing the idea that to be an “Indian” was to be associated with deviant behavior.

Other evidence of the separation of aboriginal people from Barkerville society comes from the fact that, although indigenous people were included in the annual Dominion Day celebrations in Barkerville, they had separate competitions that were exclusive to “Indians.” For example in 1874 there was an “Indian” 200 yard handicap race, a Wheelbarrow Race, a Sack Race, and an “Indian Children’s Race.” There were also separate races for “Siwash” horses. Moreover, photographic evidence shows that indigenous encampments at Barkerville may have been physically separated from town. An image in the Barkerville photograph collection called “Indian Encampment, Barkerville, Aug. '99” shows a distinct collection of shanties on the north end of the main village (see Figure One). This imbalance is further evidence to support Herbert’s thesis, indicating that indigenous people were socially and physically segregated from the rest of gold town society.

The newspaper coverage of the trial of Nickel Palsk and James Barry demonstrates how, once barred from elite society, the separateness of the “savage” could then be used to help to define White “civilization.” Barry was sentenced to hang for the

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69 For example, the 1891 Census in British Columbia used these terms to differentiated aboriginal names from everyone else.
72 James Barry’s case it relatively well known, appearing in Wright’s popular history and on interpretive signs in the contemporary heritage site. Wright, *Barkerville*, 134.
murder of Charles Blessing in 1867, on the same day Nikel Palsk, an indigenous man, was also sentenced to hang for the murder of a man named John Morgan. The Sentinel constantly compared the two men in stories about the trial. Barry’s case was shocking because the murderer was White. “The case of the convict Barry evinces an amount of human depravity and hardened villainy that makes one shudder to think that human beings, with at least average intelligence like him, are to be found at large in our midst,” lamented the Sentinel. Barry, an insider, had acted in an unexpected way that was made even more horrifying by the fact that he was a member of elite society. The Sentinel was able to accept his actions by constructing Barry as a calculated, sophisticated, and intelligent killer. “The murderer of Blessing was a practiced hand,” the paper assured its readers, “and is no doubt familiar with crime of the worst character.” These were attributes that were acceptable for an insider to possess, and differentiated Barry from Palsk in the minds of elite observers.

Palsk’s case was less shocking because he was an “Indian” and therefore expected to behave criminally. “The circumstances attending the murder of Morgan by the Indian,” explained the Sentinel, “is less revolting to humanity inasmuch as the perpetrator was an unenlightened savage.” The newspaper added that aboriginal people were more inclined to criminality because of their “inherent hatred of the [W]hite man,” their “hope of plunder,” and their “savage nature,” all of which “prevented [Palsk’s] realizing all the horrors of the deed he was about to commit.” Although the author concluded that both Barry and Palsk deserved a sentence of death, Palsk’s crime was less serious because of

73 “Criminal Trials” Cariboo Sentinel, 4 July 1867.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
his inherent status as an “ignorant bloodthirsty savage,” from whom such behavior could be expected.\footnote{Ibid.} As a part of the elite of Barkerville society, the \textit{Sentinel’s} editor could easily portray Palsk as an example of everything that civilization was not.

The contrasts between Barry and Palsk were on display in the descriptions of the moments leading up to the men’s executions. The two men’s behaviors were closely compared. “Barry…betrayed no symptoms of trepidation, but sustained himself throughout the trying scene with the utmost fortitude and coolness,” stated the paper.\footnote{“Execution of the Murderers—James Barry and the Indian Nikel Palsk,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel} 12 August 1867.} Palsk, however, “behaved in a very excited manner, and indulged in the most foul and blasphemous language…endeavoring all the while to extricate himself from his pinions.”\footnote{Ibid.} Moreover, although “neither of the prisoners made a public confession,” the paper was “very certain” that Barry had confessed to the priest in private.\footnote{Ibid.} Even though Barry was a murderer, he was still more “civilized” than Palsk because Barry was composed, brave, and unquestionably Christian.\footnote{The fact that Barry had been quite ill in the days leading up to the execution, was not considered by the paper as a possible cause of his apparent calm. Ibid.} In comparison, Palsk’s blasphemies marked him as separate and savage. The constructed nature of these descriptions becomes particularly evident in a later issue, in which McGuiken, the local Roman Catholic priest, wrote in to correct the paper on its treatment of Palsk: “We are requested by the Rev. Father McGuiken, to correct the statement made by us regarding the blasphemy used by the Indian lately executed here. The rev. [sic] gentleman, who was near the culprit at the last moment, assures us that he uttered no blasphemous language on the scaffold.”\footnote{“Correction,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 19 August 1987.}

Palsk’s and Barry’s executions demonstrate how descriptions of an indigenous person

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could be used to enforce the idea of a civilized White Barkerville society against supposed savagery. The fact that McGuiken wrote in to correct the paper is evidence that, at least in some instances, such descriptions were exaggerations or even fiction. These nuances indicate that the document-writers of gold rush era Barkerville were more concerned about the ideals of civilization versus savagery than about the reality of indigenous people.

Palsk’s case, along with the evident physical and social separation of aboriginal people from Barkerville society, demonstrates that they were ideologically excluded and contrasted with elite upper-middle class “civilization.” Although Herbert concedes that “various factors” resulted in some challenges to these ideals, he almost certainly understates the degree to which these ideals were broken during the gold rush years. In her monograph *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia 1849-1871*, Adele Perry argues that these ideals failed in other parts of the province, but the disconnect between ideals and reality at Barkerville specifically has not been examined by historians. Yet, despite the ideological goals of the elite, aboriginal people nevertheless came to occupy a central place in Barkerville gold rush society. Herbert focuses on illegal and interracial drinking as a particular example, but it is clear that aboriginal people also lived, worked, and participated in the very centre of Barkerville in a variety of capacities far beyond this single exception.

Although there is some evidence to suggest that some aboriginal people may have lived on the outskirts of town, there are other examples of aboriginal people living permanently or semi-permanently directly inside the town. Indian Mary, for example,

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84 Herbert, “Unequal Participants,” 9.
lived in a cabin in the town of Stanley.\textsuperscript{85} According to the \textit{Sentinel}, Lucy Bones had a cabin located directly across the street from Saint Saviour’s Church in the heart of Barkerville.\textsuperscript{86} From the newspaper it is clear that other “Siwash” moved regularly and freely in and out of her cabin, and that her neighbors were used to such events. The fact that the \textit{Sentinel} casually included such details is significant, because as the voice of Barkerville’s elite, it had an interest in separating “Indians” from the rest of society.

There are also several examples of indigenous people being arrested for disorderly behavior while inside town. In 1870, Johnny, “an unsophisticated young native,” terrorized some respectable Barkerville ladies, and an indigenous man named “Charley” was sentenced to be whipped after threatening one “Miss A. Hickman” with a bottle. The \textit{Sentinel} used the threat to White women as a way of emphasizing the danger represented by these men, but it also inadvertently gave a glimpse into surprisingly close interactions between what many considered the very epitome of civilization (White women) and indigenous people.

Moreover, although aboriginal people were often relegated to “Indian” specific Dominion Day activities, the fact remains that they were regular participants in this annual affair.\textsuperscript{87} According to the \textit{Sentinel} “a professional from Lillooet ran beautifully,” to win the 200 yard Indian foot race in 1874, a year marked by a particularly wide variety of aboriginal sports.\textsuperscript{88} The horse races, one of the most popular events, were frequently marked by a strong aboriginal presence. In 1874 the “Siwash Race” was “the best entered

\textsuperscript{85} “Stanley/Vanwinkle Topographical Map,” #93 H 04, Category TOW, Acc. No. 2007.0082.0004. Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
\textsuperscript{86} “Sudden Death and Inquest,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 16 July 1870.
\textsuperscript{87} For example, the 1874 celebrations already cited above included a “200 yard Handicap Race,” a “Wheelbarrow Race,” a “Sack Race” and an “Indian Children’s Race.” “Indian Sports,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 4 July 1874.
race of the day.” According to the *Sentinel*, the winner of the “Scrub Race” in 1872 was “Mr. Roger’s mare Lizzy” ridden by “an Indian boy strapped in Indian fashion.” Some years boasted special aboriginal horse races, including the “Lillooet Purse” and the “Shuswap Purse.” The consistent presence of indigenous people in one of the most important cultural events of the town indicates a high degree of integration in the Barkerville community.

There are other examples. In 1866 a lost White man named Mr. Goudie ended up spending the night in an “Indian” encampment. In 1869 the paper ran a story about a group of wealthy Barkerville residents, including the town Doctor, who went for a ride on nearby bald mountain. “Indian” attendants acted as guides and drank champagne with the group. An 1869 photograph taken in front of the Government Assay office at the centre of Barkerville show two indigenous people seated alongside a number of other Barkerville locals. In a report of Barnard’s Express passengers newly arrived in Barkerville, the *Sentinel* reported “an Indian lady” arriving amongst several White travelers. Thus, despite the construction of indigenous people as separate from Barkerville society, such incidences indicate certain closeness to the White community. Social and physical separation failed in Barkerville far more often than Herbert proposes.

Another example of aboriginal participation within the Barkerville community is evident in their interactions with the Chinese. Faith Moosang, in her report on the C.D. Hoy Photographs project, was the first to notice the connection between these two ethnic

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89 Ibid.
groups. The C.D. Hoy Photographs project was a travelling display of photographs taken in the early twentieth century by Chinese photographer C.D. Hoy. Moosang collected a number of valuable oral testimonies from old-timers in the Quesnel, Barkerville, and Williams Lake area regarding the history of Hoy and his photographic subjects. Based on this oral evidence, Moosang suggests that First Nations and Chinese people shared a sort of close camaraderie owing to their low status in society. Hoy's photographs bear this out, as a large number of his images are of aboriginal subjects (see Figure Two). Documentary evidence potentially indicates that her observations extend to the early years of the rush. There are many examples of aboriginal people and Chinese interacting. For example, in 1872 Ah Lepp and the aboriginal men (Tom, Charlie, and Jimmy) were charged with gambling “in a Chinese house in Barkerville.” Chinese sellers also often provided aboriginal people with alcohol against the law. As a typical example, in 1872 “Ah Yung” was charged for “procuring and giving whiskey to an Indian named Jimmy.” Local Chinese, particularly those who held positions of authority or wealth, employed aboriginal people. In 1875, Dr. Bell asked a Chinese Tong leader named Kwong Lee to help to look after a Chinese man admitted as a patient to the Barkerville hospital. Kwong Lee “sent two Indians for the man with a note stating that on the

95 Faith Mossang, *C.D. Hoy Historical Photographs Project*, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives.
97 “Police Court,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 1 March 1872.
98 Ibid.
99 The exchange illustrates an interesting conflict between White and Chinese ethnic groups. The Chinese patient, Kum Soon, appears to have been somewhat mistreated by both the local constable and Dr. Bell. Having been found collapsed in a snow bank, he was literally dragged to the Barkerville hospital by the constable, where he came under the reluctant care of Dr. Bell. Dr. Bell threatened to charge Kwong Lee ten
account of it being Chinese New Year, he had no time to come to the hospital himself.” Such interactions between aboriginal and Chinese people suggest that these two ethnic groups had relatively frequent contact with each other and may be evidence of the class camaraderie described by Moosang.

Aboriginal relations with the Chinese were not always friendly. For example, in 1865 a fight broke out between “a Siwash and a Chinaman” as a part of a series of brawls that made the front page of the Sentinel in September. The fracas resulted in the aboriginal participant being taken home after being thoroughly beaten. In 1871 Chinese men “Ah Yung, Ah Kung, and Ah Kil were charged with having violently assaulted Tom and Charley, two Indians, at Vanwinkle.” The details provided by the Sentinel indicate that the Tom and Charley had arrived drunk and begun to raise “a general row,” causing the three Chinese men to respond violently in an attempt to evict the disturbers. In another example, when Indian Mary was killed in 1871, her Chinese neighbors formed a vigilante committee that searched houses and guarded roads until the suspect (another Chinese man) was found. Such incidents hint at a subtext of interaction between Chinese and aboriginal people in which relationships and hostilities were formed. The existence of this connection between the two communities is evidence

dollars a day to pay for hired help to care for the sick patient. Kwong Lee first ignored the threats, then when a second note was sent by Bell, hired two aboriginal men to pick up the sick man. However, Bell refused to hand over the patient to the aboriginals, insisting that Kwong Lee come himself. The patient was subsequently taken to jail, where he died of frostbite. The coroner’s Jury found that he had died of the effects of the cold and mistreatment by his country-men, but the details suggest otherwise. Bell insisted that he had “never refused any man admission into the hospital, no matter what his nationality might be,” despite earlier statements that he didn’t want to admit the man because he was a danger to the other patients. “Coroner’s Inquisition,” Cariboo Sentinel, 20 February 1875.

Ibid. 101 “Fights in Barkerville,” Cariboo Sentinel, 2 September 1865.
102 Vanwinkle was a small mining community close to Barkerville. “Police Court,” Cariboo Sentinel, 23 December, 1871.
103 Ibid.
104 “Brutal Murder at the Forks of Quesnel—Suicide of the Murder,” Cariboo Sentinel, 4 November 1871.
of an integrated aboriginal population that participated actively in Barkerville’s society in a variety of capacities and at a variety of different levels.

Other indigenous people lived so closely to Barkerville society that their separate ethnicity is barely distinguishable in the primary documents. These people are significant because they were almost never thought of or referred to as “Indians” in a derogatory sense, demonstrating the flexibility of the use of actual ethnicity in determining racial identity. James Duffy is an example of one such individual. An established “old-timer” of the Barkerville/Bowron region, Duffy owned a cabin on the Bowron River. His name appears often in the documents without being identified as an aboriginal person. Duffy associated regularly with the respectable class of Barkerville, including Fred Tregillus. He also appears in many mineral survey and mining company documents, indicating that he was involved in the mining industry. As an active and long-standing member of Barkerville society, Duffy’s aboriginal heritage was never remarked upon in any of this documentation. Even Louis Lebourdais, who wrote his obituary in 1939, did not mention Duffy’s ethnicity. In fact, the only way to know that he was not of European origin is the 1891 census in which he is listed as an Indian, indicating that he either self-identified as an Indian or the census-taker identified him as such.

106 Duffy appears in Tregillus’ journal in 1916 twice. The first time his name is just one of a list of names and numbers associated with a vote. The second time is an itinerary of furs Duffy brought in including type and number. Tregillus, Frederick. Journals. Various Years. Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
109 1891 Census, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
There are other examples of similar individuals scattered throughout the primary evidence. When Marie Bouchie died in 1924, she was described by the *Quesnel Observer* as a "pioneer resident of the district," and her remains were interred in a public burial ground. She was reportedly of "French and Cree Indian decent," and probably was a migrant from east of the Rocky Mountains.\(^{110}\) Around 1900 Henry Ingram married an aboriginal woman named Jenny Klarminak (or possibly Klarluinak, depending on the source consulted) from Boston Bar.\(^{111}\) Henry gained notoriety for having attempted to use camels to pack supplies to Barkerville during the gold rush. Jenny's ethnicity was rarely remarked upon; clearly, it was not a barrier in her integration into Barkerville society. The couple had a number of children, all of whom seemingly went on to live relatively typical White middle-class lives. Her son William, for example, fought and died in the Boer war, and her daughters Ettie and Anna both married White men.\(^{112}\)

Yet another ethnically ambiguous individual was James Hutch, a friend and employee of Fred Tregillus. Appearing in several photographs with Tregillus, Hutch apparently acted as a guide and a packer for Tregillus' hunting trips.\(^{113}\) Indeed, indigenous people typically filled occupations such as packing and guiding in this era. Moreover, in photographs Hutch is visually differentiated from his employer in garb that includes traditional aboriginal elements (see Figure Three).\(^{114}\) Yet, despite being a meticulous record-keeper, Tregillus never remarked on Hutch's ethnicity, despite their close relationship. Hutch, like Duffy, Bouchie, and Ingram, was closely associated with

\(^{110}\) "Personal and Other Items," *Quesnel Observer*, 12 July 1924, 1.
\(^{111}\) "Henry Ingram," Reference Files, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
\(^{112}\) Ibid.
\(^{113}\) Fred Corfe, Interview by Bill Quackenbush, 6 September 2000, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
\(^{114}\) "Fred Tregillus and J. Hutch, near head of Swift River," P 3019, Tregillus Photograph Collection, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
Barkerville society and hardly relegated to the periphery. Barkerville old-timer Fred Corfe, in an interview with Barkerville curator Bill Quackenbush in 2000, stated that Hutch’s “mother was Indian,” and that his “second wife was a native who would travel with him all summer long through the mountains.”

