

“INTO THAT COUNTRY TO WORK”:

*Aboriginal Economic Activities during Barkerville’s Gold Rush**

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They go north into that country to work,
to work all the time, hard,
horses and wagons, women and children,
and dogs, hiyu dogs, all going
up by Barkerville.¹

IN 1917, MORE THAN FIFTY YEARS after the gold rush at Barkerville in the Cariboo Mountains of British Columbia, Soda Creek resident Mary Augusta Tappage remembered its effect on the working lives of the St’at’imc (Lillooet) people, who made an annual migration to the town. Following the discovery of gold on Keithley Creek in 1860, Barkerville (founded in August 1862) rapidly became the major economic hub of the central interior of British Columbia. Although the area is currently considered part of the traditional territory of the Dakelh (Carrier) people, and despite much documentation of First Nations presence, Barkerville has long been subject to the myth that no First Nations lived or worked there. Tappage’s poem and the abundant contemporary evidence considered here suggest that Dakelh lived and

* This article is based on the first two chapters of my master’s thesis, completed at the University of Northern British Columbia under the supervision of Ted Binnema. See Mica Jorgenson, “It Happened to Me in Barkerville: Aboriginal Identity, Economy, and Law in the Cariboo Gold Rush, 1862-1900” (MA thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2012). I am grateful to Ted Binnema, Mandy Kilsby, Bill Quackenbush, and Sandy Phillips for their invaluable insight, patience, knowledge, and guidance. I also wish to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the University of Northern British Columbia, the Canadian Federation of University Women, Daphne Baldwin, and William Morrison for financial support during my studies.

¹ Jean Speare, ed. *The Days of Augusta* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas Ltd., 1973), 15-16, quoted in Richard Thomas Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields* (Victoria: Heritage House, 2013), 112. *Hiyu* in Chinook means “many,” or “lots.” This verse is part of a longer poem. An earlier stanza reads: “There was a 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.”

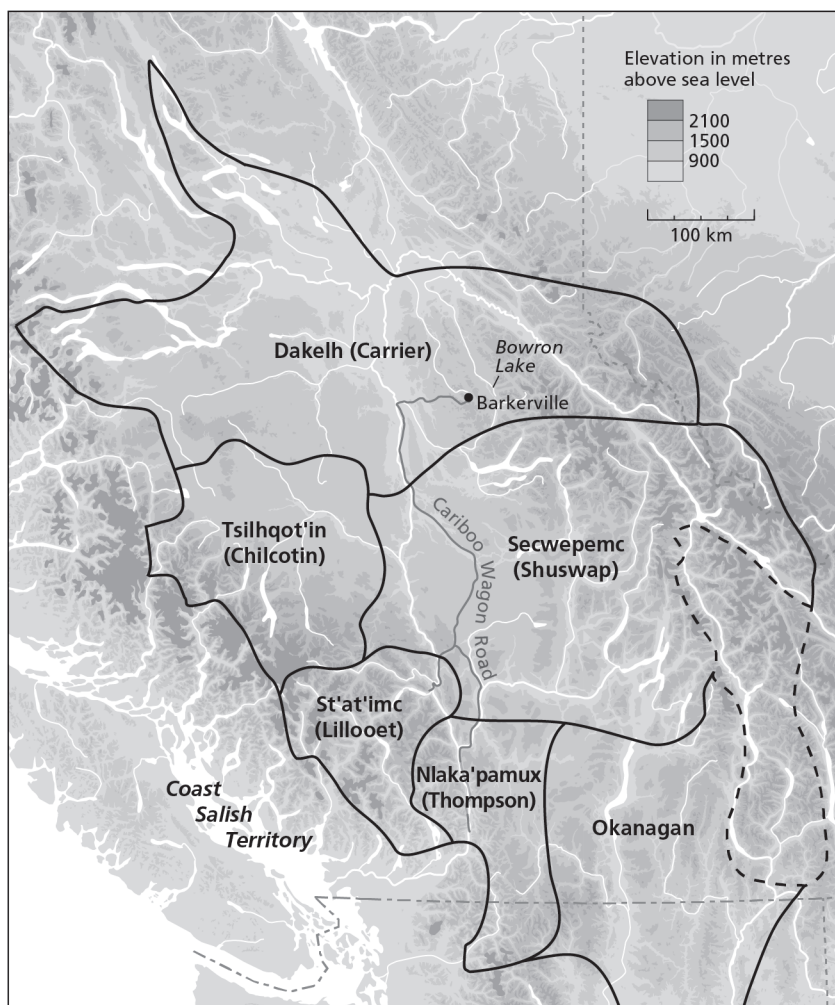


Figure 1. Barkerville and Bowron Lake lie at the southern edge of Dakelh territory. Cartography by Eric Leinberger.

worked in and around Barkerville both before and after the rush and that Aboriginal nations from all around British Columbia, including St'at'imc, Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin), Haida, and Coast Salish, were drawn there by new economic activities.

Historians have been slow to recognize the existence of First Nations at Barkerville, though popular historians Bill Hong, Jean Speare, Noel Duclos, and Richard Wright have touched on Aboriginal packing,

cattle-driving, berry picking, and prostitution in early Barkerville.² Academic historians, while asserting that the Cariboo gold rush of the 1860s and 1870s altered Aboriginal-newcomer economic relationships permanently in British Columbia,³ have not yet studied the particulars of First Nations involvement in the gold rush at Barkerville. Indeed, they have not even addressed this issue at a regional level for the Cariboo. The only scholarly work that addresses the topic, a 2005 master's thesis by Christopher Herbert, touches on First Nations economies but ultimately argues that Aboriginal people were absent from the mines and towns and only economically active in the region's hinterland.⁴

Pertinent academic writing does exist, and in the last forty years Canadian historians, especially those interested in patterns of work in the fur trade era, have examined the extent and importance of Aboriginal trade and labour, in the process providing an analytical literature that affords precedents and useful models for understanding First Nations economic lives in the Cariboo Mountains.⁵ Recently, John Lutz summarized these historical strands to argue that Aboriginal people "engaged in multiple modes of production at different times of the day and year: They hunted, fished, gathered, farmed, raised their children, and exchanged their labour in different combinations, and as opportunities presented themselves."⁶ These forms of work have often been dismissed as a transitional phase between pre-contact and colonial capitalist economies; however, in practice, they were an enduring solution for many. This mixed capitalist/subsistence production system, referred

² See Bill Hong, ... *And So ... That's How It Happened: Recollections of Stanley-Barkerville, 1900-1975* (Coquitlam, BC: W.M. Hong, 1978); Speare, *Days of Augusta*; Noel Duclos, *Packers, Pans, and Paydirt: Prospecting the Cariboo* (Quesnel: Arthur Duclos, 1995). Wright observes that Aboriginal people "were well aware of the concept of supply and demand." See Richard Thomas Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields* (Vancouver: Heritage, 2013), 108-12.

³ Accounts of economic change and First Nations in British Columbia include Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992 [1977]); Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia, 1848-1930* (Vancouver: New Star, 1996 [1978]); James K. Burrows, "A Much Needed Class of Labour: The Economy and Income of the Southern Plateau Indians, 1897-1910," *BC Studies* 71 (1986): 27-47; John Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

⁴ 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 For pertinent studies of Aboriginal labour, see Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1970* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983), 53-73; Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 283-310; Frank Tough, "As Their Natural Resources Fail": *Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); and Andrew Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival: The Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton in the Mid-19th Century," *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (2008): 69-98.

⁶ Lutz, *Makuk*, 23.

to by Lutz as “moditional” labour, is a useful framework for Barkerville’s Aboriginal history.⁷ In the following analysis I show that First Nations at Barkerville worked at a variety of occupations at different times of the year and filled particular economic niches provided by the gold rush. Starting in 1862, Aboriginal people of various origins participated actively in the gold rush economy in Barkerville by mixing subsistence, commercial, and wage work.

