

CIVILIZED, ROUGHLY:

Gender, Race, and the Politics of Leisure in Colonial British Columbia, 1860–1871

ALICE GORTON*

INTRODUCTION

In late August 1865, Judge William Cox arbitrated a case that took place between three men and a woman in a Cariboo bar named Collins' Saloon. The altercation occurred when a white miner, William Stewart, attacked a Chinese man who was tending bar in place of Collins.¹ Adjudicating the case, Cox chastised Stewart for his behaviour, but, at the same time, he made it clear that “men have a right to go into a public house and are entitled to civility. Saloon keepers are bound to keep proper attendants in the bar, and a Chinaman is not a proper barkeeper.”² This example, which illustrates one way in which white men used discourses of civilization to shape access to drinking culture, sheds light on a broader phenomenon characteristic of Cariboo mining society. For many white miners, being a man in the Cariboo meant drinking, gambling, and sparring, but equally, they held dear the idea of their unique “civility,” an aspect of mining culture that has often been overlooked by historians who focus on miners' disreputability. By invoking discourses of civilization, these men created an idealized culture that merged roughness and respectability. In attempts to shore up the ascendancy of this image, they worked to maintain and reinforce hierarchical social systems through their clear and repeated efforts to

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¹ “Cariboo Police Court,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 September 1865.

² In this example, and in what follows, I refer frequently to colonial justice and legal structures in the Cariboo. It is important to note at the outset that law during this period was being actively constructed and debated by colonists and miners. As historian Tina Loo shows, geography played a distinct role in shaping legal meanings during the gold rushes. Although a courthouse operated out of Richfield from 1865, British Columbians held conflicting claims over the meaning of law during the Cariboo gold rushes. See Tina Loo, “A Delicate Game”: The Meaning of Law on Grouse Creek,” *BC Studies* 96 (1992): 44.

exclude other individuals and groups from their culture and the ideals associated with it.

In the following, I examine how white men in the Cariboo gold rushes created and sustained these inequalities and exclusions by dictating who could participate in certain leisure activities. Historians who focus on social histories of British Columbia's gold rushes often point to miners' transience or "rough" practices, highlighting the prevalence of activities such as fighting, drinking, and gambling in these communities.³ By emphasizing miners' roughness, scholars tend to position this group as antagonistic to the aims of colonial promoters and the colonial government, whose ideas about how to create a respectable settler colonial society included white men entering heterosexual relationships with white women, engaging in educational and religious pursuits, and abstaining from alcohol.⁴

Although miners' practices sometimes diverged from the ideals of colonial commentators, these men often conformed to and asserted expectations about respectability in the Cariboo. Indeed, in interior British Columbia's mining towns, "rough" and "respectable" settler cultures merged to create a cohesive, local hybrid that celebrated the rugged manliness of the mining community while also recreating certain parts of British society. British miners defined this culture in terms of race, drawing boundaries around their practices to dictate who could act in a disreputable fashion while remaining exemplars of manly civilization. White men's efforts to make this culture exclusive bolstered their social power and privilege; as such, the dominance of white men's civilized rough culture had profound implications for white women, Indigenous men and women, and Chinese men during British Columbia's early gold rushes.

The Fraser River and Cariboo gold rushes laid the foundations of settler colonialism in British Columbia, attracting thousands of idealistic prospectors and entrepreneurs from all over the world to the colony. In 1858, when news of gold in the Fraser Canyon reached California, between twenty and thirty thousand individuals travelled to the territory in hopes of striking it rich.⁵ This article focuses primarily on miners

³ Specifically, see Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, rev. ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992), 101; Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2001), 36.

⁴ John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop Journal* 38 (1994), 192; Adele Perry, "Fair Ones of a Purer Caste: White Women and Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," *Feminist Studies* 23, 3 (1997): 504.