Duffy, Bouchie, Ingram, and Hutch demonstrate that the definition of “Indian” could be extremely flexible in practice, a nuance that contributed to further integration of this ethnic group into Barkerville society. In Barkerville, aboriginal people occupied a broad spectrum of social categories and classes. This uneven application of terms is probably owning to the fact that these individuals were more closely associated with White society, participated in the economy much like Whites, lived their lives in accordance with ideals of order and morality, and contributed to the social stability of the town. These individuals demonstrate the extent to which the identity of the “Siwash” was an ideal unreflective of the reality of life in gold rush era Barkerville. Aboriginal people were not necessarily relegated to the category of “Indians” in the derogatory sense.

It is possible that the liminal nature of gold rush society common in frontier towns allowed individuals such as Duffy, Bouchie, Ingram, and Hutch to (re)define themselves and transcend conventional racial boundaries. However there is no evidence that any of these people attempted to hide their ethnicity. Rather, because of their close relationship to Barkerville society and because they did not conform to peoples’ ideas about what a “Siwash” was, their indigenous heritage became irrelevant. These exceptions show that historians have put too much emphasis on the power of the “savage/civilized” trope in Barkerville. They also demonstrate the flexibility of the term which could be applied or removed as was needed to suit particular individuals or circumstances. Although

115 Fred Corfe, Interview by Bill Quackenbush, 6 September 2000.
allocated a peripheral role in Barkerville’s gold rush society, “Indians” did not remain there. The evidence shows that people of aboriginal decent participated actively in the town’s history and that of the surrounding area in a variety of roles and capacities, despite labels such as “Siwash” that worked to separate them from society. Moreover, the flexibility of the term, which had more to do with enforcing ideals than identifying people with aboriginal heritage, allowed some of Barkerville’s indigenous residents to avoid such labels completely.

Conclusion

Despite the absence of indigenous people from much of the secondary literature, the evidence from the primary sources can help to piece together a narrative of their history in the Barkerville/Bowron region. Archaeological reports demonstrate that there was a pre-gold rush population that lived at Bowron Lakes, starting at least at 1250 and extending into the mid-nineteenth century. The group was probably of mixed Shuswap and Carrier origin, and engaged in subsistence hunting, trapping, fishing, and foraging around the lakes. Documentary and anecdotal evidence from the early twentieth century suggests that the group was dispersed by repeated disease. It is also possible that the group migrated away from the site before or during the fur trade or the gold rush as a part of larger demographic movements experienced by aboriginal people during the nineteenth century.

In 1862, miners discovered gold in nearby creeks, sparking an influx of newcomers to the area around Barkerville and Bowron. Amongst these newcomers was a significant population of aboriginal people. Although some of these people may have come from groups that had traditionally utilized the Bowron area or been related to the
group that lived there, most were part of the gold rush influx. Aboriginal people in Barkerville had an important role to play in the society that emerged in the gold camps.

As a location of intense anxiety about morality and public order, aboriginal people, along with other lower class groups like the Chinese, could be juxtaposed against ideals of civilization that the British-influenced elite of Barkerville desired for the new town. Therefore, aboriginal people were stereotyped and described as savages and criminals. Moreover, they were separated from the rest of Barkerville society, with separate spaces of living, identifiers such as “Indian” or “Ind” attached to their names, and even separate games in Dominion Day celebrations. The comparisons between James Barry and Nikol Palsk that appeared in the Cariboo Sentinel epitomize this effort.

Despite this ideology, the primary evidence shows that in practice, some aboriginal people were central to society as it developed in Barkerville, whether or not they were publicly identified as being “Indians.” For example, aboriginal people could frequently be found at the physical centre of town, engaging and interacting with so-called “civilized” society in a variety of capacities. In other instances, people with aboriginal heritage like Duffy, Bouchie, Ingram, and Hutch were closely integrated into respectable Barkerville society, and therefore were not subjected to the stereotypes and descriptions associated with being “Siwash.” Aboriginal people occupied a complex place in Barkerville society that cannot be entirely understood under the frameworks previously proposed by historians. Aboriginal people were both separated and integrated in Barkerville depending on individual and social circumstances.
Chapter 2: Aboriginal Opportunism and the Gold Rush Economy in Barkerville

When James Duffy died in 1939 at the age of seventy-one, his obituary described him as a “prospector, trapper, and big game guide.”¹ In his wide range of occupations, Duffy embodied the economic strategy that was most common for aboriginal people participating in the Barkerville gold rush. Having arrived on the creeks in 1887 during the hydraulics era of gold mining, he appears to have found work amongst the mining companies. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, his name appears in the ledgers and account books of several different companies operating in Barkerville.² As the mining economy declined, and the area become better known for its wilderness than for its gold, Duffy turned increasingly to fur trapping and eventually guiding.³ Duffy’s ability to change occupations, seize opportunities as they arose, and adapt to evolving economic realities are traits that were typical of his time. Economic opportunity was one of the main magnets attracting aboriginal people to the Barkerville and Bowron area in the 1860s. Mary Augusta Tappage's poem, quoted in Chapter One, illustrates that reality when it states that the Lillooet “go north into that country to work, to work all the time, hard.”⁴

Compared to other aspects of British Columbia’s history, aboriginal involvement in the economy is fairly well-researched. Indeed, economic arguments lie behind the work of Rolf Knight and John Lutz, who see economic history as a crucial factor in

¹ Lebourdais, “Daily Province, Vancouver, Quesnel,” Lebourdais Fonds.
² “Lowhee Mining Company Ltd,” Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives; “Last Chance Company,” Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives; “Alabama Company,” Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives.
³ Fred Tregillus, a long-time resident of the Barkerville and a man renowned for his extensive personal journals describing many details of Barkerville life, recorded lists of furs trapped by Duffy between 1900 and 1916. Tregillus, Journals, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives.
⁴ Speare, ed. The Days of Augusta, 15-16.
aboriginal peoples’ lives in British Columbia. Knight and Lutz provide an important framework for understanding aboriginal economic strategies. For example, Knight argues that the time between 1858 and 1930 “was the period of the most strategic involvement of Indian workers in the emerging industrial economy of the province.” This argument is supported by evidence from Barkerville, where aboriginal people such as Duffy engaged in subsistence, commercial, and wage economies strategically. This also supports Knight’s argument that there is a “misconception that ongoing traditional values and attitudes...limited Indian capacities to deal with the new industries.” Indeed, in Barkerville traditional values and subsistence activities actually facilitated participation in new industries. Indeed, Knight argues that “in 1858 Indian people were not yet substantially involved in wage labour.” The evidence from Barkerville suggests that aboriginal people did not whole-heartedly turn towards the wage economy, but often combined wage work with more familiar economic activities.

John Lutz’s *Makuk* is important for introducing the concept of a “moditional economy” in British Columbia whereby aboriginal people “engaged in multiple modes of production at different times of the day and year: they hunted, fished, fathered, farmed, raised their children, and exchanged their labour in different combinations, and as opportunities presented themselves.” Lutz points out that these forms of work have often been dismissed “as transitional and on the road to a modern, fully capitalist economy”

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5 For example, both Lutz and Knight see aboriginal control of resources as an important factor of political autonomy. Lutz argues that aboriginal people remained relevant and powerful in British Columbia into the twentieth century because of the fact that they were “the main labour force of the early settlement era.” Lutz, *Makuk*, 8. Similarly, Knight argues that “Indian groups generally still retained control over most resources and maintained their own political autonomy.” Knight, *Indians at Work*, 4.
6 Knight, *Indians at Work*, 3.
7 Ibid, 8.
8 Ibid.
when in fact moditional work describes aboriginal participation in British Columbia’s economy in the late nineteenth century and beyond.\textsuperscript{10} Aboriginal people of the Barkerville area adopted moditional strategies, much as Lutz would predict. While some aboriginal people participated in wage labour, they were more likely to combine wage work with other strategies depending on skills, needs, and available resources.\textsuperscript{11} Moreover, aboriginal people appear to have chosen their work based on its compatibility with other economic activities. Thus, Knight and Lutz can inform an understanding of aboriginal history in Barkerville, providing useful tools of analysis for understanding aboriginal activities.

Until now, historians have overwhelmingly focused on British Columbia’s southern and coastal regions in order to support their arguments, despite Barkerville’s importance as an economic centre during the late nineteenth century. The applicability of their theories remains largely unexplored in the context of the Cariboo gold creeks. In addition, both Knight and Lutz make arguments about the nature of aboriginal work in the broader context, and identify provincial trends in the development of aboriginal work over an extended period of time. For example, Lutz uses the idea of a moditional economy to explain the construction of the “lazy Indian” and the dispossession and marginalization of aboriginal people in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{12} A focused examination of how aboriginal people supported themselves in Barkerville during the gold rush can

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid, 169.
\textsuperscript{11} In the 1891 census, approximately 12% of aboriginal people with recorded occupations reported a combination of two different jobs. As Lutz suggests, aboriginal people were not the only social group who combined wage labour with other forms of work, as is evidenced by White participation in commercial fishing in Barkerville.
\textsuperscript{12} Lutz, \textit{Makuk}, 4.
reveal further details about how aboriginal people responded to the challenges and opportunities of the changing economic landscape within their own context.

The primary documents tell a story of active and varied participation in the emerging Barkerville economy. Aboriginal people were most likely to engage in wage labour that did not interfere with traditional seasonal activities and that drew upon knowledge and skills that they had possessed before the gold rush began. For example, aboriginal people fished and foraged in the Barkerville area for subsistence purposes, but they also fished, hunted, and trapped commercially. These activities were often combined with seasonal packing and couriering, in an example of Lutz’s moditional economy at work. Still others engaged more intensely in wage labour opportunities that necessitated a major divergence from traditional ways of making a living, but these endeavours proved to be less popular and were often fraught with social implications. In general, these varied strategies had mixed implications for aboriginal people in Barkerville, providing a stable and viable lifestyle for some and enmeshing others in new social, political, and economic problems. Taken together, they give a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which aboriginal people interacted with the economic changes brought by the gold rush, demonstrating that aboriginal people chose to take advantage of a variety of economic opportunities based on practical and contextual needs.

Subsistence Economy

Although many aboriginal people took advantage of new wage opportunities provided by the gold rush, others maintained pre-gold rush ways of making a living into the early twentieth century. Indeed, several scholars argue that aboriginal people in northern British Columbia maintained a subsistence economy during and even after the
gold rush era, using commercial trapping to supply their relatively modest demands for anything they could not supply themselves. A large part of Douglas Hudson’s 1983 doctoral thesis argues that the Carrier (Dakelh) used trapping, wage labour, and social service programs to maintain what he calls a “bush economy” of hunting and gathering fish, ungulates, and small game right up to the mid-twentieth century.\textsuperscript{13} Aboriginal people clearly did not simply abandon earlier ways of making a living in order to participate in the new wage opportunities that appeared in and around Barkerville; rather, they continued to engage in subsistence strategies, fitting these activities into the new context of gold rush era British Columbia.

The reports of the Department of Indian affairs, after the federal government took jurisdiction over the province’s aboriginal population following British Columbia’s incorporation into Canada in 1871, document the persistence of the subsistence economy. The groups of the interior were absent from these reports until 1873, when a report by Superintendent J.W. Powell described the attributes of some of local groups and suggested “that reserves should, as a means of promoting their future welfare, be allotted to them.”\textsuperscript{14} As argued in Chapter One, the Barkerville area was probably inhabited by some combination of Delkeh and Shuswap peoples in the pre-rush era. Of the Delkeh, described by Powell as the “Tahelie and Siccanie Nations,” the report noted that “they do not engage in agriculture, but live on fish and game.”\textsuperscript{15} The Shuswap, concentrated to the south of Barkerville along the gold rush route, were comparatively less dependent on subsistence work, having “accumulated money by packing and boating for the Whites,”

\textsuperscript{14} Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, \textit{Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ending 30th June 1872} (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873), 10.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
as well as pursuing agriculture and stock-raising.\textsuperscript{16} However, those residing closer to Barkerville tended to prefer subsistence work to wage or farm labour. Farm labour in particular was more common amongst those living at Williams Lake and Soda Creek, where the Department later supplied agricultural implements and arable land.\textsuperscript{17} In 1881, Peter O’Reilly, Indian Reserve Commissioner, travelled as far as Quesnel to report on the state of aboriginal lands and to lay out reserves in the interior. He stated that the people there “have supported themselves hitherto by fishing, hunting and mining,” but they were not yet engaged in agriculture.\textsuperscript{18} They had two major fisheries, one on the west side of the Fraser River, opposite their new reserve site, and another at a lake east of Quesnel “whence they obtain their supply of white fish through the winter months.”\textsuperscript{19}

Other sources reflect a similar preference for subsistence life amongst northern aboriginal groups. In 1865, an exploring party from the north of Barkerville reported to the\textit{Sentinel} that the Indians “go off to the mountains in winter where they hunt for bear and moose, which they kill in large numbers sufficient to live on in summer, besides selling large quantities of the meat to the Hudson Bay Forts.”\textsuperscript{20} The lack of motivation to work for wages under such circumstances could be a source of frustration to employers.\textsuperscript{21} The exploring party remarked that, unlike the indigenous people between Victoria and Barkerville, those in the north were “a lazy set of beings who will not even work for the White man for money.”\textsuperscript{22} The informant noted that if the telegraph company was hoping to use aboriginal packers in the interior later that year, they were going to be extremely

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs,\textit{Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1881} (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1882), 264.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 271.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} “News from Peace River,”\textit{Cariboo Sentinel} 8 July 1865.
\textsuperscript{21} Lutz, “After the Fur Trade,” 91.
\textsuperscript{22} “News from Peace River,”\textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 8 July 1865.
disappointed, because the population north of Barkerville had other preferred ways of sustaining themselves.\(^{23}\)

In 1884, agriculture had yet to take hold. W.M. Laing Meason stated that “hitherto, nothing has been raised here, not even potatoes.”\(^{24}\) While some found “employment during the summer in boating, and at good wages,” most “still adhere to their old occupation of hunting and trapping.”\(^{25}\) The people at Quesnel were described as “the most worthless in the agency” in 1891, since they were still “too indolent to cultivate,” and those at Alexandria were described as working “either as farm hands for the Whites or at trapping and hunting.”\(^{26}\) In 1900, little had changed. Meason reported that the people at Quesnel were still engaged in “hunting, trapping, [and] fishing,” and that they “prefer hunting and fishing to cultivating their lands.”\(^{27}\) Quesnel was as close to Barkerville as the Department of Indian Affairs got, but their reports are useful in that they suggest that subsistence work continued to be an important part of aboriginal livelihoods in the regions around the gold rush town late into the nineteenth century.