“FEW INDIANS SURVIVED”: PRE-CONTACT USE,
DISEASE, AND GOLD RUSH MIGRATION

The near-absence of Aboriginal workers in histories of early Barkerville reflects Elizabeth Furniss’s observation that a powerful “frontier myth” in British Columbia involved the marginalization, displacement, and even erasure of First Nations people from the historical narrative.⁸ Scholars who acknowledge Aboriginal people at all cite the prevalence of mid-nineteenth-century disease to argue that they were gone before the miners arrived.⁹ This oversight exists despite the rush’s importance to the development of British Columbia, its position within the larger context of nineteenth-century global gold rushes, and research showing that Aboriginal people were active in other gold rushes in western North America.¹⁰ Archaeological reports suggest that the Dakelh people occupied the Barkerville region before the gold rush; and documentary evidence, including Tappage’s poem, local newspapers, mining records, and government reports, suggests that Barkerville was a location of economic activity for various other First Nations groups.

⁷ Ibid., 23, 169.

⁸ Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999). Furniss’s work focuses on Williams Lake in the Cariboo.

⁹ For example, Christopher Herbert’s research on ethnicity and social power in Barkerville ultimately argues that Aboriginal people were a “missing presence” in economic centres (like the town and its mines) due to exclusionary labour policy and the mining season’s incompatibility with seasonal rounds. See Herbert, “Unequal Participants,” 100.

¹⁰ See Ronald Genini, “The Fraser-Cariboo Gold Rushes: Comparisons and Contrasts with the California Gold Rush,” *Journal of the West* 11 (3) (1972): 470–87; Jacqueline Baker Barnhart, “Working Women: Prostitution in San Francisco from the Gold Rush to 1900” (PhD diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 1976); Douglas Hudson, “Traplines and Timber: Social and Economic Change among the Carrier Indians of Northern British Columbia” (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 1983); Daniel Patrick Marshall, “Claiming the Land: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to British Columbia” (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2000); Michael Kennedy, “Fraser River Placer Mining Landscapes,” *BC Studies* 160 (2008/09): 35–66.

Miners selected the Barkerville townsite because of its proximity to gold-bearing creeks, but the steep, narrow gullies and extreme temperatures made it a difficult place to live.¹¹ Twenty kilometres east of the town and three hundred metres lower in elevation, Bowron (previously "Bear") Lake has a more temperate climate than elsewhere in the Cariboo Mountains, an enormous network of easily accessible waterways, an annual salmon run, big game, and plentiful edible plant life.¹²

The study of the pre-gold rush era began in 1976, when Nancy Condrashoff prepared a detailed archaeological report on First Nations sites within Bowron Lake Provincial Park. Drawing on Ken Martin and Mike Robinson's 1972 surveys of pre-contact sites and on a broad reading of secondary literature, including the work of Diamond Jenness, Adrien-Gabriel Morice, and G.R. Willey, Condrashoff argues that pit houses and salmon storage pits on Bowron Lake and at the headwaters of the Bowron River indicate "considerable use of the area" and year-round occupation rather than simply seasonal use for salmon fishing.¹³ Projectile points found near the storage pits appear to show attributes of the Kamloops Phase, dated approximately 1250 to 1800 CE, which suggests occupation of the site during the contact period and fur trade era and its possible abandonment shortly before or during the gold rush. Such an abandonment fits with the impact of broader demographic shifts noted by Cole Harris in connection with the fur trade and the subsequent emergence of wage economies.¹⁴ Although Condrashoff speculates that Secwepemc (Shuswap) and Dakelh might have shared the lakes during "periods of good relations,"¹⁵ more recent research

¹¹ An 1863 report by the Royal Engineers stated that "the mining creeks are generally narrow, rocky, thickly wooded, and frequently swampy." See Lieutenant Henry 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.

¹² Ken Martin and Mike Robinson, "System 'E' Survey, Wells Grey Provincial Park, Bowron Lake Provincial Park and Upper Fraser River" (Victoria: Archaeological Sites Advisory Board, 1972), 19. The salmon runs in the Bowron River have long supported a large grizzly population inside of the current park and would be adequate to support human habitation. Tony Byrne, Peter Marshall, Lawrence Tuttle, Erro Whitfield, and P.R. Whitfield, *A Report of Cave Studies on Hucy Creek, Bowron Lake Provincial Park* (Victoria: Parks Branch, Department of Recreation and Conservation, 1873), 69; Nancy Condrashoff, "An Archaeological Outline of Bowron Lakes Provincial Park for the Interpretation Branch of the Provincial Parks Department" (Victoria: Archaeology Division, British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1976), 1.

¹³ Condrashoff, "Archaeological Outline," 1, 8.

¹⁴ Cole Harris, "Social Power and Cultural Change in Pre-Colonial British Columbia," *BC Studies* 115-16 (1997-98): 55.

¹⁵ Condrashoff, "Archaeological Outline," 8.

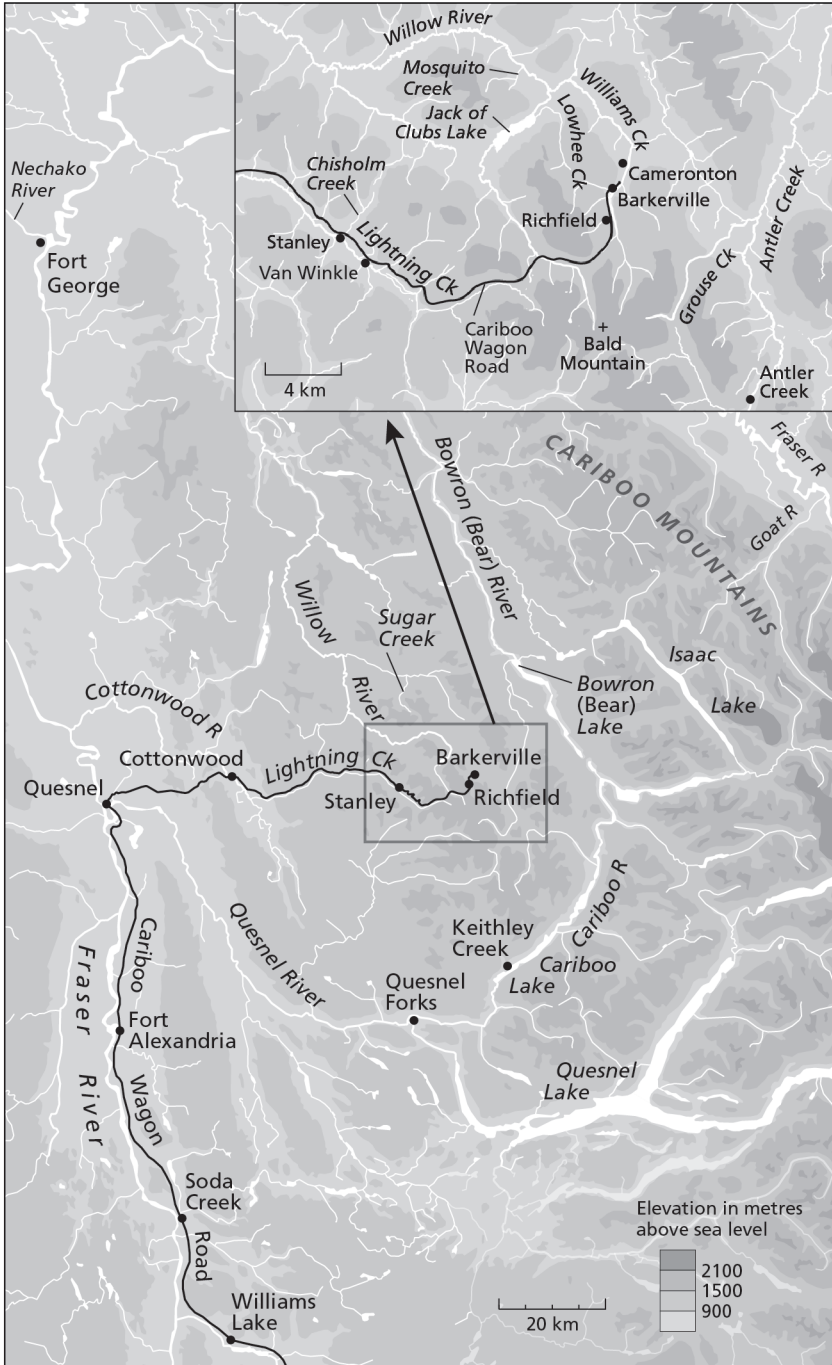


Figure 2. Barkerville and Bowron transportation routes and river networks. Cartography by Eric Leinberger.

confirms that the Bowron people were Dakelh and that the area is well within the southern borders of Dakelh traditional territory.¹⁶

Both the Condrashoff report and the earlier 1972 archaeological survey by Martin and Robinson mention large private collections of points and other artefacts gathered from various locations throughout the park by local residents.¹⁷ These artefacts have not yet been catalogued or dated, and vast areas of the park remain unexamined by archaeologists, meaning that future research may yield better information on this pre-contact population.