⁵ Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 33; Daniel Marshall, "Claiming the Land: Indians,

originally from Britain, who made up the majority of the Cariboo's non-Indigenous population. However, the gold rushes brought a much more ethnically diverse group of people to the territory, including individuals from China's Guangdong province, Mexico, various parts of Europe, and so forth.⁶ As a result of this population increase, Victoria quickly transformed from a small trading post into a bustling centre of activity.⁷ This influx of people – and fears of American incursion – prompted the British Colonial Office to claim British Columbia as a Crown colony in 1858 and to establish key institutions of colonial governance on the mainland.⁸

After the initial rush to the Fraser Canyon, which passes through Stó:lō and Nlaka'pamux lands, prospectors followed news of gold further north into the territories of the Dakelh, Tsilhqot'in, and Secwépemc people.⁹ Non-Indigenous people established themselves in what would become Barkerville, Richfield, and Cameronton in the early 1860s.¹⁰ By 1863, roughly five thousand non-Indigenous people were in Barkerville.¹¹ With the development of settler institutions such as churches, saloons, restaurants, a courthouse, and a bank, the Cariboo's goldfield towns became urban enclaves in backwoods British Columbia. The gold rushes also motivated the government to begin major infrastructure projects (such as the Cariboo wagon road) and to develop land policies to facilitate the long-term settlement of non-Indigenous people in the colony.¹²

These events were accompanied by changing European attitudes towards Indigenous peoples. Historian Robin Fisher suggests that

Goldseekers, and the Rush to British Columbia" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2000), 2.

⁶ Richard Thomas Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields* (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2013), 49.

⁷ Penelope Edmonds, "Unpacking Settler Colonialism's Urban Strategies: Indigenous Peoples in Victoria, British Columbia, and the Transition to a Settler-Colonial City," *Urban History Review* 2 (2010): 6.

⁸ Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 77.

⁹ Mica Jorgenson, "Into That Country to Work": Aboriginal Activities during Barkerville's Gold Rush," *BC Studies* 185 (2015): 109; Elizabeth Furniss, *Changing Ways: Southern Carrier History, 1793–1940* (Quesnel, BC: Quesnel School District, 1993). Barkerville, Richfield, and Cameronton, the principal foci of this study, were built on Dakelh land.

¹⁰ "New Diggings – Excitement – Poisoned Salmon," *Daily British Colonist*, 15 July 1859; "Additional from Cariboo," *Daily British Colonist*, 11 September 1861.

¹¹ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 66.

¹² James Douglas negotiated fourteen treaties with a number of Indigenous groups on Vancouver Island before 1854, but the majority of British Columbia, and especially the mainland, is unceded territory. See Robin Fisher, "Joseph Trutch and Indian Land Policy," *BC Studies* 12 (1971): 3; Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 30–32.

many settlers came to British Columbia with established negative “preconceptions ... and refused to change their opinion on the basis of new experience,” whereas non-Indigenous fur traders had relied on and worked closely with Indigenous groups.¹³ Gold miners brought new cultural frameworks and practices. Although miners depended on the labour of Aboriginal peoples, they often viewed them as racially inferior, and this was expressed through violence as well as everyday discrimination.¹⁴ For example, Daniel Marshall shows that some miners brought genocidal practices from the California goldfields to the Fraser River.¹⁵ Likewise, records from the Cariboo reveal instances of racialized violence against Indigenous individuals. With that said, mining enclaves also facilitated slightly different relationships between European and Indigenous peoples than did larger cities like Victoria. Accounts from Victoria reveal intense colonial concerns about segregating settler and Indigenous spaces, whereas in the Cariboo such racial barriers could be challenged by the population’s ethnic plurality.¹⁶ Despite the population’s heterogeneity, however, miners’ and settlers’ presence, practices, and diseases worked as violent forms of dispossession and marginalization for Indigenous peoples.¹⁷ By and large, the gold rushes and the turn to focused settler colonialism marked the beginning of a fundamental shift in Indigenous-European relations.