Fishing, particularly during the Bear River’s annual salmon run, was one of the most clear forms of subsistence work occurring at Barkerville. As it must have for thousands of years, the Bowron River provided the post-contact population with an annual salmon run that was more than sufficient to sustain them. The *Sentinel* occasionally commented on aboriginal fishing activities. For example, in 1869 it noted that “the Indians along [Bear River] are having a joyful time catching and drying salmon

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
\(^{24}\) Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1884* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger, and Co., 1885), 185.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
\(^{26}\) Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1891* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1892), 170.
\(^{27}\) Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30 1900* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1901), 354.
... the run for good, well-conditioned fish is enormous.”

28 Drying racks and fishing stations were used at Bear River, just as they were on the Fraser and at other traditional fishing grounds. The Sentinel noted that “from the piles that are hung up to dry at the numerous fishing stations on both sides of the river, it is evident that the Indians have been and are yet extremely diligent in catching and preserving all they can.”

29 According to a later story, “several tons of salmon” were caught and cured by aboriginal people at Bear Lake that year.

30 The paper commented that the large run would mean that “the Indians will have plenty of muck-a-muck for the winter.”

31 It is clear that fish caught in summer remained crucial to aboriginal winter subsistence even at the height of the gold rush.

Foraging, particularly for berries, was another form of subsistence work engaged in by aboriginal people. The best evidence of this activity taking place in Barkerville comes from the stories surrounding the annual migration of Lillooet people to the Cariboo creeks. Alvin Johnston's romanticized 1961 Cariboo Observer article describes Lillooets camping at Barkerville to gather huckleberries that grew in abundance around the town.

32 Johnston, remembering from his childhood, stated that “about ten families of Lillooet Indians” arrived in Quesnel on their way to the gold fields “... about the first week of June, depending on the season and the earliness of grass for pasture.”

33 In the first few months, they offered a variety of support services to prospectors (laundry and saddle-
horses), and then “late in the summer the women and children picked huckleberries, which were packed in empty butter boxes, or about 20 pounds weight.”\textsuperscript{34}

Confirmation of Johnston’s account can be found in other accounts from earlier years, suggesting a long-standing tradition dating back at least as far as the turn of the century. The back of a photograph of “G.F. Killam” on horseback from July of 1914 bears the inscription: “White object under horse’s nose is white canopy on prairie schooner-type wagon. Each fall, Indians from the Chilcotin come up to pick huckleberries, lifted the body from their wagon beside the creek, and lived in it briefly.”\textsuperscript{35}

In 1913, the \textit{Cariboo Observer} noted that “A band of Lillooet Indians, who annually makes the pilgrimage to the Barkerville district for the summer months, passed through [Quesnel] this week on their journey to the mining town.”\textsuperscript{36} The \textit{James Champion Journal} remarked that “Indians come to town every summer—leave in the fall,”\textsuperscript{37} and Barkerville barber Wellington Moses, remarked on “the first three Indians [to] arrive on the creek” for the annual summer visit.\textsuperscript{38} At the very least, the consistency of this story suggests that entire families of Lillooet people moved in and out of the area annually, and that berry picking was a part of a reason that they went.

Moreover, there are some hints at foraging activity in the \textit{Sentinel} that are unexplained, either because the newspaper did not understand what was going on or did not care. For example, in 1867 the paper reported that “the woods in the neighbourhood

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} “Just Back from Patrol,” Barkerville Photograph Collection, P0580, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville, British Columbia.
\textsuperscript{36} Untitled, \textit{The Cariboo Observer}, 14 June 1913.
\textsuperscript{37} James Champion, \textit{James Champion Journal}, 6 June 1902, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
\textsuperscript{38} Wellington Moses, \textit{Moses’ Diary}, 6 June 1902, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
of Conklin’s gulch were set on fire.” \textsuperscript{39} This could be evidence of underbrush burning, which was a common practice among aboriginal people that encouraged the growth of desirable species and eased travel through the dense northern woods. \textsuperscript{40} Natural forest fires were common however, and could also damage berry crops. In 1869 the \textit{Sentinel} obtained information from “Kloosh-le-Tete, an Indian,” that “the forest fires have destroyed the olally shrubs.” \textsuperscript{41} This meant that “the prospects for an abundant harvest of olally muck-a-muck are dim through the smoke.” \textsuperscript{42} Again, Kloosh-le-Tete’s reference to muck-a-muck (food) implies that the berries were for consumption rather than sale.

Sometimes differentiating subsistence work from commercial hunting and gathering is difficult. For example, aboriginal hunters were casually mentioned by the newspaper in an 1870 story about a grizzly bear attack. According to the article the two men were “Caribou hunters” who had “been recently very successful.” \textsuperscript{43} The paper refers to the men as brothers, who obviously hunted together regularly and had both the equipment and knowledge to do so. According to the 1891 census for the entire Cariboo District, hunting was the main work for 10% of aboriginal people with listed occupations. Although this number is problematic for reasons discussed in the introduction, it supports the argument that aboriginal people continued to hunt in the Barkerville area, particularly when combined with other accounts. \textsuperscript{44} The documents do not explain whether any of the food hunted or gathered was sold commercially.

\textsuperscript{39} “Fire in the Woods,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 30 September 1867.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} “Encounter with a Bear,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 22 October, 1870.
\textsuperscript{44} The department of Indian Affairs reported that hunting activities persisted at nearby Quesnel and Alexandria.
The references to aboriginal people engaged in fishing, foraging, and hunting is significant, considering the number of potential limiting factors on both the activities themselves and on their transmission into written documents. The very small size of a pre-rush subsistence-based population and the rather austere environmental circumstances of the Cariboo Mountains discussed in Chapter One would have discouraged such activity. In addition, Barkerville’s thriving mining and wage economy was relatively rare in British Columbia at the time, providing new opportunities in a variety of different fields which would logically have been the main draw of the town. Finally, subsistence work was relatively uninteresting to the immigrant population of Barkerville, who typically described aboriginal people only when they came into direct contact with them. Thus, the occasional descriptions of subsistence activities in newcomer accounts such as the Sentinel suggests that such work was visible and prevalent. The continued reliance of aboriginal people on these older ways of making a living for at least part of the year is indicative of the opportunistic nature of aboriginal livelihoods. Aboriginal people used pre-existing knowledge and skills in order to thrive in the otherwise new and unfamiliar gold rush economic territory.

**Barkerville Food Shortages, Commercial Fishing, and the Fur Trade**

In many cases, the rush opened up new markets for traditional goods, potentially intensifying subsistence work and providing a supplementary income for regular seasonal activities. Knight argues that the sale of game animals, furs, and salmon to the incoming miners was a regular practice during the Fraser rush and lists the resource industries as important occupations for aboriginal people in the late nineteenth century.\(^45\) This argument is convincing considering how many of British Columbia’s main exports were

\(^45\) Knight, *Indians at Work*, 88.
products created or obtained by indigenous people. For example, according to the
Sentinel in 1870, “Furs and Hides” were the largest export from the colony at $178,000,
lumber was the second largest at $128,000, and fish and cranberries were among the top
ten, at $13,000 and $1,238 respectively. Such figures indicate that aboriginal people
were central players in British Columbia’s late nineteenth century economy. It also
suggests that they were actively engaged in the sale of traditional products to new
markets.

The establishment of towns such as Barkerville meant there was new demand for
resources in the interior of the province. Its remote location and large immigrant
population caused high prices and intermittent shortages of key goods. In particular, there
was a steady demand for food, especially fresh meat. Since aboriginal people were
already gathering resources in the area, the extension of those goods for sale was a
reasonable option. In many cases the evidence does not explicitly state that goods were
being sold; however, the sources do describe subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering
by aboriginal people, shortages of goods in Barkerville, and the sale of subsistence goods
in Barkerville by non-aboriginal people. This combination of factors suggests that the
extension of the subsistence economy to commercial sale would not have been too far a
stretch for aboriginal entrepreneurs.

The Sentinel frequently remarked on food shortages, which occurred on a regular
basis in the province’s interior throughout the 1860s and 1870s. In the spring of 1866 the

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46 “Imports and Exports for 1870,” Cariboo Sentinel, 18 March 1871. According to the Sentinel, aboriginal
people in New Westminster gathered “large quantities of cranberries” for sale in San Francisco, where it
sold “from $1.50 to $2 per gallon.” “New Westminster Items from Columbia and Examiner,” Cariboo
Sentinel, 17 October 1876.

47 Items such as pick-axes and gumboots tended to be in short supply as well. For example, in 1865 general
merchandiser J.H. Todd & Co. advertised the arrival of spring goods, which would include “Gum Boots
and Coats, Soulwester Hats, Cotton Duck, Blashing Powder, Oregon Hams, and No. 1 Scotch Oatmeal.”
Sentinel observed that meat was completely unavailable in Barkerville, although there were rumours of "a small quantity of fresh pork, which sells readily at 62 cents per lb" in Richfield. There was another shortage the following spring. In May of 1867, the Sentinel reported that "for two or three days last week, not a pound of beef, ham, or bacon could be procured on the creek, and the consequence was, that some very ancient can meats were greedily sought after, and changed hands at respectable figures." Indeed, prices were relatively high throughout the period. For example, in 1866 beef sold for thirty-five cents per pound, bacon for eighty cents, and potatoes for twelve cents. In 1870, at one of the more remote creeks, beef was selling "at 50 cents, and no growling." In 1871, beef prices in Barkerville hit sixty cents per pound. Further reflecting the intensity of demand, the newspaper closely tracked the movement of beef herds that were grazed at nearby Bald Mountain, and speculated openly on whether or not food supplies would last the winter.

The sale of fish in the mining towns could be extremely lucrative. Referring to White men who had abandoned the mines for commercial fishing, the newspaper openly stated that "those who have been in the fishing business ... will do much better than if they had been mining." A man intent on exploring an overland route from Barkerville to Tete Juane Cache in the fall of 1869 never got past Bear Lake, where he stopped to

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50 "Coquet Creek," Cariboo Sentinel, 30 August 1866.
51 "Germansen Creek," Cariboo Sentinel, 24 September 1870.
52 "Prices of Provisions, Etc." Cariboo Sentinel, 5 August 1871.
54 "Prospects for the Coming Winter," Cariboo Sentinel, 6 September 1866.
55 "Bear Lake," Cariboo Sentinel, 9 October, 1869.
participate in the fishery. The fish were so plentiful that year that the Sentinel reported that they had filled up one miner’s sluice box, and he was later able to sell them for twenty-five cents per pound. Non-aboriginals were profiting from fishing, and were probably working alongside indigenous people at the active fishery on Bear River. Therefore, the sale of salmon by aboriginal people to the meat-hungry Barkerville markets is a distinct possibility.

Aboriginal people from other fisheries occasionally brought fish to Barkerville. There is at least one example of a eulachon sale by aboriginal merchants. The eulachon trade dates to well before the contact era, and yet in 1867 the Cariboo Sentinel remarked that aboriginal people were selling the fish “at the rate of three bucketfuls for one bit.” According to the newspaper their main market was Chinese miners, “who are always ready with the cash for good cheap grub.” This is a specific example of the rush creating a new market for aboriginal goods. The demand for eulachon was one that the province’s aboriginal population was prepared to take advantage of and pre-existing trade relationships and trails facilitated the extension of eulachon to a new market of immigrating Chinese miners.

Aboriginal people also engaged in commercial trapping during the gold rush; an occupation established in the region since the early nineteenth century. In 1891 the Cariboo District Census listed trapping as consisting of 31% of all listed occupations for aboriginal people, a larger proportion than any other job. Along with hunting, trapping was one of the most common occupations combined with wage labour. Of those with

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56 “At Bear Lake,” Cariboo Sentinel, 14 August 1869.
57 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 1891 Census, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
multiple jobs, 91% were either part time hunters or trappers, indicating that this
commercial work was an important part of moditional living. In addition, Meason
reported that “the value of the furs brought yearly to Quesnell [sic] from the north is
estimated at $100,000; 80 per cent of that amount is paid to the Indians in goods.” He
used this figure as an argument to refute “the often heard complaint, that the Indians of
British Columbia do not contribute anything towards the Dominion revenue.”

The *Sentinel* contains several hints that suggest that the fur trade was alive and
well around Barkerville during the gold rush. In 1869 a man carrying furs from Fort
George arrived in Barkerville with news of new gold strikes. Fred Tregillus recorded
that local aboriginal resident James Duffy trapped enough martin, mink, otter, bear,
weasel, and lynx to earn $272 in 1916, although it is unclear whether Tregillus was the
buyer. Commercial sale of traditional goods and the extension of pre-existing activities
to the gold rush market was one way in which aboriginal people chose to engage in the
gold rush economy as it emerged at Barkerville. The evidence suggests that a
combination of subsistence and commercial hunting, fishing, foraging, and trapping
could supply a large portion of the needs of aboriginal families around Barkerville.

**Moditional Wage Work**

While many aboriginal people depended on subsistence and commercial activities,
others pursued wage labour, probably on a seasonal basis. Because aboriginal people
came into more frequent contact with newcomers when they engaged in wage work, there

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61 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
66 25% of aboriginal people with listed occupations were referred to as “labourers.” *1891 Census, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives.*
is comparatively more information about their participation in these activities. Couriering
and packing are the two best-recorded forms of seasonal wage work as part of a
moditional economy, although they were almost certainly not the only forms of work
engaged in by aboriginal people.67 Alvin Johnston’s Cariboo Observer article suggests
that, amongst other odd jobs, aboriginal people also rented out saddle horses and
aboriginal women may have provided laundering services for miners.68

In Makuk, Lutz notices that aboriginal people arrived for “a work season that
lasted from early spring to late summer” in Victoria, and that this migration became a
regular part of seasonal cycles of trading and raiding amongst coastal groups.69
Comparable patterns possibly occurred in Barkerville, although document-writers’
neglect of such cycles makes them difficult to pin down.70 Aboriginal people were
certainly engaged in foraging around Barkerville during the spring, as is indicated from
local primary evidence. For example, Kloosh-le-Tete was gathering olally in June,71 and
the Lillooet arrived in Barkerville in the same month for their summer huckleberry
crop.72 However, late spring, when mud and melting snow made wagon and sleigh use
impossible, was also the best season for packing.73 Hunting and fishing were fall
activities,74 and the salmon run arrived in August.75 Aboriginal mining appears to have

67 The 1891 census lists combined work as consisting of 12% of total occupations for aboriginal people.
Ibid.
68 Johnston, “Indians Trek to Barkerville,” Cariboo Observer, 1 June 1961. Unfortunately, there is little
primary evidence to support these claims.
69 Lutz, Makuk, 169-170.
70 With some exceptions, since the Indian Agent for Quesnel reported that “the young men [at Quesnel]
find employment during the summer in boating.” Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of
Indian Affairs for the year ended 31st December 1884, 185.
72 Champion, James Champion Journal, 6 June 1902, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives.
73 For example, this occurred in the spring of 1868 and 1875. “How Provoking,” Cariboo Sentinel, 8 June
1868; “The Express,” Cariboo Sentinel, 17 April 1875.
74 For example, the unlucky Caribou hunters were attacked by a bear in October. “Encounter with a Bear,”
Cariboo Sentinel, 22 October, 1870.
occurred year round. In 1873, Indian Superintendent J.W. Powell marvelled that aboriginal people could be seen “during the coldest weather working their cradles.” If a regular cycle existed, the documentary evidence provides few hints about what it might have looked like. Aboriginal residents’ varied cultural origins, social activities, and economic occupations suggest that there may have been multiple cycles at work at any one time in Barkerville. Alternatively, while some groups (like the Lilooet) used the area seasonally others may have been permanent residents.