The earliest documentary evidence relating to the Cariboo Mountains dates to Simon Fraser's 1808 expedition. Fraser noted the presence of "several houses of the Nasquitins [Nazco First Nations]" at the mouth of the Cottonwood River and the Quesnel River, both of which emerge from the Cariboo Mountains.¹⁸ On his return trip he "procured some furs, plenty of fish and berries" from the people, which were probably gathered locally as a part of an existing subsistence and trading economy.¹⁹ In subsequent decades, the Aboriginal people of Bowron were involved in the fur trade and travelled from the Cariboo Mountains down to the posts on the Fraser River via the Bowron and Cariboo rivers. Joseph McGillivray, in charge of the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Alexandria in 1827, reported that the Bowron area was a popular hunting ground and complained about the arduous winter journey between Bowron Lake and the post.²⁰

Established trails between Bowron, the Quesnel River, the Cariboo River, and the Fraser River were later used by miners to reach gold-bearing creeks in the Cariboo Mountains. One of these routes led from the Bowron region northeast through the Cariboo Mountains to the Goat River. In 1869, Aboriginal people reported that a large lake to the northeast (probably Isaac Lake in Bowron Lake Provincial Park) was only "fifteen miles" (twenty-four kilometres) from Tete Jaune

¹⁶ Doug Brown, "Carrier Sekani Self-Government in Context: Land and Resources," *Western Geography* 12 (2002): 21-67; Elizabeth Furniss, "The Carrier Indians and the Politics of History," in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, ed. R.B. Morrison and C.R. Wilson, 508-46 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Condrashoff, "Archaeological Outline," 3.

¹⁸ W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2007), 84.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁰ The journey supposedly took twenty-five days, although this was possibly an exaggeration on behalf of the author since it appears in a section on the disadvantages of the post. See Joseph McGillivray, "Appendix A: Report of Fort Alexandria Western Caledonia Columbia River District Outfit 1827," in *The Publications of the Champlain Society: Simpson's 1828 Journey to the Columbia*, E.E. Rich, ed. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), 189-94.

Cache and the same distance to the Fraser River.²¹ The *Cariboo Sentinel* (hereafter the *Sentinel*) stated that “it [was] a well-known fact that the Indians ha[d] trails and communication between Bear River and lake and Tete Jaune Cache” and proposed putting a road in for miners.²² In reality, the distance was much greater, but it seems clear that regular and known routes existed between the Bowron Lake region and the rest of the province well into the gold rush era. The story also indicates Aboriginal knowledge of the local watersheds and their destinations.

The evidence suggests that European disease took a heavy toll on the first residents of the Bowron Lake region, as it did elsewhere in what became British Columbia. According to Cole Harris, in 1848 and 1849, measles and influenza hit the interior of the province, which experienced “massive depopulation” by 1850. Smallpox further reduced the First Nations population in 1862, the first year of the Cariboo gold rush.²³ The effects of disease are apparent in the memories of Barkerville’s earliest white residents. In a 1934 letter to newspaper reporter Louis Lebourdais, Barkerville resident Hazel Kibbee wrote that “few Indians survived” an epidemic that swept the region around the time of the arrival of the first white trappers at Bowron – Neil “Swampy” Wilson and Kenneth McLeod – in the early 1860s.²⁴ This seems to refer to the smallpox epidemic of 1862. Hazel even claims that Wilson 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.”²⁵

Further information about the epidemic comes from Thomas and Elinor McCabe, who were naturalists in the Bowron region in the 1920s and 1930s. The McCabes speculated that mid-nineteenth-century disease was a major contributing factor to the spread of moose to Bowron. In their 1928 article on the history of the Bowron Lake moose, they quote oral information provided by William Boyd, a resident of Cottonwood who visited Bowron Lake on a regular basis. Boyd claimed that “the older Indians who frequented the northern moose country in

²¹ This optimistic estimate was later proved inaccurate. See “A Chain of Lakes,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 28 July 1869.

²² “Overland Communication,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 August 1869, 2.

²³ Harris, “Social Power,” 53.

²⁴ Kibbee did not know the exact date of Wilson and McLeod’s arrival. The men were old family friends whose stories had been passed down to Kibbee by her father. See Hazel Kibbee to Louis Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, British Columbia Archives (hereafter BCA), Lebourdais Fonds, MS-0676. See also Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 109, 206; and Anne Laing, *The Traveller’s Site Guide to Barkerville Historic Town* (Burnaby: Vanpress, 2009), 81.

²⁵ Kibbee to Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, BCA, Lebourdais Fonds. For Wilson, see also Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 109–10.

the winters [hunted] moose for food for themselves and their large following of dogs."²⁶ That is, Aboriginal subsistence hunting kept moose numbers in check. The McCabes also noted that the moose population exploded after a "passing of great numbers of Indians in some of the late epidemics." According to the McCabes, "the vanishing of the old native culture ... [was] probably the chief [factor] in the increase of the moose."²⁷

Accounts by Kibbee and the McCabes influenced the secondary literature, which often employs the story of epidemic disease at Bowron as a transitional narrative between the region's pre-contact and its gold rush history: the complete eradication of the Aboriginal population of Bowron explains why First Nations people did not coexist with miners in Barkerville. For example, local historian Chris Harris argues that "successive waves of human occupation ... left little mark on the Bowron Lakes,"²⁸ and in his popular history of Bowron, Richard Wright concludes that, "by [1862, Indians] no longer fished the lakes nor canoed the river."²⁹

In her 1934 letter to Lebourdais, Hazel Kibbee related that Wilson and McLeod encountered an Aboriginal woman who was "the single survivor of a scourge of smallpox that had wiped out the rest of the tribe, numbering several hundred people."³⁰ This is the origin of the "total-destruction-by-disease" explanation of First Nations absence from Bowron and Barkerville. Lebourdais took considerable journalistic liberty with the story, describing the last Aboriginal woman at Bowron "weeping amongst the fresh-made graves on lower Bear River."³¹ The woman's entire tribe had been wiped out by smallpox, Lebourdais asserts, which she considered punishment for their efforts to prevent the gold rush. Hoping to keep their pristine lake community from being settled and mined by invaders, the tribe had – the account goes – murdered a white man who had come down Antler Creek in

²⁶ Thomas and Elinor McCabe, "The Bowron Lake Moose: Their History and Status," *Murrelet* 9, 1 (1928): 4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Chris and Jenny Harris, *The Bowron Lakes: British Columbia's Wilderness Canoe Circuit* (Vancouver: Gordon Soules, 1991), 81.

²⁹ Richard Wright, *Bowron Lake Provincial Park: The All-Seasons Guide* (Surrey: Heritage House, 1994), 16.

³⁰ Kibbee to Lebourdais, 5 February 1934, BCA, Lebourdais Fonds.

³¹ Lebourdais's article is 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. See Louis Lebourdais, "Bear Lake," BCA, Lebourdais Fonds, MS 0676, box 7, file 4, p. 2; Martin and Robinson, "System 'E' Survey," 17.

1860. In Lebourdais's story, the old Aboriginal woman was gently led away by Wilson and McLeod, the white men, "her shrunken shoulders shaking with sobs" as she said goodbye to her homeland. In this way she physically and symbolically made room for newcomers and their narrative of exploration and gold hunting. In effect, a "frontier myth" was in the making.³² Unfortunately, "total destruction by disease" has provided a ready explanation for Aboriginal peoples' apparent absence in the subsequent rush, even though First Nations did, in fact, live and work in the region.