Accounts of aboriginal people acting as couriers are scattered throughout the documents, often hidden within larger stories. In 1870, for example, a court case against two Chinese men charged with running a lottery house was delayed owing to the lack of an interpreter; an Indian was dispatched to get one. Aboriginal people worked for the Chinese community as well. In 1875 Tong leader and local businessman Kwong Lee sent two aboriginal men to pick up a sick Chinese man from the Barkerville hospital “stating that on the account of it being Chinese New Year, he had not time to come to the hospital himself.” Even in the earliest days of the rush, as the first White miners made their way to Antler Creek, there is evidence of indigenous people acting as letter carriers and capitalizing on other opportunities while they were at it. In 1859, one “Mr. Brown” claimed to have bought snowshoes at fourteen dollars a pair from the Fort George Indians, for the purposes of getting to the future Barkerville town site, where claims were already springing up. Once he arrived, he hired two Indians to carry a letter declaring the

77 “Police Court,” Cariboo Sentinel, 10 December, 1870.
78 “Coroner’s Inquisition,” Cariboo Sentinel, 20 February 1875.
name of a new creek and laying claim to it.⁷⁹ Scattered throughout the documentation, these accounts indicate that aboriginal people acted as couriers during the gold rush on a semi-regular basis.

Packing seems to have been one of the most common new wage opportunities engaged in by aboriginal people in Barkerville. Aboriginal packers were so important to the earlier Fraser rush that Chief Justice Matthew Begbie remarked that “no supplies were taken in except by Indians ... Without them ... the country could not have been entered or supplied in 1858-1860.”⁸⁰ References to Indians as packers appear at regular intervals in the Sentinel, as do references to the importance of this industry to the viability of the community. The arrival of goods into Barkerville was followed with great interest by the newspaper, because supplies were generally short.⁸¹ Demand was particularly high in the spring, when melting snow made the roads impassable by wagon and sleigh.⁸² Especially in the early years, the community depended on indigenous packers to bring in essentials like food and mining supplies.⁸³

Aboriginal packers working in and around Barkerville were common in the first decade of the rush. In 1868, the Sentinel reported that the supplies available in the mining town of Antler Creek “were only obtained by being packed by Indians from

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⁷⁹ His reminiscences were published in the Colonist in 1913. Untitled, Victoria Colonist, 24 December 1913.
⁸² For example, this occurred in the spring of 1868 and 1875. “How Provoking,” Cariboo Sentinel, 8 June 1868; “The Express,” Cariboo Sentinel, 17 April 1875.
⁸³ For example, in the summer of 1869, indigenous people were employed in bringing flour to Yale and Lytton, “which article does not appear to be very plentiful thereabouts.” “Busy,” Cariboo Sentinel, 24 July, 1869.
Barkerville.” The same was true of nearby mining camps on Mosquito Creek, the Willow River, Sugar Creek, and Mustang Creek. The newspaper complained about the poor state of the roads in the area, which meant that “goods have to be packed by Indians, at a rate of 8 cents per lb.” Residents of the more remote communities were at the mercy of packers, since there were few alternatives. This power is demonstrated in an incident in 1866 where speculator “Mr. Gronosky” lost “several hundred dollars” when “the packer...charged him double freight on [his] goods, namely, 16 cts [per] lb” after a failed foray into the Cariboo Mountains.

The dependence on aboriginal packing in the Barkerville area did not occur without a certain degree of resentment from the non-aboriginal population. This resentment was palpable in the Sentinel. In response to the predicament facing the Mosquito Creek community, the paper lamented “‘Tis true a trail is now being cut by an enterprising individual, on his own account and at his own cost, except an appropriation from the Gold Commissioner of $25!” In May of 1866 the paper ridiculed an unfortunate Indian packer who slipped and fell into William’s Creek while carrying a heavy load on his back. In 1869 the paper described packers from Stuart’s Lake on the way to Fort Ogden as being of such “uncouth appearance and manners” that “the savages attracted much attention and considerable amusement.” Apparently these resentments were reciprocal, particularly as the demand for packers declined with the steady improvement of the roads and the influx of newcomer packers and stockmen with whom

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84 “Antler Creek,” Cariboo Sentinel, 18 June 1868.
86 Ibid.
87 “Cedar Creek,” Cariboo Sentinel, 23 August 1866.
89 “Involuntary Bath,” Cariboo Sentinel, 31 May 1866.
90 “Stewart’s Lake Indians,” Cariboo Sentinel, 14 August 1869.
they had to compete. In 1874, a non-aboriginal pack train was robbed on its way from Barkerville to Cassiar. The packers reported “shameful treatment by the Indians, who robbed them of everything they could lay hands on, and threatened them on the slightest remonstrance.” In another article, rumours of aboriginal people “stealing horses at Deep Creek and taking them off in the direction of Kamloops” circulated in the Sentinel. Such crimes might indicate the robbers’ frustration at having an important source of seasonal income taken away, and a need for money and goods.

Barkerville’s dependence on the manual labour of aboriginal people was seen as archaic, and a sign of the government’s neglect of the district. In response to demands from the swiftly expanding population in the interior of the province, James Douglas began to build, improve, and maintain roads in the 1860s so that sleighs or carriages could operate year round on the more heavily used routes. The most important of these new roads was the Cariboo Wagon Road, completed to Barkerville in 1865, which immediately reduced demand for packers. R.G. Harvey writes about a similar “phasing out” of aboriginal labour in the Fraser Canyon. He argues that the steamer was the direct competition of Indian packers and canoes, swiftly putting them out of business on the lower parts of the Fraser. Like steamers, horse drawn wagons and sleighs could transport more goods as well as people in a shorter time.

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92 “Bad Indians,” Cariboo Sentinel, 10 October 1874, 3; “Quesnelmouth October 8,” Cariboo Sentinel, 10 October 1874.
94 Duclos, Packers, Pans, and Paydirt, 133-137.
95 Ibid, 136.
96 R.G. Harvey, Carving the Western Path by River, Rail, and Road Through Central and Northern B.C. (Surrey: Heritage House, 1999), 10
97 In Packers, Pans, and Paydirt, Noel Duclos tells the story of aboriginal packers who were gradually out-competed and replaced by packers of other ethnicities. Although aboriginal packers were cheaper, particularly in the early years, mule trains, stages, steam-ships, and sleighs “became better known and
Freighting business, for example, advertised that it could bring goods from Yale to Richfield in ten days.\textsuperscript{98}

However, even after these roads to Barkerville were completed, indigenous people continued to pack, particularly in the spring when melting snow made it difficult to keep the new routes open. In June of 1866, the \textit{Sentinel} expressed irritation at Barkerville's continuing dependence on Indians as packers.

\begin{quote}
How Provoking—Only half a mile of snow to prevent wagons from coming to Barkerville, and yet the Government will not expend fifty dollars to have it cleared away. The express and mail have still to be packed across the mountain by Indians. "Posses our souls in patience," Caribooites, and pay without grumbling the paltry sum of $3000 a week in road tolls and $2000 a week in mining licenses etc.\textsuperscript{99}
\end{quote}

The problem was unresolved by 1875, the year that the paper stopped publishing. In April of that year the newspaper reported that poor road conditions prevented the mail and express sleds from passing beyond Cottonwood. Indians would pack it the rest of the way, meaning that the mail would be late.\textsuperscript{100} Such instances annoyed the \textit{Sentinel}'s editor, but they also indicate that packing could still be a lucrative way of making a living for aboriginal people even in the later years of the rush and despite simmering racial tensions. Like couriering, packing provided income for aboriginal people without interrupting seasonal rounds. These forms of economic activity were relatively stable and desirable since they could be easily combined with subsistence work and did not overly disrupt peoples' lives.

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\textsuperscript{98} At eight cents a pound, Aboriginal packers were not necessarily cheaper than shipping by stage coach, which in the summer of 1865 cost a dollar per pound for freight weighing "5 to 25 lbs." However, prices tended to go down with volume, and stage coaches carried significantly more volume. "Express Freight," \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 1 July 1865.
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\textsuperscript{99} "How Provoking," \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 8 June 1868.
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\textsuperscript{100} "The Express," \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 17 April 1875.
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Mining

While subsistence activities, commerce, and wage work provided important ways of making a living for aboriginal people, gold mining was Barkerville’s major industry. For non-aboriginal migrants, mining was Barkerville’s biggest draw. Other commercial and economic activities usually existed to support mining activity, rather than as new and independent industries. Mining’s importance to Barkerville’s population is reflected in the documentary evidence. The *Cariboo Sentinel*, for example, tended to focus on mining activities with lengthy reports on the operations of active companies in the area. In addition, mining issues were involved in a disproportionate number of court cases. The centrality of the mining industry in Barkerville meant that a large percentage of the people who lived and worked there, including people of aboriginal descent, were engaged in mining activities as a way of making a living. Although not to the same extent as other Barkerville residents, the hunt for gold also attracted aboriginal people.

Based on the comparatively more abundant evidence for the Fraser River gold rush, historians generally agree that indigenous people were major participants in mining south of Barkerville in the years leading up to 1862. Daniel Marshall’s doctoral thesis argues that “Native peoples not only participated in gold discoveries throughout the northern Pacific Slope region, but actively mined the resource.” Michael Kennedy is more specific, arguing that although the Fraser rush had died down by 1860, gold mining “continued to be practiced by small groups of Chinese and Native miners who used pans,

101 A typical report can be found in June of 1865, the first month of the paper’s publication. “The Prairie Flower Company, claim short distance from the Forest Rose have 12 men working. A new shaft has been sank this season 90 feet deep. A new wheel has just been completed to pump a blind shaft, the wheel in the old shaft keeping the drift clear of water...” Untitled, *Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 June 1865.
102 Almost every *Sentinel* edition for the years 1865-1875 included a long “Mining Court” section detailing recent cases related to claims and diggings.
rockers, and sluices.” Lutz is the most descriptive, pointing out that indigenous people were mining gold for the Hudson’s Bay Company before outsiders arrived on the Fraser and that they continued to be competitive as miners through the duration of that rush. Ronald Genini suggests that “the bulk of the extraction through 1859 was by Indian river-panning.” Even popular historians acknowledge indigenous gold miners in the earlier rushes. Noel Duclos writes extensively about the aboriginal role in the 1851 Queen Charlotte Rush, and quotes a San Francisco newspaper which described two hundred aboriginal men with their families mining alongside a mere sixty Whites. The evidence and arguments presented by these scholars convincingly indicates the presence of aboriginal people in the earlier phases of the gold rush. Their participation in mining during these earlier phases makes their participation in Barkerville’s mining economy all the more likely.

Yet, despite consensus about aboriginal miners in the Fraser and Queen Charlotte Rushes, histories of the Cariboo have not yet explored the possibility of similar activities in the Barkerville region. Indeed, Christopher Herbert’s lone examination of ethnicity in the Barkerville mines reaches the opposite conclusion, claiming that there is no evidence of indigenous miners there at all. Despite Herbert’s claim that aboriginal people were the “missing presence” in the gold mines, there is evidence to show that some aboriginal people did turn to mining for wage labour in Barkerville throughout the gold rush period. However, aboriginal mining activity in Barkerville tended to be of a different

104 Kennedy, "Fraser River Placer Mining Landscapes," 44.
105 Lutz, Makuk, 174.
107 Duclos, Packers, Pans, and Paydirt, 29.
108 Herbert, “Unequal Participants,” 100.
109 Ibid.
character than that of Whites; it was more sporadic and peripheral than the intensive mining operations of the newcomers.

There are a number of accounts of aboriginal mining activities throughout the late nineteenth century. Popular historian Bill Hong mentions “Indian Frank” who supposedly had “a small operation a quarter-mile above Stanley on Chisholm Creek’s west bank.” An 1867 Sentinel article titled “Douglas Diggings” reported the profits of a number of miners at the Douglas site, and concluded by noting that “a number of Indians are working at these diggings.” An article from the summer of 1869 pointed out that “the Indians who made small ‘piles’ last winter by mining ... are busy packing flour from Yale to Lytton.” In 1871 the Sentinel reported that a “Siwash, living at Richfield, who had been rocking among the old claims, made a complaint on Tuesday that he had been robbed the previous night of $42.50 in gold dust, notes, and silver.” As individual mining became less viable in the later years of the rush, aboriginal men also worked as employees in mining companies. The names of several aboriginal men, including James Duffy, appear regularly in mining company ledgers. For example, the names “Indian Frank,” “Indian Dick,” “Indian Jim” and “Edward (Indian)” are recorded in ledgers from the Central Company on the Jack of Clubs Creek. Working for mining companies could be lucrative. In 1870 a labour shortage drove wages up to “$3 per day

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110 Hong, And So...That's How it Happened, 71.
113 “Rocking” refers to the use of a one-man rocker used to sift gravel. “Alleged Robbery,” Cariboo Sentinel, 12 August 1871.
115 “Central Company, Jack of Clubs Creek,” Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives.
[or]...better." The *Sentinel* noted that "there is not an idle man on the creek," and "in a few claims Indians are being employed." Collectively, this evidence indicates that aboriginal people participated in the mining economy of Barkerville, taking advantage of the arrival of this industry into the area when it suited them. However, the nature of their participation was rarely large-scale or as intensive as the mining of the Chinese or White populations. For example, both Chinese and White miners started large-scale companies, but there is no indication of similar operations initiated by aboriginal people. Lack of access to capital and lack of literacy and numeracy would have prevented aboriginal people from owning or operating large-scale operations.

Herbert’s description of aboriginal people as the “missing presence” in the mines is not entirely accurate, but his work provides a good explanation for their relative scarcity from this industry. First, he suggests that British-influenced elite believed that aboriginal people were incompatible with industrial development, so they deliberately denied them work related to mining. Second, Herbert argues that a surplus of Chinese and White miners in Barkerville created a highly competitive job market. Finally, gold mining may have been unappealing to aboriginal people because it did not fit well with seasonal rounds. The mining season occurred at the same time as summer hunting, fishing, and foraging activities needed to secure adequate food resources for the winter. Packing, hunting, and trapping were familiar, profitable, and easily incorporated into

117 Ibid.
119 Ibid. Herbert uses a *Sentinel* article written during a labour shortage in 1870 as evidence. The paper stated that “there is not an idle man on the creek at the present time,” that “both Chinese and White labor [sic] would seem to be scarce,” and that as a result, “Indians are being employed, which is something quite new.” “Labour,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 18 June 1867.
120 Herbert, *Unequal Participants*, 101.
121 Ibid.
existing patterns of life. This combination of factors tended to push aboriginal people towards activities that supplemented mining, rather than mining itself. Nevertheless the evidence suggests that aboriginal people were opportunistic gold miners, and did participate in this industry.

Prostitution

The economic activities of aboriginal people in Barkerville were largely opportunistic, ranging from those that could be combined with traditional activities, or that used similar skills and knowledge as traditional activities, to those that incorporated newer forms of wage labour and required larger adjustments. The aboriginal sex trade does not fit neatly into this pattern. Participation in the sex trade was not opportunistic, since aboriginal women sometimes engaged in it out of desperation. Nor can the sex trade necessarily be classified as an economic activity, since the actual exchange, usually of sexual services in return for goods and cash, was not always clearly defined. In Barkerville, as in other gold mining and frontier towns, the sale of sex occurred with varying degrees of formality, blurring the line between prostitution, consensual sexual relationships, and sexual abuse.122 Adding to the difficulty of examining the sex trade in Barkerville is the scarcity of straightforward evidence. With no aboriginal accounts of the sex trade, it is impossible to reconstruct what aboriginal communities thought about the sale of sex. The existing records rarely mention aboriginal people, and are particularly unlikely to mention aboriginal women. Moreover, the sex trade was considered too

122 In her survey essay on mining towns and prostitution, Julia Ann Laite observes that "it seems that the reality of women's engagement with prostitution in mining regions was by no means black and white, and the line between resistance and survival often became blurred." Julia Ann Laite, "Historical Perspectives on Industrial Development, Mining, and Prostitution," The Historical Journal 52 (3)(2009): 746. With no aboriginal accounts of the sex trade, it is impossible to reconstruct what aboriginal communities thought about the sale of sex.
scandalous to be a proper topic for newcomer literature. Nevertheless, prostitution appears to have been an important part of indigenous peoples' livelihoods in Barkerville, providing a form of income for some aboriginal women.

According to the Victoria Colonist, "degraded" women of a variety of ethnicities were already apparent in Barkerville in 1862. In September of that year, the Colonist described prostitutes who would "swagger through the saloons and mining camps with cigars or huge qwids of tobacco in their mouths," wearing men's clothing, gambling, and drinking whiskey. Richard Wright's popular history of the town contains a number of references to brothels, owned and occupied by women who sold sex in later years. For example, Fanny Bendixon owned and operated a long series of "parlour" and "private" saloons known to be disorderly houses between 1866 and 1899. Non-aboriginal prostitution continued to appear on a semi-regular basis in historical records until the 1930s, although as the rush declined in the closing years of the nineteenth century, so did the area's population and the abundance of evidence.

The relationship between race and prostitution in Barkerville is comparable to similar dynamics apparent in the California gold rush. Jacqueline Barnhart's examination of prostitution in San Francisco points out that there were different levels of prostitution in California, from the more professionalized "brothel prostitutes" to part time

123 Not only did strict Victorian mores discourage any discussion of sex amongst the educated upper-middle class who edited and patronized Barkerville's paper, but after 1860, prostitution was being increasingly regulated and prosecuted in locations where colonial control was strongest, such as the urban centres of the east coast. Although such measures did not reach the remote northern interior of British Columbia until much later, it is possible that such attitudes affected reporting on the topic. In many cases sexual contact between an aboriginal women and White men is implied but never explicitly confirmed, leaving room for the reader's interpretation. Ibid.
124 "The Prostitutes," Victoria Colonist, 10 September 1862.
125 Wright, Barkerville, 48-49.
126 British Columbia Police, Barkerville Detachment, Daily Diaries 1934-36, RG 36, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, Barkerville.
“streetwalkers,” engaged in the sex trade out of economic need.\textsuperscript{127} She points out that marginalized Latino and Mexican women tended to be treated with contempt and were poorly paid compared to White women.\textsuperscript{128} Generally these women chose prostitution out of economic need, since there were few alternatives for women to earn money in the gold rush economy.\textsuperscript{129} Prostitution resulting from economic need was also a feature of Barkerville’s sex trade, as evidenced by the apparent financial hardship amongst some aboriginal women. Moreover, although there are examples of “professionalized” prostitution, most of the evidence regarding aboriginal women is weighted towards casual arrangements in the sale of sex.

In an example of a more formal sex-for-pay establishment, in 1865 the \textit{Sentinel} reported on an dance hall that employed aboriginal women. The article described a dispute between James Loring, the owner of the hall, and a man named “Pierce.” Loring accused Pierce of plying “the Squaws who [were] employed in Loring’s Dancing Saloon” with illegal liquor.\textsuperscript{130} Popular historian Richard Wright makes reference to Loring’s saloon, calling it his “Terpsichorean Saloon in Camerontown” where native women were employed and thereafter became “a part of the underside of Barkerville’s social life, most often surfacing as prostitutes.”\textsuperscript{131} Such evidence hints at the possibility of a formal or semi-formal sex trade involving aboriginal women in Barkerville.

Establishments such as Loring's Saloon were probably rare, and there are considerably more accounts of aboriginal women trading sex for money or liquor on a

\textsuperscript{127} Jacqueline Baker Barnhart, “Working Women: Prostitution in San Francisco from the gold rush to 1900,” (PhD Diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 1976), 83.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, 116.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid, 148.
\textsuperscript{130} The paper later indicated that the accusations were part of a larger dispute between the two men, and therefore had little to do with Loring's aboriginal dancers. “The Indian Liquor Traffic,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 14 October 1865.
\textsuperscript{131} Wright, \textit{Barkerville}, 45.
much less formal basis. Lucy Bones is one of the best cases of a woman who seems to have been regularly involved in the sex trade without being explicitly labelled a prostitute or being associated with a disorderly house. Her illicit dealings were brought to light after her suspicious death in 1870. The testimony of the witnesses of her death seem to indicate that Lucy was regularly working in the sex trade. According to the *Sentinel*,

"Charlie, an Indian" said "I was in the house when a White man came and asked to sleep there; Lucy demanded money; the White man said he had none; Lucy told him it was very good if he would get some cocktails. He went and got one bottle. About midnight he went and got another bottle." 132 Charlie's account seems to indicate that the White man came to Lucy's cabin specifically for sex. Lucy's request for payment, first in money and then in liquor, indicates that their relationship was mutually understood as an exchange. 133

Other accounts of similar exchanges are more vague, thoroughly blurring the line between prostitution and what may simply have been alternative forms of sexual relationships. A good example is the case of A. Clinker and "Susan." The *Sentinel* stated that "Clinker was brought up on a charge of giving Susan, an Indian woman, whiskey at Stout's Gulch. Chief Constable Lindsay said he had gone on the previous night, at Harry Wilmott's request, to Clinker's cabin, and found the woman in Clinker's bed drunk. Found also a bottle of cocktails." 134 Lizzie Wilmot, an eight year old aboriginal child, and "Jeannie" both testified in court that Clinker had also given them alcohol. The result was a thirty dollar fine against Clinker. While it is difficult to say whether or not "Susan" was

132 "Sudden Death and Inquest," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 16 July 1870.
133 'The White man's testimony is even more explicit. "Charles Hughes-- ... After a while I told her I wanted to sleep with her, she told me she wanted some whiskey ... I went away; she told me I might come bye and bye{sic}; I returned about two o'clock ..." Ibid.
earning a living by selling sex, the implication is there in the description of where she was found and the emphasis on the presence of alcohol.\textsuperscript{135} 

In another example of casual sexual contact, a man named “Johnston” assaulted a man named “Moses” for bragging that he would “take his kloochman from him.”\textsuperscript{136} It is unclear whether the woman in question was a prostitute, but saloon owner Henry Morgan did testify that Moses asked him to illegally take a bottle of whiskey to the barn where the “Indians” were camped, possibly as payment.\textsuperscript{137} After fining Johnston, the judge was quoted as saying that “it did not look well for [Moses] to be laying around an Indian camp in sight of the town; and being a strong hearty man...it would be more to his advantage to go to work and make for himself a good name.”\textsuperscript{138} Cases such as Clinkers’, Johnston, and Moses’ demonstrate the difficulty of separating casual prostitution from other types of relationships, and that, regardless of the technicalities, contact with aboriginal women was frowned upon by respectable society.

Further complicating an understanding of prostitution as an economic activity is the wide range of compensation women appear to have received for sexual services. For some the sex trade may have been lucrative. Bay Ryley claims that for some Klondike prostitutes, selling sex was both glamorous and profitable, and it stands to reason that Barkerville prostitutes might have had a similar experience.\textsuperscript{139} Unfortunately, it is difficult to tell where aboriginal women gained or spent their wealth in Barkerville, since the sources rarely specify. However, the evidence does indicate that aboriginal women

\textsuperscript{135} Adele Perry argues that contact between White men and aboriginal women tended to be highly sexualized. Perry, \textit{On the Edge of Empire}, 49.
\textsuperscript{136} “Assault,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 5 September 1874.
\textsuperscript{137} He was quick to inform the judge that he refused to do so.
\textsuperscript{138} “Assault,” \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 5 September 1874.
\textsuperscript{139} Bay Ryley, \textit{Gold Diggers of the Klondike: Prostitution in Dawson City, Yukon, 1898-1908} (Canada: Watson & Dwyer, 1997), 26.
were capable of amassing considerable wealth. In one case an aboriginal woman from Barkerville named "Betsy" was reported to have lost a satchel containing "about $800 in money, specimens, and gold rings." She posted an advertisement in the Sentinel in hopes of reclaiming the money which specified that two of the cheques had been for "the respective sums of $130 and $100." On the other hand, Susan is certainly one example of a woman who appears not to have benefited financially from her participation in Barkerville's economy. A few months after she was found in Clinker's bed, her name again appears in police court for being "drunk and disorderly and breaking windows in Barkerville." Faced with the choice between a ten dollar fine or three days' imprisonment, Susan was unable to pay the fine and instead served the jail time. Her experience suggests that women did not always benefit financially from participation in Barkerville's economy, whether or not they were engaged in the sex trade.

In addition, there is some evidence that being an aboriginal prostitute came with some serious dangers. Many, including Lucy Bones, died under suspicious circumstances. In 1865 an aboriginal woman named "Sophie" was "[taken] ... forcibly into [a] house" and murdered by Donald Livingston, apparently with the help of two aboriginal men named "Indian Bill" and "Indian Jim." In 1871 a woman named "Full Moon" was beaten with a rock and might have been killed if John Bowron, the government agent, had not intervened. In response to the incident, the paper openly ridiculed Full Moon's appearance, and her assailant received a mere seven days

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140 "Relics of a Robbery," Cariboo Sentinel, 12 September, 1874.
141 "Lost," The Cariboo Sentinel, 28 September 1872.
142 "Police Court," Cariboo Sentinel, 5 October, 1872.
143 "Information," 1864, GR 2528, Box 1, File 3, Cariboo West Court Documents, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria; Untitled, 1864-1871, GR 2528, Box 1, File 6, Cariboo West Court Documents, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria.
144 "Assault," Cariboo Sentinel, 22 July 1871.
imprisonment for the assault. Far from the frequently romanticized lives of White women in Barkerville, such as stories of the German “Hurdy Gurdy Girls,” it seems that as a form of income for aboriginal women, prostitution was fraught with considerable danger.¹⁴⁵

Historians of prostitution tend to link the history of the aboriginal sex trade to a broader story of abuse and exploitation of aboriginal people in the contact era. In a brief discussion of aboriginal prostitution in the Klondike, Bay Ryley describes the women of the indigenous Hän people selling sex both earlier and on a more informal basis in the Klondike than women of other ethnicities. She notes the presence of “squaw dances” and aboriginal women as companions to miners, and ultimately argues that the participation of Hän women in the sex trade was a sign of the disruption brought on by the invasion of thousands of miners into their territory.¹⁴⁶ Accounts of aboriginal prostitution in California are even more bleak, painting a picture of aboriginal women victimized by rape and suffering from untreated venereal disease.¹⁴⁷ While exploitation and marginalization unquestionably were aspects of aboriginal prostitution in Barkerville, it is impossible to determine whether they were any more (or less) exploited than other women, making such comparisons problematic. What the evidence does indicate is that women had vastly varied experiences with the economy generally, including their participation in the sex trade. There were many options when it came to engaging in the gold rush economy, and while participation in that economy seriously disrupted some women’s lives, others prospered.

¹⁴⁵ Wright, *Barkerville*, 45.

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Conclusion

Aboriginal people were active participants in the Barkerville gold rush economy. While new ways of making a living became available with the rush, these new opportunities also came with new problems. Some, like those who turned to the lucrative packing industry, were adversely affected by changing attitudes about the packing trade. Similarly, there is some indication that aboriginal women engaging in the new opportunities in the sex trade may have financially benefited, but others experienced abuse, poverty, and even death. Some aboriginal people used pre-existing skills like fishing, foraging, or hunting in order to support themselves. These activities may have been intensified in order to meet new demands during the rush, and may have provided a way of supporting aboriginal people when the wage economy began to fail. Ultimately, the gold rush in Barkerville can be seen as a single step in a larger change in the British Columbian economy to which aboriginal people intelligently adapted. Their willingness to engage in a wide range of activities indicates a high level of opportunism that characterized aboriginal participation in the Barkerville economy during the gold rush era.
Chapter 3: “The Savage Nature of the Indian:” The Nikel Palsk Trial as a Case Study of Aboriginal Relationships with the Courts in Barkerville

When not concerned with aboriginal peoples’ economic activities, the documentary evidence from gold rush era Barkerville usually relates to their interactions with the courts. The murder trial of Nikel Palsk was one of the most important aboriginal court cases tried in the Cariboo region. Brought before the assize court at nearby Richfield presided over by Chief Justice Matthew Begbie in July of 1867, Palsk was tried and convicted alongside James Barry, a White man convicted of killing his travel companion, Charles Morgan Blessing.¹ The two men were the only convicted murderers to be hanged at Barkerville. Their stories garnered considerable interest from the public, providing a glimpse into the role of law and its interaction with race in the gold rush community.

Palsk was convicted of murdering a White named John Morgan on the trail between Soda Creek and Quesnellmouth in the fall of 1865. Palsk killed Morgan with the help of an aboriginal accomplice named Chil-Pecken.² According to Chil-Pecken’s evidence, the two men had encountered Morgan along the trail and offered him some whiskey. Palsk had suggested to Chil-Pecken that they kill Morgan, and despite Chil-Pecken’s objections, shot Morgan twice in the back. Since Morgan had not died from the shots, Chil-Pecken had finished the deed with his axe. The two of them had then stolen

¹ Barry’s case was remarkably similar to Palsk’s. Barry’s victim, Charles Morgan Blessing, had travelled as far as Quesnellmouth with “a coloured man named Moses,” but when some other business detained Moses in Quesnellmouth, Blessing had decided to continue on to Barkerville with Barry. Somewhere on the road, Barry shot his unsuspecting companion in the back of the head and robbed him. Upon arriving in Barkerville, Moses enquired after Blessing. Barry’s denial of having left Quesnellmouth with Blessing, despite a number of witnesses who testified to the contrary, aroused suspicion. Barry was later found to be in possession of a distinctive breast pin that Moses identified as having belonged to Blessing, and was convicted by Matthew Baillie Begbie to “be hanged by the neck until...dead.” “The Assizes,” Cariboo Sentinel, 2 July 1867.
² “Still at Large,” Cariboo Sentinel, 11 October 1866.
the dead man's watch, money, and a piece of gold. They sold the watch and the gold to "Mrs. Ritch" for eight dollars. Although a coroner's inquest "brought in a verdict that deceased was murdered by some person or persons unknown," watchmaker E. Hodgens identified the watch sold to Ritch as having been one that he had repaired for Morgan in 1865.\(^3\) Ritch recalled the men who had sold it to her, and Palsk was jailed at Quesnellingmouth shortly thereafter.

In April of 1866, Palsk escaped from the jail at Quesnellingmouth and made his way to Okanagan Lake where local indigenous people reported his presence to authorities.\(^4\) In the fall of 1866, a year after Morgan's murder, Palsk was arrested in Washington Territory for "committing some depredation there," and was thereafter handed over to British Columbia's colonial government.\(^5\) Palsk and Barry were tried and convicted by a jury in July of 1867 before Matthew Begbie. After languishing in prison for a month, Palsk and Barry were hanged on the same scaffold\(^6\) as a testament to the fact that "even in such an isolated portion [of the British Empire], such wretches will not be permitted the exercise of such horrible instructs with impunity."\(^7\)

Despite the fact that Palsk's name appeared regularly in the pages of the *Cariboo Sentinel* between 1865 and 1867, his case is rarely referred to in modern historiography. Popular and academic work on Barkerville and on British Columbia's legal history tends to emphasize the story of James Barry instead. The absence of Palsk's story from these modern accounts is typical of the way in which aboriginal people have been left out of

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\(^3\) "The Assizes," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 July 1867.
\(^4\) "Still at Large," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 11 October 1866.
\(^5\) Untitled, *Cariboo Sentinel*, 29 October 1866, 3.
\(^7\) "Criminal Trials," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 4 July 1867.
the historical narrative around Barkerville. Yet, as a case study, Palsk’s trial can inform an understanding of aboriginal interaction with the law at Barkerville. Palsk’s trial demonstrates the struggle for authority in British Columbia, which often used aboriginal “savagery” and paternalism as reasons for legal intervention; however, his case also demonstrates the tenuous nature of that authority as many indigenous people remained well beyond the reach of colonial law.