Although estimates for population loss in epidemics range as high as 90 percent in parts of British Columbia,³³ scenarios of total destruction by disease should be viewed with caution. Cole Harris, who argues that epidemic disease caused considerable demographic change among British Columbia's Aboriginal population, offers some insight into the fate of Bowron Lake survivors.³⁴ On the middle Fraser River he points out that, after the epidemics, there were no longer enough people to maintain the salmon fisheries, forcing the remaining individuals to move to other locations or to change their modes of subsistence. First Nations also relocated to take advantage of the commercial fur trade economy, which was established and relatively stable by 1850. First Nations 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 one hundred years earlier. The result was that the population shifted as survivors moved to core or favoured areas previously unavailable to them and coalesced into new groups.³⁵ Survivors of the epidemic at Bowron may have found it impractical to remain in the area and so moved to centres of population where new modes of making a living were possible.³⁶ At the same time, rising employment opportunities associated with the gold rush attracted Aboriginal people to Barkerville from other areas of the province that were undergoing similar demographic changes.³⁷

By 1862, whatever population might have existed near Barkerville was small enough to be invisible to the incoming miners, and any

³² Lebourdais, "Bear Lake," BCA, Lebourdais Fonds, 3; Furniss, *Burden of History*.

³³ Harris, "Social Power," 55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 55, 67, 79.

³⁶ First Nations people living near Fort George, Quesnelle Forks, and Fort Alexandria, all accessible by river from the Bowron region, may be descended from the Bowron Dakelh.

³⁷ In the gold rushes, Aboriginal people "were relocating to the gold-mining communities at Fort Hope, Lytton, Yale, Wild Horse Creek, and New Westminster." Lutz, *Makuk*, 167-71, 177.

survivors had merged with First Nations elsewhere. I have seen no clear references to any local Bowron Aboriginal population in the newspapers, miners' accounts, or government documents. Newspapers and newcomers tended to lump all First Nations under the terms "Indian" or "Siwash" regardless of their geographic origin, which compounds the problem of identification. And, because Barkerville had no recognized Indigenous population, it never had a reserve.³⁸ Although the *Sentinel* reported "8 male Indians and 7 females" in a December 1866 census, it is unclear where they lived,³⁹ and none of the official Cariboo district census reports identified Aboriginal people as residents in Barkerville, Richfield, Lightning Creek, or Keithley Creek. Neither the McCabes' writings in the 1920s or 1930s nor documents pertaining to the creation of the Bowron Lake Game Reserve (1928) indicate the presence of local Aboriginal people in this portion of the Cariboo Mountains.⁴⁰ Considerable research remains to be done on Dakelh use and habitation of the Cariboo Mountains generally and of Barkerville/Bowron Lake specifically.

Despite the disappearance of the Bowron Lake Dakelh from the documentary evidence, which seems to be disease-related, Aboriginal peoples' participation in the Cariboo gold rush did not end in 1862. A new First Nations population of temporary and perhaps permanent residents formed in the years following the rush. An "Indian Camp" appears in newspaper, documentary, and photographic sources between 1874 and perhaps 1914. Richard Wright quotes an interwar letter from Harry Jones to Louis Lebourdais: "The Lillooet Indians were in the habit of spending their summer months in Barkerville in the [18]70s – their camping ground was on the East side of Williams Creek, opposite the hospital – the same camping [site] every year, as it was their custom to camp on the same ground when travelling up and down the road."⁴¹ In 1874, two men were implicated for taking alcohol into this

³⁸ The closest reserves were at Quesnel and Alexandria, and they were established in 1881. See Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1881* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1882), 271. After British Columbia joined Canada in 1871, the Barkerville region was included in the Williams Lake Agency of the Department of Indian Affairs. For the arrival of Indian agents in British Columbia, see Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, chap. 7; and Keith D. Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2009).

³⁹ *Cariboo Sentinel*, 15 December 1866.

⁴⁰ For more on the origins of the Bowron Lakes Game Reserve, see Mica Jorgenson, "'A Business Proposition': Naturalists, Guides, and Sportsmen in the Formation of the Bowron Lakes Game Reserve," *BC Studies* 175 (2012): 9-34.

⁴¹ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 112.



Figure 3. "View of Barkerville: Indian Encampment, Barkerville, Aug, '99." The Cariboo Wagon Road gave First Nations on its route ready access to Barkerville. *Source:* Barkerville Photograph Collection, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives, P-1479.

camp in an effort to gain the affections of an unidentified Aboriginal woman, and an 1899 photograph entitled "View of Barkerville: Indian Encampment, Barkerville, Aug, '99" shows an open and hilly area surrounded by packhorses, a covered freight wagon, a cart, sheds, shacks, and wooden shelters located high on the northeast bank of Williams Creek on the edge of town. The camp is suggested in other records: in June 1902 James Champion noted in his journal: "Indians come to town every summer – leave in the fall."⁴² And, in the same month, Barkerville barber Wellington Moses noted that "the first three Indians [to] arrive on the creek" had come for their annual summer visit.⁴³

Although Barkerville is within Dakelh traditional territory, historically the best recorded Aboriginal residents in the town are the St'at'imc (Lillooet) people mentioned by Mary Tappage and Harry Jones. In 1961, historian Alvin Johnston recalled that the Lillooet had travelled to the Barkerville region to gather huckleberries, an obser-

⁴² James Champion, "James Champion Journal," 6 June 1902, Barkerville Historic Town Library and Archives (hereafter BHTLA).

⁴³ Wellington Moses, "Moses Diary," 6 June 1902, BHTLA.

vation that is confirmed by newspaper accounts of the annual migration of St'at'imc to Barkerville.⁴⁴ Other evidence puts St'at'imc people in Barkerville during the summers. For example, in September 1899, John Stevenson, W.J. Powell, and John Lyne were all separately charged at the Richfield courthouse with supplying "an Indian woman of the Lillooet tribe, known by the name of 'Nancy,' with an intoxicant."⁴⁵ In July 1907, Indian agent E. Bell wrote of a "Lillooet" man named John Scotchman who appeared for trial at Richfield after he shot an Aboriginal man named Edward, who was from Cayoosh Creek, near Lillooet.⁴⁶

The *Sentinel* mentions other varied origins of Barkerville's post-1862 First Nations population. For example, on 11 October 1866 the newspaper commented on an Aboriginal man accused of murder at Soda Creek, who was reportedly at large in the Okanagan, and whose trial was eventually held in Richfield.⁴⁷ In 1867, the *Victoria Colonist* mentioned the death of an Aboriginal woman of the curious name of "Captain John" who was originally from Victoria but who had been living on Williams Creek for two years.⁴⁸ When an Aboriginal woman named "Full Moon" was assaulted in Barkerville in 1871, "two Indians – a Lillooet and Hydah," were implicated.⁴⁹ Three years later, the *Sentinel* claimed that "Indians" would be gathering in Barkerville "from all parts of the province to witness the [1874 Dominion Day] amusements," and it also provided the results of "Indian"-specific competitions such as the "Siwash races."⁵⁰ Known to be a gathering place for Aboriginal peoples, Barkerville received funds from Indian commissioner I.W. Powell specifically for the purpose of hosting these games.⁵¹ Also in the *Sentinel* in 1874, an Aboriginal person from Boston Bar brought news of a death to Barkerville.⁵² These references indicate that Aboriginal people travelled considerable distances and that, after 1862, the First Nations population of Barkerville was composed of a number of

⁴⁴ Alvin Johnston, "Indians Trek to Barkerville," *Cariboo Observer*, 1 June 1961; untitled, *Cariboo Observer*, 14 June 1913.

⁴⁵ British Columbia, Government Agency, Cariboo, "Magistrates Court, Indian Act: Liquor Violation," BCA, GR 216, box 150, file 6.

⁴⁶ British Columbia, Attorney General, Correspondence, 1872-1937, 1950, "E. Bell, Indian Agent, to A.W. Vowell, Indian Superintendent," 31 July 1907, BCA, GR 0429, box 14, file 03, fol. 2421/04.

⁴⁷ "Still at Large," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 11 October 1866.

⁴⁸ "Births and Deaths," *Victoria Colonist*, 6 July 1867. She was probably the daughter of a well-known Aboriginal man named Captain John who supposedly made a fortune running boats between Hope and Yale during the original stages of the Fraser rush. See Marshall, "Claiming the Land," 85.

⁴⁹ "Assault," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 July 1871, 3.

⁵⁰ "Indian Sports" *Cariboo Sentinel*, 27 June 1874.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² "Yale," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 29 August 1874.

migrants. Unfortunately, labels identifying individuals' home groups are rare, but in these examples alone we have Aboriginal people specified as originating in the Fraser Canyon, Lillooet, Victoria, and the Queen Charlotte Islands. These do indeed seem to represent First Nations from "all parts of the province," as the 1874 article specified.