The Struggle for Legitimacy: The Context of the Palsk Trial

Nikel Palsk’s trial and execution in 1867 should not be understood as an isolated incident, but as part of a broader history of the extension of colonial law. Aboriginal contact with European legal structures in British Columbia can technically be traced back to British occupation of the “Columbia District” (or Oregon Territory) in the early nineteenth century. Competing British and American claims to the region after the War of 1812 were temporarily settled in a joint occupancy agreement in 1818. In 1821, the British government gave the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) a twenty-one year licence to the area, which was renewed in 1836. During these years, despite nominal British occupation, the HBC and its fur traders relied primarily on their own methods of justice and tacitly acknowledged a high degree of Native autonomy. This state of affairs began to change in the 1840s under the threat of American expansion in the North. The HBC had hoped that the settlement of a boundary between the British and American territories would eventually follow the Columbia River, but in the early 1840s, a flood of American

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8 For example, Wright, Barkerville, 135; Mark Forsythe and Greg Dickson, The Trail of 1858: British Columbia’s Gold rush Past, (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2007), 142-143; Williams mentions Palsk, but focuses on the details of Barry’s trial to make his point. Williams, The Man for a New Country, 136-137.


10 John Phillip Reid, Patterns of Vengeance: Crosscultural Homicide in the North American Fur Trade (Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society, 1999), 121.
settlers into Oregon and Washington resulted in the Oregon treaty, in which the British
government ceded to the United States the entire territory South of the forty-ninth
parallel. In order to provide a barrier to further American expansion, Vancouver Island
was made a British Crown Colony in 1849. The mainland remained under the
jurisdiction of the HBC. Despite this measure, the discovery of gold on the Fraser River
in 1858 brought the immigration of thousands of miners, many of them “forty-niners”
from California, into HBC territory. With the possibility of American annexation again
looming, British Columbia’s mainland was declared a British Crown colony. Despite
the fact that the colony had only just been established and contained none of the
instruments and institutions required for administering law, miners and settlers expected a
functioning governmental and legal apparatus to be in place upon their arrival. Against
a backdrop of questions about legitimacy and authority, British colonial officials needed
to make British law pervasive and authoritative as quickly as possible.

Anxieties about British Columbia’s future were renewed in the 1860s, when
debate surfaced over whether the colony should join Canada or the United States. The
American Civil War ended in 1865 bringing a revival of American expansionism and
“manifest destiny.” The population of the mainland generally opposed American
annexation, and Barkerville was a particular hotbed of support for confederation with
Canada and alliance with Britain. Yet in Victoria, “annexation petitions” circulated in
1867 and in 1869 asking American President Grant to annex British Columbia, and in

12 Ibid, 36.
13 Foster, “The Queen’s Law is Better than Yours,” 48.
15 Roy and Thompson, *British Columbia*, 49.
1868, the California Legislature promised that it would do whatever was necessary to attach British Columbia to the United States.\textsuperscript{16} The American purchase of Russian-America (Alaska) in 1867 and increased American pressure for possession of the San Juan Islands created further alarm.\textsuperscript{17} On the eve of confederation with Canada in 1871, the \textit{Cariboo Sentinel} expressed the perspective of many Barkerville residents: "The union of British Columbia to the Dominion without delay was needful, inasmuch as the Americans purchasing Alaska showed a design to seize all the Western part of the continent."\textsuperscript{18} During these tense years, as many as sixteen British warships were stationed at the base in Esquimalt.\textsuperscript{19} For those in the interior of the colony, where American annexation was particularly undesirable, the effective assertion of British colonial law was an essential part of demonstrating colonists’ alliance to Britain and their desire for Canadian confederation.

Tina Loo suggests that, between 1858 and 1871, colonial courts were largely preoccupied with the challenges brought by the gold rush.\textsuperscript{20} This included conflict with aboriginal people, as miners and settlers increasingly competed with interior groups for land and resources.\textsuperscript{21} Unfortunately for administrators, the application of colonial law over most of these groups was almost impossible to achieve in the late nineteenth century.

\textsuperscript{16} Roy and Thompson, \textit{British Columbia}, 46.
\textsuperscript{17} Margaret A. Ormsby, \textit{British Columbia: a History}, (Vancouver: MacMillan, 1958), 235.
\textsuperscript{19} Woodcock, \textit{British Columbia}, 107.
\textsuperscript{20} Loo, \textit{Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia}, 3-4, 59-60. For example, an overwhelming number of early cases were related to claims disputes, debt payment, and commercial transactions.
\textsuperscript{21} Hamar Foster, "Letting Go the Bone: The Idea of Indian Title in British Columbia, 1849-1927," in \textit{Essays in the History of Canadian Law VI: British Columbia and the Yukon}, ed. Hamar Foster and John McLaren (Toronto: Osgoode Society, 1995), 29, 34, 43-44. On Vancouver Island, Douglas had negotiated land-transfer treaties with local villages between 1850 and 1854, but ceased this practice on the mainland. Instead, land ownership was determined by the "land argument," whereby any land that was being actively worked agriculturally could be claimed by the worker, while unworked land was considered "waste" and therefore claimable.
century. Newcomers remained outnumbered by aboriginal people throughout much of this era, long after courts were established in nodes of colonial control such as Richfield.\textsuperscript{22} Aboriginal people outside of these centres probably were not aware that European law was supposed to replace, rather than simply supplement, their own.\textsuperscript{23} The challenges of a highly mobile population and a rugged local geography compounded these difficulties. This incomplete control of aboriginal people was manifested in the way that they were treated by courts. For example, as late as 1873 Chief Justice Begbie advised Justices of the Peace not to interfere in conflicts within aboriginal communities, letting the chiefs and the tribes discipline wrongdoers.\textsuperscript{24} Such advice indicates that the highest authorities of British Columbia were aware of the fact that the law had little real authority over large segments of the colony's nominal subjects.

The obstacles to the effectiveness of government control over remote populations were partially offset by establishing legal offices in settlement centres and giving them extensive powers to act independently.\textsuperscript{25} At these locations, the law acted as a deterrent for aboriginal misbehaviour by becoming more symbolic of colonial power than an actual embodiment of it.\textsuperscript{26} Tina Loo points out that, in appointing justices of the peace, a certain amount of English sentiment and bearing was required, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a distinctly English legal ideology in a place where English authority was not yet certain.\textsuperscript{27} The fact that Begbie travelled his lengthy circuits in full robe and wig speaks to the importance of symbolism in maintaining a façade of order and control in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[22] John Lutz argues that aboriginal people outnumbered newcomers until at least 1885. Lutz, \textit{Makuk}, 165.
\item[23] Foster, "The Queen's Law is Better than Yours", 81.
\item[25] Loo, \textit{Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia}, 64.
\item[26] Foster, "The Queen's Law is Better than Yours", 77.
\item[27] Loo, \textit{Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia}, 58.
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British Columbia's new communities. Recognizing the difficulties associated with administering justice on the frontier, administrators chose to rely on these symbolic gestures in the locations where they held the most power as a way of asserting legal authority and maintaining order in the colony.

The effort on behalf of colonial officials to assert the authority of colonial justice symbolically had some specific consequences for aboriginal people. Some scholars have noticed a striking imbalance in the court documents in regard to capital offences. Of twenty-six men hanged in British Columbia between 1864 and 1871, twenty-three were aboriginal, a number disproportionate to their actual population numbers at the time. Furthermore, all but three of these cases involved a White victim. Foster argues that this imbalance was at least partially due to what he calls "judicial unorthodoxy," which was sometimes required to secure a result that served as a symbolic assertion of intolerance of aboriginal misbehaviour. In one case, Begbie openly stated in his writing that, "had the prisoners been White men, defended by council, & tried separately, it is more than probable that [they] would have got off." Vastly outnumbered, Begbie and other legal administrators could not hope to exert actual control over the indigenous population, so they used capital punishment as a means of demonstrating the severity and effectiveness of European law against the demographic whose criminal behaviour seemed most threatening to colonial control.

28 Ibid, 66.
29 Foster, "The Queen's Law is Better than Yours?", 84. Williams counts twenty-seven, twenty-two of which were aboriginal. Williams, A Man for a New Country, 141.
30 Williams, A Man for a New Country, 142.
31 Foster, "The Queen's Law is Better than Yours?", 77. Tina Loo notes that Begbie was fairly well-known for undermining the influence of juries in order to get desirable sentences. Tina Loo, Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 71.
32 Regina v. Scothla and Carabine, alias Kalabeen, "With Remarks," GR 1372, reel B-1308, F142g, 20, Royal British Columbia Archives, quoted in Foster, "The Queen's Law is Better than Yours?", 76.
The Chilcotin incident provides a poignant example. This conflict broke out in the Southern Interior in 1864 after several Tsilhqot’in killed a number of Whites who were part of a road building party within their territory. The incident was seized upon by the *British Colonist* and other newspapers as an example of “the growing insecurity of the White man’s life amongst the northern savages,” describing the homicides in chilling detail. The newspapers dichotomized the unarmed and civilized Whites against the savagery of their aboriginal killers in a way that was remarkably akin to the Palsk trial. But, as Tina Loo points out, although “public reaction to the deaths of eighteen Whites was swift and sure,” government action was not. The launching of an enquiry was difficult, considering the distance and rugged geography between Victoria and the Chilcotin, and the money and resources required. Yet, for colonial officials the incident was an insurrection of subjects, not an act of war between autonomous entities. A demonstration of British law and justice was required. The new Governor of British Columbia, Frederick Seymour, initiated a manhunt and managed to arrest a number of the alleged killers. Indicative of aboriginal indifference to the new regime of law, some of the alleged perpetrators attempted to provide monetary compensation for the killings of Whites, a practice which had been acceptable in such cases in the past; but as William Turkel points out in regard to this incident, “the rules of the game had now been changed

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33 Lutz, Makuk, 119.
35 Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order and Authority in British Columbia*, 139-145.
36 Ibid, 139.
37 Turkel, *Archive of Place*, 186. In regard to the use of colonial law in the Chilcotin incident, Tina Loo argues that its administration was “both an emblem and a measure of the superiority of those who promulgated, enforced, and were bound by it. In short, law was central to the identity of British Columbians.” Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia*, 134.
38 Turkel, *Archive of Place*, 177-186.
without notice." The subsequent trials conducted by Begbie (the same judge who would later try and hang Palsk) resulted in nine aboriginal executions. Both Loo and Turkel have noticed that the Chilcotin incident was explicitly used by Begbie and other colonial administrators as a way of articulating the separation between British Columbia and the American west. "Meting out Justice according to the law was what separated British Columbians from Americans," quotes Turkel from Begbie's bench books, "and a failure to do so would surely mark the beginnings of 'californization' and a decent into savagery." The application of colonial law as proof of colonial autonomy and imperial control affected the ways in which the British Columbian courts treated aboriginal people.

It was in this context that Barkerville was populated, developed, and declined in the late nineteenth century. Begbie's first circuit to the Cariboo occurred in 1860, arriving in Barkerville and Richfield in the winter of 1861. He heard no cases, but engaged in meticulous note-taking and reconnaissance. By 1862, he had his own cabin in Richfield, and in 1863 the Cariboo Sentinel praised the efforts of both Begbie and the local police magistrate for maintaining good order on the Cariboo creeks. In subsequent years, the Cariboo became the legal centre of the colony, with almost half of all county court litigation between 1858 and 1871 initiated in Richfield. Amongst those parading

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39 Ibid, 186.
40 Ibid, 184.
41 Ibid, 185.
43 Ibid. The trip produced two maps of unprecedented detail and accuracy of the route extending from New Westminster to the Cariboo. Although Begbie's biographer David Williams indicates that these observations were carried out because of Begbie's natural inquisitiveness and enjoyment of note-taking, it was also an important aspect of knowledge gathering and the assertion of control over the land. Ibid, 52.
44 Wright, Barkerville, 52.
45 Loo, Making Law, Order and Authority, 78.
through the Cariboo courts were a number of aboriginal people, including Nikel Palsk, for whom the presence of British law had mixed implications.46

Aboriginal Criminals: The Role of Ideology at the Richfield Courthouse

Palsk’s trial was a unique instance in the history of the Richfield courthouse in that he was the only aboriginal man ever sentenced to death there, but it is not unique in that it was part of a longer history of aboriginal contact with the courts in and around Barkerville. The most common way for aboriginal people to end up in court was as the result of alcohol-related charges. Regardless of their nature, two common themes ran through many Richfield cases, from the more minor alcohol offences to Palsk’s murder trial. Aboriginal people were seen as naturally inclined to dangerous criminal behaviour, and therefore threatening to the social order. At the same time, they also needed protection, both from their own “savage” natures and from external corrupting influences.

The Sentinel’s coverage of the Palsk trial made regular connections between aboriginal people, violence, and savage naivety as a way of explaining both the crime and the selected punishment. Despite Palsk’s absence from modern retellings of the trail, a large part of the Sentinel’s coverage in 1867 was devoted to explicit comparisons of the White James Barry and the “Indian” Nikel Palsk, focusing on their “civilized” and “savage” characteristics. Overwhelmingly, the paper portrayed Barry’s crime as

46 Owing to the scarcity of evidence, it is difficult to tell what affects, if any, larger processes like confederation with Canada in 1871, the subsequent reserve commissions, and the Indian Act in 1876, had on the ways that aboriginal people interacted with the law on a day-to-day basis in Barkerville. George Edgar Shankel, “The Development of Indian Policy in British Columbia,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Washington, 1954), 93, 89-112. The establishment of reserves was not particularly relevant in the gold rush town, since O’Reilly never got to the gold fields during his travels through the Cariboo in 1881. He did, however, establish reserves at Quesnellmouth and Fort Alexandria in that year. Dominion of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1881 (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1882).
motivated by his particularly immoral and abnormal traits, whereas Palsk was considered to be naturally inclined to criminality because of his race. According to the Sentinel:

The convict Barry evinces an amount of human depravity and hardened villainy that makes one shudder to think that human beings, with at least average intelligence like him, are to be found at large in our midst... The circumstances attending the murder of Morgan by the Indians, though equally horrible, is less revolting to humanity inasmuch as the perpetrator was an unenlightened savage. The inherent hatred of the White man may have rendered the crime less atrocious to his mind, and the hope of plunder doubtless had its weight in the commission of it, but there is no doubt that the savage nature of the Indian prevented his realizing all the horrors of the deed he was about the commit.  

The fact that Barry was a member of the White community made his crime surprising and terrifying. The idea that such an atrocious act could come from within was difficult for the community to grasp, so the newspaper explained Barry's crime in terms that separated him from regular society. “The murderer of Blessing was a practised hand,” the newspaper concluded, “and is no doubt familiar with crime of the worst character.”

Thus, Barry was cold-blooded, skilled, and intelligent. These were terms with which the Barkerville community could be comfortable describing a deviant White man, and thus fully justify his hanging.