"THE INDIANS WILL HAVE PLENTY OF MUCK-A-MUCK FOR THE WINTER": THE ENDURANCE OF THE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY IN BARKERVILLE

My forays into newspapers, court records, and government documents provide many more examples of First Nations peoples' gold rush era activities. Indeed, Aboriginal people continued to fish, forage, and hunt to sustain themselves during the gold rush. For example, they regularly harvested the annual salmon run at Bowron River, where they had fishing stations and drying racks, just as they had on the Fraser and at other traditional fishing grounds.⁵³ In August 1869, the *Sentinel* noted: "the Indians along [Bowron River] are having a joyful time catching and drying salmon ... [T]he run for good, well-conditioned fish is enormous." It continued: "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."⁵⁴ The newspaper also noted that "several tons of salmon" were caught and cured by Aboriginal people at Bowron Lake that year.⁵⁵ Similarly, in August 1870, the *Sentinel* commented that the large run would mean that "the Indians [would] have plenty of muck-a-muck [food] for the winter."⁵⁶ Unfortunately, these early accounts do not provide a home base or ethnographic affiliation for these fishers, but it seems likely that they were Dakelh.

Foraging, particularly for berries, was another form of subsistence work engaged in by First Nations people. In June 1869, the *Sentinel* quoted "Kloosh-le-Tete, an Indian," saying that "the forest fires have destroyed the olally [berry] shrubs." This meant that "the prospects for an abundant harvest of olally muck-a-muck [were] dim through the

⁵³ For this typical combination of salmon fishing stations and drying racks, see Douglas Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); and Douglas Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries: Indian Reserves and Fishing Rights in British Columbia, 1849-1925* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

⁵⁴ "The Salmon Run," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 August 1869.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* See also "At Bear Lake," and "Mountain Fishery," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 August 1869.

⁵⁶ "Quesnellmouth Items," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 August 1870.

smoke."⁵⁷ Barkerville's high elevation and subalpine forests produced large wild berry crops, and "Kloosh-le-Tete's" anxiety about the implications of their destruction in 1869 may indicate their importance as a seasonal food supply.⁵⁸

The best evidence of berry-picking taking place in Barkerville comes from the recorded memories of those who witnessed, a generation later, the annual migration of St'at'imc and Tsilhqot'in people to the Cariboo creeks. In June 1913, the *Cariboo Observer* noted: "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."⁵⁹ Mary Augusta Tappage's 1917 poem, "The Lillooets," is a fine example of this "pilgrimage," but other references suggest a long-standing tradition dating back at least as far as the turn of the century. For example, a July 1914 photograph of "G.F. Killam" on horseback bears this caption: "White object under horse's nose is white canopy of 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."⁶⁰ This indicates that Tsilhqot'in people came to Barkerville for the same purposes, and at the same time, as St'at'imc people. Recalling events from his school days at the turn of the century, Alvin Johnston, in the *Cariboo Observer*, described St'at'imc camping at Barkerville to gather the huckleberries that grew in abundance around the town.⁶¹ According to Johnston, "about ten families of Lillooet Indians" arrived in Quesnel on their way to the goldfields "about the first week of June, depending on the season and the earliness of grass for pasture."⁶² 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 huckle berries, which were packed in empty butter boxes, or about 20 pounds weight."⁶³ The consistency of these accounts suggests that entire families of St'at'imc and Tsilhqot'in people moved in and out of the area annually to work at a variety of jobs, including picking berries and

⁵⁷ "Olally Prospects," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 June 1869.

⁵⁸ Berries were harvested by First Nations women in other parts of the northwest and were particularly important when salmon stocks ran low. See Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 57-59; Nancy Turner, *Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 97.

⁵⁹ Untitled, *Cariboo Observer*, 14 June 1913.

⁶⁰ "Just Back from Patrol," Barkerville Photograph Collection, P0580, BHTLA.

⁶¹ Alvin Johnston, "Indians Trek to Barkerville," *Cariboo Observer*, 1 June 1961.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

providing laundry services and packhorses to the residents and miners of Barkerville.

Commercial trapping drew Lheidli T'enneh (Dakelh people living at the confluence of the Fraser and Nechako rivers) to Barkerville through the gold rush period. Barkerville's Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) store stocked tobacco and marten and beaver traps specifically for trade with the Lheidli T'enneh, who came to Barkerville every spring rather than trading at the Fort George post within their traditional territory. Lheidli T'enneh trappers were market savvy and adept at getting the best prices for their furs. In 1869, John Wark, who was in charge of the Barkerville store, reported to the Board of Management in Victoria that the "Fort George Indians" had not made their usual spring visit. He assumed that better prices at Fort George had drawn the trade away, but in fact Aboriginal trappers had sold their furs to stagecoach express operator Francis Barnard. Under the threat of losing HBC shipping contracts, Barnard promised to stop trading with the Lheidli T'enneh trappers.⁶⁴ The incident suggests that Barkerville was an economic hub for First Nations fur producers who opportunistically took advantage of new markets in the Cariboo.

Hunting also featured as part of Barkerville's gold rush and early economy. For example, two First Nations hunters (of unidentified origin) figure in an October 1870 *Sentinel* story about a nearby grizzly bear attack. The newspaper noted in passing that the two men were "Caribou hunters" who had "been recently very successful."⁶⁵ The Mountain Caribou (for whom the Cariboo Mountains are named) migrate out of the higher elevations into protected valleys in the fall, bringing them right through the Barkerville area. While we know little about these Caribou hunters, their activities suggest that they used existing knowledge and skills to thrive in the new and unfamiliar gold rush economy. We can also speculate from this intriguing incident that market hunting – commercial as opposed to sport hunting – took place at Barkerville. Such hunting must be placed in the context of severe meat shortages in Barkerville between 1866 and 1871. During these years, the *Sentinel* closely tracked the movement of beef herds at nearby Bald Mountain and speculated openly about whether or not food supplies would last the winter.⁶⁶ In the

⁶⁴ See Ramona Boyle and Richard Mackie, "The Hudson's Bay Company in Barkerville" (this issue).

⁶⁵ "Encounter with a Bear," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 October 1870.

⁶⁶ "Cows," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 June 1867; "Bovine," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 June 1871; "Mountain Grasses," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 August 1869; "More Beef," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 18 June 1870; "Prospects for the Coming Winter," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 September 1866.

spring of 1866 the paper observed that meat was completely unavailable;⁶⁷ in May 1867, it 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[ned] meats were greedily sought after, and changed hands at respectable figures";⁶⁸ in 1870, at one of the more remote creeks, beef was selling "at 50 cents [per pound], and no growling";⁶⁹ and in 1871, beef prices hit sixty cents per pound.⁷⁰ Such food shortages made First Nations hunting and fishing more important and valuable. Barkerville's remote location and large settler population resulted in short supply, high demand, and high prices for certain goods and services.⁷¹

The sale of fish in the mining towns could be lucrative. The *Sentinel* recorded a sale of eulachon in Barkerville in May 1867, noting that Aboriginal people of unstated origin were selling the fish "at the rate of three bucketfuls for one bit [25 cents]." The main market was Chinese miners, "who [were] always ready with the cash for good cheap grub."⁷² This transaction suggests a degree of contact between Aboriginal people and Chinese miners, an acquaintance that extended to the social sphere in early British Columbia.⁷³

While no direct references survive of First Nations selling fish from the Bowron region, a white man intent on exploring an overland route from Barkerville to Tete Jaune Cache in August 1869 never got past Bowron Lake, where he stopped to participate in the fishery. Fish were so plentiful that the *Sentinel* reported that he had filled up a miner's sluice box and that he was later able to sell them for twenty-five cents per pound.⁷⁴ In October 1869, the newspaper observed: "those who have been in the fishing business ... will do much better than if they had been mining."⁷⁵

⁶⁷ "Scarcity of Meat," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 10 May 1866.

⁶⁸ "Scarcity of Beef," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 13 May 1867.

⁶⁹ "Germansen Creek," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 September 1870.

⁷⁰ "Prices of Provisions, Etc." *Cariboo Sentinel*, 5 August 1871.

⁷¹ 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." See "Live and Let Live," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 June 1865.

⁷² "Oolahans," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 27 May 1867.

⁷³ See Jean Barman, "Beyond Chinatown: Chinese Men and Indigenous Women in Early British Columbia," *BC Studies* 177 (2013): 39-64.

⁷⁴ "At Bear Lake," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 August 1869.

⁷⁵ "Bear Lake," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 9 October 1869.

“PACKED ACROSS THE MOUNTAIN BY INDIANS”:
GOLD RUSH OPPORTUNITIES IN WAGE WORK

While berry picking, hunting, and fishing occurred in relative isolation, wage and/or commercial work at Barkerville brought Aboriginal people into more frequent contact with newcomers. As a result, comparatively more information about their participation in these jobs has survived, and, of these, packing goods was primary. This was an old tradition. Aboriginal packers had been so important to the earlier Fraser River gold rush that Chief Justice Matthew Begbie later recalled that “no supplies were taken in except by Indians ... Without them ... the country could not have been entered or supplied in 1858-1860.”⁷⁶ In his 1862 diary, a Cariboo miner named Samuel Hathaway wrote: “There are numbers of Indians all through this region ... along the route. They work pretty well, packing over the portages, loading wagons and boats, etc.”⁷⁷ In the 1860s, in order to provide commercial access to the swiftly expanding population in the interior of the province, Governor James Douglas built, improved, and maintained roads so that freight wagons or sleighs could operate year round on the more heavily used routes.⁷⁸

The most important of these new roads was the Cariboo Wagon Road, completed to Barkerville in 1865.⁷⁹ Historian R.G. Harvey notes a “phasing out” of Aboriginal labour in the Fraser Canyon as a result of the road’s improved infrastructure. Fraser River steamers competed directly with Aboriginal packers, swiftly putting them out of business on the lower parts of the river.⁸⁰ Like steamers, horse-drawn wagons and sleighs transported more goods and people in a shorter time than could be managed by Aboriginal packers.⁸¹ For example, at Barkerville, F.J. Barnard’s Express Freighting business advertised that it could bring goods from Yale to Richfield in ten days.⁸² In 1862, George Eves noted: “Packing is done from Forks [Quesnelleforks] to Williams Creek principally by Indians 30 c [per pound] but has recently gone up to 40 c,

⁷⁶ Matthew Baillie Begbie in H.L. Langevin, *British Columbia: Report of the Honourable H.L. Langevin, Minister of Public Works* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1872), 27.

⁷⁷ Hathaway is quoted in Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 110.

⁷⁸ Duclos, *Packers, Pans, and Paydirt*, 133-37.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁸⁰ R.G. Harvey, *Carving the Western Path by River, Rail, and Road through Central and Northern BC* (Surrey: Heritage House, 1999), 10.

⁸¹ Duclos also notes that Aboriginal packers were gradually out-competed and replaced by packers of other ethnicities. Although Aboriginal packers were cheaper, particularly in the early years, mule trains, stages, steamships, and sleighs “became better known and could reliably carry more goods,” meaning that “the Indian was called on less and less.” See Duclos, *Packers, Pans, and Paydirt*, 62.

⁸² “Express Freight,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 1 July 1865.

and \$5 worth of grub for the trip."⁸³ Aboriginal packing continued even after the completion of the Cariboo Wagon Road to Barkerville in 1865, particularly when the rapidly melting spring snow at the town's higher altitude made it difficult to keep the new route open. Because supplies were generally short and road access difficult, the *Sentinel* followed the arrival of goods in Barkerville with great interest.⁸⁴ On several occasions, the demand for goods created opportunities for Aboriginal packers. In June 1866, the *Sentinel* described Barkerville's continuing dependence on Aboriginal people as packers. "How Provoking," reads the headline: "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."⁸⁵ Continued reliance on the manual labour of "Indians" was seen as archaic and as a sign of the government's neglect of the district. In June 1868, when the road was once again rendered impassable by lingering spring snow, the *Sentinel* sarcastically urged its readers: "[Let us] possess 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."⁸⁶ The problem was still unresolved in 1875, the year that the paper stopped publishing. In April of that year the *Sentinel* 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.⁸⁷

Even when the new wagon road was operational, it did not solve the problem of transport between Barkerville and its many satellite communities on more remote creeks – communities whose residents were at the mercy of First Nations packers. The *Sentinel* reported an incident in 1866 in which a speculator named Mr. Gronosky lost "several hundred dollars" when "the [Aboriginal] packer ... charged him double freight on [his] goods, namely, 16 cts [per] lb" after a failed foray into the Cariboo Mountains.⁸⁸ In 1868, a letter to the editor of the *Sentinel* complained about the lack of roads between Barkerville and the major mining operations at Antler Creek, Grouse Creek, Willow River, and Sugar Creek: "There is no means of getting supplies except through Mosquito [Creek],

⁸³ Eves is quoted in Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 110.

⁸⁴ For example, "Arrival of Goods," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 18 October 1866; untitled, *Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 June 1867; "Pack Trains," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 11 June 1868; "Pack Train," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 18 June 1868.

⁸⁵ "How Provoking," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 8 June 1868.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ "The Express," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 April 1875.

⁸⁸ "Cedar Creek," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 23 August 1866.

from which goods have to be packed by Indians.”⁸⁹ The adverse climate and diffuse character of the Cariboo Mountain mining communities meant that First Nations could engage in this type of work, presumably to supplement other ways of making a living. The consistency of complaints over the years indicates that Aboriginal packing continued sporadically around Barkerville, even when improvements to infrastructure reduced such work along the main Fraser River transport corridor.

Even in the earliest days of the rush, as the newcomers made their way to Antler Creek, Aboriginal people acted as letter carriers while simultaneously capitalizing on other opportunities. In 1862 Michael Brown, one of the original discoverers of gold at Barkerville, claimed to have bought snowshoes at fourteen dollars a pair from the Fort George First Nations so that he and his partner could get to rumoured discoveries at Antler Creek. Joined at Antler by William Dietz and Michael Burns, the group of four explored together and eventually struck it rich on “Williams” Creek. The men hired two “Indians” to carry a letter to Judge Nind at Williams Lake, declaring the name of a new creek and laying claim to it. The Aboriginal postmen, probably members of the local Red Bluff band, were travelling to Williams Lake anyway “to procure provisions for a storekeeper at the forks of the Quesnel.”⁹⁰

In 1870, a court case against two Chinese men charged with running a lottery house in Barkerville was delayed owing to the lack of an interpreter, and an Aboriginal person was dispatched to get one.⁹¹ Aboriginal people worked for the Chinese community as well. In February 1875, a representative of the Chinese merchant house Kwong Lee sent two First Nations 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.”⁹² Scattered in passing throughout the newspapers, these accounts indicate that Aboriginal people acted as couriers during the gold rush.

Economic activities such as the sale of food, packing, and couriers supported gold mining, which was the engine of Barkerville’s boom-town economy. Its importance to Barkerville’s population is reflected in the *Sentinel*, which focused on mining activities and provided lengthy reports on the operations of active companies in the area. Mining issues

⁸⁹ “Roads,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 19 July 1868.

⁹⁰ The creek was named after William Dietz because he was the one who found the most gold. Barkerville is located on this creek. Michael Brown’s reminiscences were published in the *Colonist* in 1913. See “Gold Discovery of Fifty Eight,” *Victoria Colonist*, 24 December 1913.

⁹¹ “Police Court,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 10 December 1870.

⁹² “Coroner’s Inquisition,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 20 February 1875.

also dominated local court cases.⁹³ The centrality of mining meant that a large percentage of the people in Barkerville made a living from it, and, inevitably, the hunt for gold attracted Aboriginal people as well.

Aboriginal miners had been major participants in the Fraser River gold rush in 1858. As Ronald Genini notes: "The bulk of the extraction through 1859 was by Indian river-panning."⁹⁴ Daniel Marshall argues that "Native peoples not only participated in gold discoveries throughout the northern Pacific Slope region, but actively mined the resource," and he consults colonial government sources to further argue that, after 1858, Secwepemc and Nlaka'pamux peoples, along with Chinese, formed the majority of miners.⁹⁵ Michael Kennedy is equally specific, maintaining 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, rockers, and sluices."⁹⁶ Lutz, drawing on work by Marshall, T.A. Rickard, and others, notes that Aboriginal people mined gold for the HBC before outsiders arrived on the Fraser and that they continued to work as miners during that rush.⁹⁷ Aboriginal participation in Barkerville's mining economy must be seen as an extension of this earlier tradition.