Palsk's crime was framed as being less horrible because of his status as a person already inclined to criminal behaviour. Palsk, who was “unenlightened” and “savage,” unlike the “practised” and “intelligent” Barry, was expected to behave in a criminal manner. To the Sentinel, Palsk was motivated by hatred of White men, which justified the crime in his mind. His “savage nature” meant that he did not fully comprehend the consequences of his actions. Palsk was a victim of his own temperament, and the paper suggested that this fact might actually “meet more favor [sic] from an all-seeing Judge.”

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47 “Criminal Trials,” Cariboo Sentinel, 4 July 1867.
48 Ibid.
and result in a lighter sentence.\textsuperscript{49} Such statements suggest an ideological combination of Palsk as naturally inclined to criminal behaviour and Palsk as a victim of his own nature requiring special treatment under the law. This dual construction of Palsk explained his actions and justified the intervention of the court.

Palsk's "savage" criminal nature as opposed to Barry's status as a deviant member of civilization was a continual theme in the \textit{Sentinel's} coverage of the trial as it progressed. In an update on the prisoners as they awaited execution, the paper stated that neither Barry nor Palsk appeared to be particularly moved by their circumstances or inclined to confess to the local reverend Father McGuiken. Barry kept talking about commutation, and "the Indian appears equally unaffected by the spiritual consolation of the Rev. Father." Later, however, the paper stated that "Barry is in the habit of devoting a great portion of his time daily to the perusal of the Bible."\textsuperscript{50} On the day of the execution the paper stated that "it is very certain that Barry must have [made a confession] to the priest before he could receive absolution."\textsuperscript{51} Palsk, on the other hand, was described as using "the most foul and blasphemous language."\textsuperscript{52} The fact that this part of the story was a construction is clear from the fact that Father McGuiken later wrote in to correct the paper, stating that he had been near Palsk the whole time and that he had uttered no blasphemous language.\textsuperscript{53} The comparisons continued right to the scaffold. "Barry betrayed no symptoms of trepidation," the \textit{Sentinel} reported, "but sustained himself throughout the trying scene with the utmost fortitude and coolness."\textsuperscript{54} Barry's behaviour

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Untitled, \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 15 July 1867.
\textsuperscript{51} "Execution of the Murderers--James Barry and Nikel Palsk," \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 12 August 1867.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} "Correction," \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 19 August 1867.
\textsuperscript{54} "Execution of the Murderers--James Barry and Nikel Palsk," \textit{Cariboo Sentinel}, 12 August 1867.
was contrasted directly to Palsk's, who had started to resist when brought into view of the scaffolds and "struggled in such a manner as to induce the officers to keep the irons still on his wrists." Barry had been quiet, but "the Indian...behaved in a very excited manner... cursing the King George man and his Indian accomplice, endeavouring all the while to extricate himself from his pinions."

The constructions of aboriginal people as naturally criminal and needing paternalistic protection were regularly repeated themes at Richfield that were not restricted to the Palsk trial. The mixed ideals of fear and paternalism were written into colonial legislation right from the colony's beginning. One of Douglas' first proclamations in 1858 was a "Penalty for selling liquor to the Natives," in which these two themes are apparent. The proclamation echoed Vancouver Island's 1854 prohibitions, stating that "the sale or gift of Spirituous or other Intoxicating drinks to the said Native Indians is contrary to the law, and is hereby strictly prohibited." Douglas offered two reasons for the necessity of the bill: First, the consumption of alcohol meant that indigenous people were "endangering the Public peace, and the lives and property of Her Majesty's subjects and others in the Districts." Second, the sale of liquor "to the Native Indians of Fraser River, and elsewhere" caused "the great injury and demoralization of the said Indians." This declaration explicitly delineated aboriginal

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55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
58 "Penalty for selling liquor to the Natives, 1858."
59 Ibid. In 1867, Douglas' proclamation was revised slightly and amalgamated with Vancouver Island's legislation. The 1867 Ordinance added the power to search aboriginal peoples' belongings and dwelling places. Vancouver Island had legislation in place since 1854, revised in 1860. Barry Gough, Gunboat
people from newcomers, arguing that aboriginal people required different treatment under the law because of their particular characteristics.

The reality of British Columbia’s large, mobile, and largely autonomous aboriginal population was a source of anxiety for at least some of Barkerville’s residents. It was well beyond the capabilities of the courts to prosecute every infraction, so the instances that did end up in court tended to reflect the priorities of colonial society. The result was that certain behaviours, particularly those deemed threatening to the social order, tended to be targeted for particular attention by the Richfield court. Fear of aboriginal criminality may have partially originated from the fact that many of the new arrivals had emigrated directly from California, where violent conflicts between aboriginal people and newcomers are well recorded. Moreover, in the 1850s, aboriginal people in Washington and Oregon were engaged in outright war against settlers in the face of increasing encroachment on their lands and resources. Although historians have characterized the Fraser and Cariboo rushes as comparatively peaceful, the newcomer

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*Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 220-221. Although a definition of “Native Indian” or “Indian” was not found in this legislation, there are no cases of liquor law violations being contested on the basis of whether or not the person in possession of alcohol was technically an “Indian” in any of the court cases examined. This indicates that there was enough consensus over who constituted an “Indian” in British Columbia that it did not become an issue. When British Columbia became part of Canada in 1871, jurisdiction over aboriginal people and their consumption of liquor was turned over to the federal government and was consolidated with federal jurisdiction in 1876 under the *Indian Act*. Canada, Dept. of Indian and Northern Affairs, Treaties and Historical Research Centre, P.R.E. Group, *The Historical Development of the Indian Act*, by Robert Moore, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978), 69. The *Indian Act* definition of “Indian” referred to treaties, and was therefore not very useful in British Columbia, so the definition was widened several years after the Act to account for both “any Indian or non-treaty Indian, or any person male or female who is reputed to belong to a particular Indian band or who follows the Indian mode of life.” Hamilton, *Sobering Dilemma*, 52.


population feared the potential for violence in the new colony. Isolated incidents such as the Fraser War of 1858 and the Chilcotin War of 1864 both resulted in deaths on both sides, and there are examples of attacks on travelling miners and pack trains well into the 1860s. Although newspapers tended to exaggerate the details of these events, and such incidents rarely affected people in Barkerville itself, residents worried that they would. Perhaps most tellingly, when Palsk escaped from jail at Quesnel and was spotted in the Okanagan, the Sentinel urged authorities to capture him quickly “if only for the salutary effect it would have on the other Indians who believe that the carelessness of Government arises from fear.” In other words, it was of utmost importance that the government appear in control of Indians, lest they begin to doubt the power and authority of colonial law.

Indeed, fear of aboriginal murder is palpable in the pages of the Cariboo Sentinel. The newspaper reported frequently on massacres and murders elsewhere. For example, in 1866 the paper quoted the Montana Post’s article “Horrible Atrocities” which described examples of aboriginal massacres. “The Powder River road to Montana is infested by Indians,” the paper lamented, “who are daily committing the most fearful depredations.” The worst part, according to the paper, was that the attacks were not the result of a single troublesome tribe, but that the “red men engaged in these atrocities are

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62 Williams paints a rosy picture of British Columbian frontier justice in which miners formed their own governments in the absence of outside authority, and enthusiastically obeyed colonial law when it finally arrived. Williams, “The Administration of Criminal and Civil Justice,” 231-232.
63 “Bad Indians,” Cariboo Sentinel, 10 October 1874, 3.
64 For example, in 1865 the Sentinel expressed fears that two missing prospectors had been killed by Indians somewhere in the Horsefly Valley area “News of one of the Government Exploring Parties,” Cariboo Sentinel, 12 June 1865.
65 “Still at Large,” Cariboo Sentinel, 11 October 1866.
mostly Sioux, but the Arapahoes and Cheyennes are by no means guiltless." 67 The Sentinel also reported on a gruesome massacre in Idaho where a group of Indians reportedly killed Chinese prospectors. 68 In 1869, the paper reported on the prospect of a Sioux war, detailing scalpings and quoting local officials who believed that “the Indians have never shown so much hostility as they do at the present time.” 69 Fear of aboriginal criminal behaviour was part of Barkerville residents’ understandings of frontier life, and it affected the way in which aboriginal people were treated in court.

The assumption that aboriginal people were naturally inclined to violence usually meant that prosecutions around liquor law were accompanied by allegations of other types of visibly disruptive activities, suggesting that the allegations were less about liquor and more about controlling aboriginal deviance. For example, in 1870, “Johnny, an unsophisticated young native,” was charged with being drunk and disorderly after harassing some women “dwelling unprotected by the roadside.” 70 Although the charge was for being drunk and disorderly, the reason Johnny was targeted was the threat that he posed to civilized White women. According to the newspaper he “was ordered to render his services to the Colonial Government for the space of two days” for “this improper conduct.” 71 In a similar example, in April of 1871, two Indians, both named Charley, were charged with being drunk after one of them supposedly threatened one “Miss A. Hickman with a bottle.” 72 In October of 1872, Susan was arrested for being drunk after

68 “Frightful Massacre by Indians,” Cariboo Sentinel, 28 June 1866.
69 “Another Sioux War in Prospect,” Cariboo Sentinel, 13 November 1869.
70 “Police Court,” Cariboo Sentinel, 10 December 1870.
71 Ibid.
72 The newspaper commented on the impropriety of the act, stating that one of the Charleys’ behaviour was “unbecoming his royal namesake” and sentencing him to a week of hard labour and to be whipped “Police Court, Cariboo Sentinel, April 29 1871.
she smashed windows in Barkerville. In 1895, "Tsowaik, alias Sol" was found in Barkerville in a state of intoxication and sentenced to twenty days in the Richfield Gaol. Similarly, "Shbill" was also found drunk in Barkerville, and sentenced to a month. That these activities were visible to the Barkerville population and disruptive to the status quo was a large part of the reason they were brought to court. Aboriginal people, alcohol, and criminal behaviour were closely linked in these cases, and the law provided the means for controlling all three.

Although less frequently than fear of aboriginal deviance, paternalism as a motive for enforcing the law can be seen in the arrests and prosecutions of the Richfield courthouse. In earlier years, the most obvious instances of paternalism were those where White and Chinese newcomers were prosecuted for selling alcohol to aboriginal people, particularly aboriginal women. For example, in 1872, A. Clinker was convicted for giving an aboriginal woman named "Susan" alcohol. In a similar case, an "Indian boy" named "Tom" along with "Indian Charley" testified against a Chinese man named Lee Kee who was accused of selling liquor to a "kloochman." Clinker and Lee Kee were targets for prosecution because of the idea that aboriginal people needed to be protected from such unscrupulous individuals. In these cases the state demonstrated its legitimacy by acting as a protector for the people in its charge.

73 Untitled, Cariboo Sentinel, 5 October, 1872.
74 John Stevenson, Justice of the Peace, "Warrant of Commitment upon a Conviction when the punishment is by imprisonment," Magistrates Court: Indian Act, Liquor Violation, GR 216 Box 150 File 6, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria.
75 John Stevenson, Justice of the Peace, "Conviction, when the Punishment is by Imprisonment," Magistrates Court: Indian Act, Liquor Violation, GR 216 Box 150 File 6, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria.
76 "Police Court," Cariboo Sentinel, 17 July 1872.
77 The term "kloochman" was used to refer to aboriginal women. "Selling Liquor to Indians," Cariboo Sentinel, 5 September 1874.
Paternalism appears more frequently in cases towards the turn of the century, when fears about aboriginal criminal behaviour became less prevalent as aboriginal population declined in the face of expanded settlement and colonization. For example, the Richfield trial of “the Indians Saul and Amelia for the alleged murder of James Kelly on the 31st of March [1903]” demonstrates how paternalism and fear of criminality could co-exist in these later years. Despite Amelia having “admitted hitting the blow which killed Kelly as he attempted to commit a criminal assault on her,” the Jury acquitted her. Saul, on the other hand, “was found guilty of Manslaughter” despite the fact that “there was not a particle of evidence to connect him with the case.” Amelia was acquitted because she was considered a victim in need of protection and mercy from the law. Despite a lack of physical evidence to support such a conclusion, Saul was connected with the crime and convicted, revealing the strength of ideology in governing aboriginal legal cases regardless of the facts.

On the other hand, paternalism alone seems to have been at the heart of John Scotchman’s trial after the death of “Indian Edward” in 1907. Edward was supposedly shot “as the result of a drunken Spree.” In the letters between Indian Agent E. Bell, his superior A.W. Vowell, the entire incident was blamed on the unknown whiskey sellers who supplied the two men with alcohol. “They are in reality the murderers and yet they go free,” Bell lamented. Yet, because of the contradictory evidence given by the Indians and the refusal of the “disreputable White men” to admit that they had sold any liquor, a

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78 E. Ball, Indian Agent, to A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent,” Royal British Columbia Archives.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
charge against them could not be secured. The insistence that naive aboriginal people like John Scotchman needed protection from the evil influences of White liquor sellers indicates that aboriginal people were more to be pitied than feared by the early twentieth century.

Such evidence indicates that aboriginal people were allotted a special place in the courts, both at Richfield and beyond, that was different from other British Columbians. The court records are too sporadic, too varied in detail, and subject to too many unknown factors to allow for a statistical analysis of the treatment received by aboriginal people as opposed to others. The anecdotal evidence hints that punishments for aboriginal people might have been comparatively severe. The whipping of “Charley” in 1871 is a good example. It is difficult to imagine a White man being whipped for a drunk and disorderly behaviour at the time, and indeed, his case is the only recorded whipping carried out by the Richfield court for the period. Whether other aboriginal people had similar experiences with the law is difficult to discern. Nevertheless, the persistence of the stereotypes of “savagery” and paternalism in the cases referred to above indicates that, at the very least, they were allocated a separate status from other Richfield cases.

As an expression of the mixed impulses of fear and paternalism, the Palsk trial fits within the context of aboriginal cases tried at Richfield. On one hand, Palsk was characteristically dangerous and thought to be more inclined to violence than his

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83 A quick review of the Barkerville Charge Book from July 1866 to May 1896 demonstrates the difficulty of quantitative analysis. For example, repeat offender Joseph Parks, a White lawyer who was also a notorious drunk, seems to have been treated much differently than other drunk and disorderly individuals, regardless of their ethnicity. Moreover, punishments varied from fines of varying amounts to labour to jail time, without explanation. British Columbia, Provincial Police Force, Barkerville, Charge Book, 30 July 1866-10 May 1896, GR 822, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria.
84 “Police Court, Cariboo Sentinel, April 29 1871, 3; British Columbia, Provincial Police Force, Barkerville. Charge Book, Royal British Columbia Archives, 40.
counterpart who, despite being equally criminal, at least possessed the characteristics of civilization. On the other, Palsk’s crime was understandable on account of his particular deficiencies, which potentially warranted special treatment from the judge. These themes are echoed in other court cases throughout the gold rush period. Ultimately, the danger posed by “the savage nature of the Indian” justified Palsk’s execution. Like other aboriginal prosecutions at Richfield, Palsk’s death served as a demonstration of order and control over a group thought to be in need of particular attention under the law.85

**Aboriginal Participation at Richfield and the Limits of Colonial Law**

Although the use of stereotypes about aboriginal people as a motivation for legal action was used to demonstrate the legitimacy of colonial law at the Richfield courthouse, the failure of administrators to consolidate their authority reveals the limits of the law’s application in the Barkerville area. In many cases the effective application of colonial law required the participation of aboriginal people.86 For example, the testimony of “Lizzie Wilmot, a promising child of 8 years, and Jeannie, an Indian woman,” was instrumental to the conviction of A. Clinker for selling alcohol to “Susan.”87 In the coroner’s inquest into the death of aboriginal woman “Lucy Bones,” aboriginal men named “Tom,” “Swap-Shin,” “Charlie,” “Charley Hughes,” and “Hudson Bay Charlie” all testified in court. Aboriginal people were not limited to the role of witnesses, either. During a case against two Chinese men who did not speak any English, an aboriginal man was sent to get an

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86 Using the early twentieth century case study of the hunt for Cariboo outlaws Paul Splintlum and Moses Paul, Tina Loo has argued that aboriginal people in British Columbia were at the forefront of policing the province, “as guides, trackers, and constables, and in the courtroom as interpreters and Crown Witnesses.” Tina Loo, “Tonto’s Due: Law, Culture, and Colonization in British Columbia,” in *Essays in the History of Canadian Law: British Columbia and the Yukon* ed. Hamar Foster and John McLaren (Toronto: Osgood Society, 1995), 129.
87 “Police Court,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 July 1872.
interpreter. Similarly, aboriginal participation was a feature of the Palsk trial. The
testimony of Chil-Pecken was essential for the prosecution and eventual conviction,
providing a description of a homicide that was not witnessed by anyone else.
Furthermore, both Palsk and Chil-Pecken testified through an interpreter referred to only
as "Mr. E. Dewdneu," whose knowledge of their language might indicate that he was of
aboriginal or possibly Metis heritage. Finally, indigenous people at Okanagan Lake
played an important role in the case by reporting Palsk's presence to the authorities,
allowing for his eventual capture.