A number of accounts survive of Aboriginal mining activities, though details are scarce. In 1867, the *Sentinel* reported the profits of the Douglas site and noted that "a number of Indians [were] working at these diggings."⁹⁸ In the summer of 1869, the newspaper noted: "the Indians who made small 'piles' last winter by mining ... are busy packing flour from Yale to Lytton."⁹⁹ Two years later: "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."¹⁰⁰ Historian Bill Hong mentions "Indian Frank," who had "a small operation a quarter-mile above Stanley on Chisholm Creek's west bank."¹⁰¹

⁹³ Almost every *Sentinel* edition for the years between 1865 and 1875 included a long "Mining Court" section detailing recent cases related to claims and diggings.

⁹⁴ Genini, "Fraser-Cariboo Gold Rushes," 472.

⁹⁵ Marshall, "Claiming the Land," 18. See also Daniel Marshall, "Rickard Revisited: Native 'Participation' in the Gold Discoveries of British Columbia," *Native Studies Review* 11, 1 (1996-97): 91-108.

⁹⁶ Kennedy, "Fraser River Placer Mining Landscapes," 44.

⁹⁷ Lutz, *Makuk*, 174.

⁹⁸ "Douglas Diggings," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 27 May 1867.

⁹⁹ "Busy," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 24 July 1869.

¹⁰⁰ "Rocking" refers to the use of a one-person rocker used to sift gravel. See "Alleged Robbery," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 August 1871.

¹⁰¹ Hong, ... *And So ... That's How It Happened*, 71.

As individual mining became less viable in the later years of the rush, Aboriginal men also worked as employees in mining companies, and they appear regularly in mining company ledgers.¹⁰² For example, “Indian Frank,” “Indian Dick,” “Indian Jim,” and “Edward (Indian)” are recorded in ledgers from the Central Company on the Jack of Clubs Creek.¹⁰³ Working for mining companies could be lucrative. In 1870, a labour shortage drove wages up to “\$3 per day [or] ... better.” The *Sentinel* noted that “there [was] not an idle man on the creek,” and that “in a few claims Indians [were] being employed.”¹⁰⁴ These records of Aboriginal mining tend to appear as side-notes to other stories and, unfortunately, provide no direct information about the specific origins, tribal affiliations, or motivations of the miners involved.¹⁰⁵

These findings contradict the work of Christopher Herbert, who, on slim evidence, speculates that a surplus of Chinese and white miners in Barkerville created a highly competitive job market that prevented Aboriginal people from becoming wage-earning miners.¹⁰⁶ He also proposes that 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 aimed at securing adequate food for the winter.¹⁰⁷ Seasonal cycles of Aboriginal wage and subsistence work may indeed have existed in Barkerville, but the intermittent coverage of newspapers and other accounts makes them difficult to detect.¹⁰⁸ By the turn of the twentieth century, Aboriginal people were certainly engaged in foraging around Barkerville during the spring, as is indicated from the evidence related to St’at’imc huckleberry picking.¹⁰⁹ However, late spring, when mud and melting snow made wagon and sleigh use impossible, was also the best

¹⁰² “Lowhee Mining Company Ltd,” BHTLA; “Last Chance Company,” BHTLA; “Alabama Company,” BHTLA.

¹⁰³ “Central Company, Jack of Clubs Creek,” BHTLA.

¹⁰⁴ “Labour,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 18 June 1867.

¹⁰⁵ Further instances of Aboriginal mining will undoubtedly appear as further primary research is undertaken in relation to such sources as letters, diaries, mining licences, and gold commissioners’ reports.

¹⁰⁶ Herbert cites a *Sentinel* article written during a labour shortage in 1870 as evidence: “There is not an idle man on the creek at the present time,” “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.” See Herbert, “Unequal Participants,” 101.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ 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 among coastal groups. See Lutz, *Makuk*, 169–70.

¹⁰⁹ Champion, *James Champion Journal*, 6 June 1902, BHTLA.

season for packing.¹¹⁰ Hunting and fishing were fall activities, when the salmon run arrived and the caribou began to migrate.¹¹¹ In 1873, Indian superintendent I.W. Powell marvelled that Aboriginal people could be seen "during the coldest weather working their cradles," which suggests a considerable degree of adaptation to the gold rush economy.¹¹² One can speculate that Aboriginal mining took place when opportunity and season allowed. Aboriginal residents' varied origins and occupations imply that there may have been multiple cycles at work at any one time in Barkerville and that seasonal work opportunities may have pushed Aboriginal people not only towards activities that supplemented mining but also towards mining itself.

"LUCY DEMANDED MONEY; THE WHITE MAN SAID
HE HAD NONE": ABORIGINAL WOMEN AND THE
SEX TRADE IN BARKERVILLE

Just as First Nations men and their economic activities appear sporadically in the documents, hints from the *Sentinel* suggest that Aboriginal women were also economically active in Barkerville. For example, "Kloosh-le-Tete," who lamented the loss of the Barkerville berry crop in 1869, was a St'at'imc or Tsilhqot'in woman living or temporarily working at Barkerville. In 1874, an Aboriginal woman named "Betsy" lost a satchel containing "about \$800 in money, specie, and gold rings" while travelling by stagecoach between Lightning Creek and Barkerville.¹¹³ In hopes of reclaiming it, she posted an advertisement in the *Sentinel*, which specified that two of the cheques were from the Bank of British North America, were in her own name, and had been for "the respective sums of \$130 and \$100."¹¹⁴ The paper did not mention how she came to obtain such a sum or where she was taking it. The satchel was found two years later emptied of its money.¹¹⁵ Betsy's economic activities

¹¹⁰ This occurred in the spring of 1868 and 1875. See "How Provoking," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 8 June 1868; "The Express," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 17 April 1875.

¹¹¹ For example, the unlucky caribou hunters were attacked by a bear in October. See "Encounter with a Bear," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 October 1870; "The Salmon Run," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 25 August 1869.

¹¹² Dominion of Canada, *Annual Report on Indian Affairs for Year Ending 30th June 1872* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873), 10.

¹¹³ "Relics of a Robbery," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 September 1874.

¹¹⁴ "Lost," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 28 September 1872.

¹¹⁵ "Relics of a Robbery," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 12 September 1874.

remain a mystery, but the possession of such a large sum of cash suggests considerable financial influence.¹¹⁶

Aboriginal women who came into contact with white men through the sex trade were comparatively more visible (and therefore potentially better recorded) than were those involved in other forms of work, but even here the records are either sporadic or of a sensational nature. The sex trade was referred to in euphemisms or in very vague terms in Barkerville, just as it was elsewhere in British Columbia, which makes it difficult to trace in the documents.¹¹⁷ As Patrick Dunae argues about Aboriginal prostitution in Victoria, “the motives, identities, and origins of these women were irrelevant to colonial officials who regarded Aboriginal prostitutes as a nuisance.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, sources rarely define the actual exchange of sexual services, goods, and cash. As in other gold mining and frontier towns, these exchanges occurred with varying degrees of formality, blurring the line between prostitution, consensual sexual relationships, and sexual abuse.¹¹⁹ While the details of the sex trade and its implications for Aboriginal women are difficult to assess, prostitution appears to have been a form of Aboriginal livelihood in Barkerville and provided a form of income for some.¹²⁰

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 quids of tobacco in their mouths,” wearing men’s clothing, gambling, and drinking whisky.¹²¹ Richard Wright documents a number of brothels owned and occupied by women in later years. For example, between 1866 and 1899, Fanny

¹¹⁶ For a broad view of Aboriginal women’s work, see Carol Williams, ed., *Indigenous Women’s Work: From Labour to Activism* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Patrick Dunae, “Sex, Charades, and Census Records: Locating Female Sex Trade Workers in a Victorian City,” *History sociale/Social History* 42, 84 (2009): 267–97.

¹¹⁸ Patrick Dunae, “Geographies of Sexual Commerce and the Production of Prostitutional Space: Victoria, British Columbia, 1860–1914,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19, 1 (2008): 119.

¹¹⁹ In her survey essay on American mining towns and prostitution, Julia Ann Laite observes: “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,” *Historical Journal* 52, 3 (2009): 746.

¹²⁰ Jean Barman notes “the rapidity with which Aboriginal women became sexualized as prostitutes in colonial British Columbia.” See Jean Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850–1900,” *BC Studies* 115–16 (1997–98): 243. Adele Perry also argues that contact between white men and Aboriginal women tended to be highly sexualized. Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 49.

¹²¹ “The Prostitutes,” *Victoria Colonist*, 10 September 1862.

Bendixen owned and operated a long series of "parlour" and "private" saloons known to be disorderly houses.¹²² However, Sylvia Van Kirk notes that no easily identifiable brothels existed in the Cariboo, that prostitution was generally unorganized, that "it was largely Native women who were exploited as prostitutes," and that at Barkerville the dominance of Aboriginal prostitutes explains the profession's relative invisibility.¹²³

Despite some examples of "professionalized" prostitution in Barkerville, most of the evidence regarding Aboriginal women implies casual arrangements pertaining to the sale of sex. That more formal sex-for-pay establishments existed is hinted at by an 1865 report in the *Sentinel*. Here, we may have evidence of a dance hall that employed Aboriginal women. The newspaper reported on a dispute between James Loring, the owner of the dance hall, and a man named Pierce. Loring accused Pierce of plying "the Squaws who [were] employed in Loring's Dancing Saloon" with illegal liquor.¹²⁴ Richard Wright refers to Loring's saloon as Loring's "Terpsychorean [dancing] Saloon in Cameronton," where Aboriginal women were employed and thereafter became "a part of the underside of Barkerville's social life, most often surfacing as prostitutes."¹²⁵ Such evidence hints at the possibility of a formal or semi-formal sex trade involving Aboriginal women in Barkerville.

More accounts survive of Aboriginal women trading sex for money or liquor on an informal basis. For example, Lucy Bones was regularly involved in the sex trade without being explicitly labelled a prostitute or being associated with disorderly houses. Bones's illicit dealings are known only because of her suspicious death in her cabin in the heart of Barkerville in 1870. The testimony of witnesses indicates that Lucy worked regularly in the sex trade. The *Sentinel* reported the testimony of "Charlie, an Indian," as follows: "I was in [Lucy's] 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." Charlie's account indicates that the white man came

¹²² Richard Wright, *Barkerville, Williams Creek, Cariboo: A Gold Rush Experience* (Williams Lake: Winter Quarters Press, 1998), 48-49; Sylvia Van Kirk, "BENDIXEN, FANNY," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bendixen_fanny_12E.html.

¹²³ Sylvia Van Kirk, "A Vital Presence: Women in the Cariboo Gold Rush, 1862-1875," in *British Columbia Reconsidered: Essays on Women*, ed. Gillian Lara Creese and Veronica Strong-Boag (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1992), 22.

¹²⁴ 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. See "The Indian Liquor Traffic," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 October 1865.

¹²⁵ Wright, *Barkerville, Williams Creek, Cariboo*, 45.

to Lucy's cabin specifically for sex. The testimony of Charlie Hughes, the white man mentioned by "Indian Charlie," is equally explicit. "After a while I told her I wanted to sleep with her, she told me she wanted some whiskey," stated Hughes.¹²⁶ Lucy's request for payment, first in money and then in liquor, suggests that their relationship was mutually understood as an exchange.

Other accounts are more oblique and blur the line between prostitution and what may simply have been sexual relationships. An example is the July 1872 case of A. Clinker and Susan. According to the *Sentinel*: "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."¹²⁷ Lizzie Wilmott, an eight-year-old Aboriginal child, and a woman named Jeannie both testified in court that Clinker had also given them alcohol. The result was a thirty-dollar fine assessed to Clinker. While it is difficult to determine whether Susan was earning a living by selling sex, that she did so is implied by her being found in Clinker's bed. Susan did not fare well in Barkerville. In October 1872, a few months after being 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 chose the jail time.¹²⁸

In another example of casual sexual contact, in September 1874 a man named Johnston assaulted Wellington Delany Moses, a barber, for bragging that he would "take his klootchman [Aboriginal woman] from him."¹²⁹ It is unclear whether the woman in question was a prostitute, but saloon owner Henry Morgan testified that Moses asked him to break the law by taking a bottle of whisky to the barn where the Natives were camped, possibly as payment. He was quick to inform the judge that he had refused to do so. After fining Johnston, Justice Robertson said 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."¹³⁰ The

¹²⁶ "Sudden Death and Inquest," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 16 July 1870.

¹²⁷ "Police Court," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 July 1872.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1872.

¹²⁹ Moses is well known in Barkerville history. He was a black barber who arrived in the 1860s and ran a successful shop for many years. See "Assault," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 5 September 1874.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

examples of Clinker's and Moses's "klootchman" demonstrate the difficulty of separating casual prostitution from other types of relationships.

Prostitution could be a dangerous business. 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."¹³¹ Lucy Bones died under suspicious circumstances in 1870, and in 1871 a woman named Full Moon was beaten with a rock and might have been killed had John Bowron, the government agent, not intervened. The *Sentinel* openly ridiculed Full Moon's appearance, and her assailant received a mere seven days' imprisonment for the assault.¹³² Unlike the frequently romanticized lives of white women in Barkerville, such as the German "Hurdy Gurdy Girls," Aboriginal prostitution was fraught with considerable danger.¹³³ Regardless, the evidence suggests that the sex trade was a part of Barkerville's economy and that Aboriginal women participated in it.

BARKERVILLE'S PLACE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA'S FIRST NATIONS HISTORY

Although much research remains to be done, especially in the colonial and early government records generated in the mining districts, the sources surveyed here indicate that Aboriginal people lived and worked at Barkerville during the gold rush. Indeed, the evidence – either substantial or elliptical – suggests that Aboriginal people of a variety of origins in British Columbia came to Barkerville to engage in a range of occupations, including berry picking, laundry services, packing and packhorse support, hunting, selling salmon and eulachon, letter-carrying, mining, and prostitution. Barkerville was a hub of employment, the economic nucleus of central British Columbia, and members of the Dakelh, St'at'imc, Tsilhqot'in, Haida, and Coast Salish First Nations are known to have worked or visited there.¹³⁴ While some flourished in

¹³¹ "Information," 1864, BCA, Cariboo West Court Documents, GR 2528, box 1, file 3; Untitled, 1864-71, BCA, Cariboo West Court Documents, GR 2528, box 1, file 6.

¹³² "Assault," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 July 1871.

¹³³ For a description of the hurdy-gurdy girls, see Wright, *Barkerville*, 45. Silvia Van Kirk also contrasts the Hurdy Gurdies with Aboriginal prostitutes in Barkerville, concluding that Aboriginal women experienced considerable danger in their profession. Van Kirk cites the deaths of Lucy Bones and another Aboriginal woman, "Jessie, 'The Flower of Lillooet,'" who was sick and died on the road to Barkerville in 1872. See Van Kirk, "Vital Presence," 32.

¹³⁴ In his gold rush database, Wright names over forty First Nations people at Barkerville, including Joseph, a Similkameen man; Nellie Bouche, a "Carrier Metis from Fort St James"; and Sarah, a Klickitat woman from Washington State. See Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 56, III.

the gold rush economy, others experienced hardship and poverty as a result of large-scale changes to British Columbia's political, social, and economic landscape.

But many questions remain. How many Aboriginal migrants lived at Barkerville permanently or seasonally? How did temporary or permanent work at Barkerville affect traditional Aboriginal trade networks and cultural practices? Archival and archaeological research should help answer these questions. In a broad sense, evidence of an Aboriginal presence at Barkerville contributes to the larger history of Aboriginal economies in British Columbia and resonates especially with Lutz's moditional framework: Aboriginal people came to Barkerville to engage in a mix of capitalist and subsistence work. In thinking and writing about Aboriginal modes of production in the colonial economy, Lutz and other historians of the province's first people provide valuable models and precedents for examining Aboriginal work at Barkerville. The evidence presented here indicates that, in the 1860s and 1870s, a Dakelh group was decimated by disease at nearby Bowron Lake, while a number of various other BC First Nations came to Barkerville to trade or to work. Aboriginal people chose to move, work, and live in ways that responded to the gold rush and a rapidly advancing colonial economy.