Aboriginal agency is an important part of the story of law meted out at Richfield.
Many people used the presence of the court at Richfield to try to further their own
interests. For example, in 1871 an aboriginal man complained of being robbed of money
and gold that he had placed under his pillow the night before. He suspected two other
aboriginal men, but since he had no evidence, there was nothing that could be done.
More commonly, aboriginal people went to the courts in order to solve disputes with
Whites. For example, in 1865 an unnamed "Indian" won a suit against M.C. Davis for
sixty dollars in wages. In another case, a man named Indian Bob sued a man named J.B.
McMillan for wages earned for cutting hay. Indigenous agency, participation, and

88 "Police Court," Cariboo Sentinel, 10 December 1870.
90 Ibid.
91 "Still at Large," Cariboo Sentinel, 11 October 1866.
92 "Alleged Robbery," Cariboo Sentinel, 12 August 1871.
93 "Cariboo Police Court," Cariboo Sentinel, 16 September 1865.
94 British Columbia, Government Agency, Cariboo, "Ordinary Summons, Holden at the County Court of
150 mile house, registered at Barkerville," 14 October 1897, GR 0216, Box 417, File 3, Royal British
Columbia Archives, Victoria.
utilization of the law in the Richfield courthouse was an important part of their relationship with colonial law during the gold rush. 95

Although some aboriginal people participated in the legal process, others remained indifferent to it, and were simply beyond the reach of colonial authority. For example, in September of 1874, a case of a Chinese man selling liquor to an Indian woman was heard before Justice A.R. Robertson. Although several witnesses were brought in, Robertson expressed frustration that “he could not fine the amount he ought to” because the woman in question could not be found. 96 In another case, an aboriginal man allegedly feigned drunkenness in order to get near a White man named “Frank Petrin” on the road between Barkerville and nearby Bald Mountain. After travelling with Petrin for a few minutes, the unnamed man suddenly lifted a gun and ordered Petrin to hand over his valuables. Petrin narrowly escaped by darting into some bushes and taking an alternate route back to Barkerville where he immediately reported the incident. Upon arriving back in town, the aboriginal man was questioned, but he denied any knowledge of threatening Petrin. No charges were laid. 97 The indifference of the Indian to the authority of colonial law and his disinclination to confess meant that the Richfield court could do nothing about the incident. Such examples demonstrate the limits of colonial law during the rush.

95 Although the question of Aboriginal peoples’ legitimacy as witnesses arose in other parts of Canada, aboriginal people regularly testified as witnesses in Richfield without comment from the documentary sources. On the other hand, there is some evidence that aboriginal peoples’ roles in the courts were not taken particularly seriously. The Sentinel joked in 1869 about an “injun justice” who punished one of his fellows for possession of alcohol by “take him jug away, and drink him myself,” much to the amusement of the real Justice of the Peace to whom he told his story. “An Indian Justice,” Cariboo Sentinel, 20 February 1869.
97 “Almost a Tragedy,” Cariboo Sentinel, 15 August 1874.
As previously noted, some scholars have convincingly argued that symbolism, or "judicial unorthodoxy" was an important tool for overcoming the difficulties of enforcement in the early days of colonial justice on the frontier. This strategy was an important facet of maintaining order in Barkerville. Those who were deemed trouble-makers by the colonial elite within the town itself, where colonial law was could exert actual power, were targeted as examples of its effectiveness. For example, in 1872 when Barkerville Constable Lindsay entered a Chinese gambling house and pressed charges against the two Indians and the Chinese proprietor, he was engaged a visible demonstration of effective colonial law at work against undesirable elements of town society. Such cases confirmed the law's authority to Barkerville's concerned residents while remaining within the power of colonial law to enforce. Such charges were the exception rather than the rule, and are scarce in the primary evidence. Since most of the aboriginal population was beyond the grasp of colonial authority, those who fell within were made visible symbols in an attempt to assert the legitimacy of British law over the rest of the aboriginal population.

Despite the fact that Palsk was, in the end, hanged by the Richfield court, the inability of colonial law to exert itself over much of the aboriginal population living in and around Barkerville was an important part of this case's context. The Palsk trial was

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98 For example, Graham Parker describes the use of symbolism in legal culture, using Begbie as a specific example. Graham Parker, "Canadian Legal Culture," in Law and Justice in a New Land: Essays in Western-Canadian Legal History ed. Louis Knafla (Toronto: Carswell, 1986), 12. Similarly, David Ricardo Williams stresses the important of symbolism by quoting Begbie's argument that establishing popular confidence in justice is as important as justice itself. Williams, "The Administration of Criminal and Civil Justice," 228.


100 Although Palsk was hanged, other aboriginal murder trials did not result in convictions. For example, in 1873 an aboriginal man named "Jommy" was brought before Begbie's court in Richfield accused of murder. He was found not guilty. British Columbia, Government Agency, Cariboo, "Return of Offences
an exaggerated version of the effort to demonstrate the authority of law without revealing that this authority was tenuous. In some regards, Palsk was an easy target. The newspaper stated that, despite doubts in Europe about the validity of capital punishment in murder cases, “opinion ruled ... completely against the prisoners, [and] the punishment was ... justly meted out as an explanation for the measure of their crimes.”  

There was even the suggestion that hanging was, in Palsk’s case “the Divine will.” The conflict that often surrounded other capital cases in British Columbia seems to have been completely absent in the Palsk case. Palsk appears to have been as feared and reviled by the rest of the aboriginal population as he was by the White jury that convicted him. Aboriginal people were reportedly “in great dread of him, as they consider he is bullet proof,” and were crucial in Palsk’s recapture in 1867. Moreover, his accomplice Chil-Pecken was the key witness of the killing. Nobody (besides Palsk) objected to his hanging, and the courts could demonstrate their effectiveness by punishing him for Morgan’s death without fear of overstepping their bounds.

Yet, not all accounts of the hanging agree that it was a clear victory for the courts. An American newspaper described Barry as being so “depressed in spirits” that his limp body “had to be supported to the scaffold and sustained while the final arrangements

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Against the Indian Act tried at Richfield 1901-1903, “11 June 1873, GR 216 Box 227 File 5, Royal British Columbia Archives, Victoria.

101 “Criminal Trials,” Cariboo Sentinel, 4 July 1867.

102 Ibid.


105 “Still at Large,” Cariboo Sentinel, 11 October 1866.

were being made.” Palsk, on the contrary, “was defiant” on the scaffold and bragged that “he had killed ten White men, and gloried in the bloody deeds.” Moreover, “when the executioner was about to tie his arms and feet, he objected, saying that he was no woman; and when the cap was drawn down over his face he insisted that Barry should be hoodwinked first, as he, being an Indian, had no idea of having done anything to him that was not also done to the King George man.” This image of Palsk on the scaffold, subtly different from the Sentinel’s, suggests a considerable degree of agency and awareness on behalf of Palsk that detracts from the idea of a clean victory for colonial law. Indeed, the American newspaper had less motivation for portraying the hanging as a shining example of effective colonial governance, and may have been insinuating that colonial administrators had less control over Palsk (and his people) than they claimed.

The inability of the Richfield court to assert total authority over aboriginal people is particularly evident in regards to Chil-Pecken. Although Chil-Pecken was the one to strike the death blow against Morgan, he seems to have escaped punishment in court. Chil-Pecken’s escape is probably an effect of the importance of symbolism in early British Columbian courts. It was more important that justice was clearly demonstrated than for blame to have been appropriately placed. There is certainly a sense amongst legal historians of British Columbia that aboriginal people understood and resented the disadvantages they suffered under colonial law, and that colonial authorities did their best

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107 Columbia Press 2 September 1867, in Williams, ... The Man for a New Country, 137-138.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Although the Charge Book mentions a “Chelpekin, alias ‘Joe’” tried in New Westminster, it is unclear whether he was the same man. British Columbia, Provincial Police Force, Barkerville, Charge Book, 16 June 1867, Royal British Columbia Archives, 12.
to manage these resentments through a variety of means. At one point during the trial Begbie allegedly said “you have both dyed your hands in blood, and must both suffer the same fate. The law for the savage as well as the Christian is death for death.” The fact that Begbie believed it necessary to state that the punishment against White and Indian was fair and equal suggests that he was aware of these tensions. Adding a second aboriginal hanging may have been pushing too far. Without Chil-Pecken's evidence, the case would have been much less certain, and although Chil-Pecken denied having been offered his freedom in exchange for his testimony, the reality may have been much different. The conviction of Morgan’s murderer depended on Chil-Pecken’s evidence, giving Chil-Pecken considerable leverage and placing him well beyond the reach of the Richfield court.

Palsk's case as represented in the Cariboo Sentinel is particularly demonstrative of the constraints of emerging colonial law. The trial of Barry and Palsk took place at Richfield, within a node of newcomer authority and power. Yet, the broader context was one in which the authority of British law was not yet fully established over a large, mobile, and relatively autonomous aboriginal population. While the law could not allow the murder of Morgan to go unpunished, it also had to wait two years to bring those who had committed the deed to trial. Moreover, while one man, Palsk, was punished, the one who actually killed Morgan appears to have escaped unscathed. The jurisdiction of colonial law over aboriginal people at Richfield remained tenuous, forcing Begbie and

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111 For example, George Bell’s 1872 murder trial was watched with great interest by both White and native residents, and Begbie used the case to demonstrate that Whites were subject to the same laws as aboriginal people. Swainger, “A Distant Edge of Authority,” 215
113 Ibid.
other administrators to take symbolic victories when the opportunity arose in an effort to assert the authority of their court amongst goldfield residents.

Conclusion

The late nineteenth century was an era in which the demonstration of the authority of colonial law as an important project for administrators in the face of questions about sovereignty and legitimacy. In Richfield, where colonial justice was centred during the height of the Cariboo gold rush, the cases heard reflected this broader project. The idea that aboriginal people were naturally inclined to violent behaviour and also needed protection from the state provided an avenue through which colonial authorities could regulate them. As the Nikel Palsk trial demonstrates, the "savage nature of the Indian" was a perfect target for administrators who needed to prove the effectiveness of the law for maintaining order in the new colony. However, significant aboriginal agency remained a factor in court cases throughout the gold rush period. The dependency of colonial authorities on aboriginal participation and their failure to completely extend the law over aboriginal people is apparent in many of the Richfield cases, including Palsk's. In these ways, the Palsk trial provides an important case study of the struggle for legitimacy in British Columbia's unfledged legal system as it was manifested at the Richfield courthouse during the gold rush.
Conclusion

"It Happened to Me in Barkerville" provides the first step towards the inclusion of aboriginal people in the narrative of Barkerville history and towards the inclusion of Barkerville in British Columbia's aboriginal past. The linking of these narratives contributes to an improved understanding of British Columbia's origins and development at the end of the nineteenth century.

The examination of aboriginal lives at Barkerville is hindered by the dearth of evidence, and ultimately "It Happened to Me in Barkerville" leaves many questions unanswered. Although glimpses of aboriginal lives and activities are gained through the documentary record, much remains unknown. For example, did a population of aboriginal people remain at Bowron Lake? How many aboriginal migrants lived at Barkerville permanently as opposed to seasonally? What did aboriginal communities within Barkerville look like, and how did they interact with White, Chinese, and other ethnicities? Internal aboriginal perspectives are conspicuously absent from this narrative. What did aboriginal people think about the rush for gold? How did Barkerville's existence fit in to pre-existing patterns of aboriginal life? How did it affect trade, diplomatic relations, and hierarchies? Further historical and archaeological research may be able to provide some clues, but it is possible that the answers to these questions are forever lost to historians. "It Happened to Me in Barkerville" provides a starting point for future research by pointing out the simple fact that aboriginal people did were present in Barkerville and their activities deserve attention and analysis in both scholarly and popular interpretations of the Cariboo gold rush.
The establishment of a history of aboriginal people in Barkerville has important implications for historians of British Columbia's aboriginal past. Broader theories of the province's development are incomplete without the inclusion of the Barkerville region, which was an important social, economic, and legal centre during the late nineteenth century. In the northern interior of the province, where aboriginal historiography is already scarce, the evidence from Barkerville can add depth and nuance to the historical narrative. "It Happened to Me in Barkerville" uses some of the established theories of this history to understand the evidence from Barkerville, indicating the relevance of Barkerville documents to the broader literature. For example, the history of aboriginal labour in Barkerville is strong evidence for the argument that aboriginal people were engaged in a moditional economy, and the Nikel Palsk trial helps confirm the importance of symbolism to colonial legal powers of the 1860s. At the same time, evidence from Barkerville potentially problematizes the idea that British Columbia's aboriginal past is the story of invader versus invaded, that aboriginal experiences were monolithic, and that aboriginal people were marginalized and separated by settlement in the late nineteenth century.

"It Happened to Me in Barkerville" is the first step towards a better understanding of a history of aboriginal people in the Barkerville gold fields. The lack of both scholarly and popular awareness of this topic needs to be addressed. Aboriginal contributions to the development of Barkerville, and, conversely, Barkerville's contribution to aboriginal history, need to be recognized and more fully examined by historians. The linking of these narratives has the potential to significantly enrich the history of British Columbia, its diverse people, and its gold rush origins.
Migrant groups like the Lillooet may have used this encampment on a seasonal basis while visiting and working in Barkerville. Taken from a knoll at the north end of the town in 1899, this photograph looks down on the crowded main street. The distinct shape of the Masonic Hall, still standing in Barkerville Historic Town, is visible just left of centre. This image illustrates the physical separation of aboriginal people from the rest of the gold rush era society.
Figure Two: "Portrait of an Unidentified First Nations Couple and Baby."

P1645, Barkerville Historic Town Archives.

C.D. Hoy, a Chinese businessman in Barkerville and Quesnel, took a number of photographs of aboriginal people in the early twentieth century, including this one. The frequency of aboriginal peoples' appearances in Hoy's photographs is indicative of relationships between Chinese and aboriginal communities that may extend back to the gold-rush era.
James Hutch (right) worked as a guide for Fred Tregillus (left) during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although much different in appearance and dress from Tregillus, Hutch's ethnicity was never remarked upon in his employer's extensive records. Hutch exemplifies the idea that some individuals were well-integrated into town life, despite a dominant ideology excluding aboriginal people from Barkerville society.
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