Along with changes in attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples and their cultures, the gold rushes profoundly affected the ways in which white settlers understood sexuality and gender in British Columbia. Historian Adele Perry demonstrates the fundamental significance of the idea of white women to the colonial project.¹⁸ She suggests that colonial promoters viewed settler women as a “panacea” for the colony’s problems, providing, as they would, the opportunity for British Columbia’s largely single white male population to enter heterosexual monogamous relationships with white women and, together, form white settler families. Inter marriages between Indigenous women and white men had been

¹³ Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 74; Cole Harris, *The Reluctant Land: Society, Space, and Environment in Canada before Confederation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 432.

¹⁴ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 45. For miners’ dependence on Indigenous labour, see John Sutton Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Daniel Marshall, “No Parallel: American Miner-Soldiers at War with the Nlaka’Pamux of the Canadian West,” in *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, ed. John Findlay and Kenneth Coates (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2015), 34.

¹⁶ Penelope Edmonds, “Unpacking Settler Colonialism’s Urban Strategies,” 14; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 44.

¹⁷ Harris, *The Reluctant Land*, 434.

¹⁸ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 139.

essential to the fur trade; however, with the advent of the gold rushes, colonial officials sought to recast these relationships, positioning them as antagonistic to the settler project.¹⁹ As part of this process, white men also began to denigrate Indigenous women and to view them as increasingly sexualized.²⁰

Overall, the gold rushes were pivotal in British Columbia's history. They sparked the mass immigration of non-Indigenous people and led James Douglas to declare dominion over the mainland. The new colonial government looked to "open up" land for white settlement, in part through focused efforts to dispossess Indigenous peoples. At the same time, the gold rushes transformed Indigenous-European social relations as immigrants brought with them new and increasingly negative notions about race and gender – notions that underpinned their everyday experiences and interactions in the colony.

APPROACHES

In addressing these events, historians of British Columbia have illuminated many of the contours of the mid-nineteenth-century gold rushes. Their work highlights the significance of law, violence, gender, race, and space in shaping colonial social and political relations in British Columbia.²¹ Social historians of the gold rushes have particularly focused on the importance of gender and race in gold rush communities.²² Specifically, Adele Perry and Robert Hogg both examine configurations

¹⁹ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* (Oklahoma City: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 5.

²⁰ Jean Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850–1900" *BC Studies* 115 (1997): 249.

²¹ Loo, "A Delicate Game," 41–65; Tina Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*; Christopher Herbert, "Unequal Participants: Race and Space in the Interracial Interactions of the Cariboo Goldfields, 1860–1871" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2005); Daniel Marshall, "Mapping the New El Dorado: The Fraser River Gold Rush and the Appropriation of Native Space," in *New Histories for Old: Changing Perspectives on Canada's Native Pasts*, ed. Ted Binnema and Susan Neylan, 119–44 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Barman, *West beyond the West*; Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

²² This is also a pattern in wider scholarship on gold rushes. For American contexts, see Gunther Peck, "Manly Gambles: The Politics of Risk on the Comstock Lode, 1860–1880," *Journal of Social History* 26, 4 (1993): 701–23; Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Christopher Herbert, "Life's Prizes Are by Labor Got": Risk, Reward, and White Manliness in the California Gold Rush," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, 3 (2011): 339–68.

of masculinity on British Columbia's mining frontier.²³ In Perry's path-breaking study of gender and race in colonial British Columbia, she argues that white miners both reconfirmed and challenged gender norms by creating a "vibrant homosocial culture," which included activities as diverse as gambling, cooking, fighting, and mending clothing.²⁴ Perry's analysis focuses on white miners' transient culture, emphasizing aspects of these men's lives that colonial officials, journalists, and reformers found especially disreputable.²⁵ To this end, she discusses the ways in which reformers attempted to mould miners into respectable settler men, contending that mining culture was understood as problematic to the colonial project in British Columbia, which relied on respectable, long-term white familial settlement. By underlining these tensions between "rough" miners and respectability-focused reformers, Perry positions them as two distinct groups whose interests did not always overlap.

Robert Hogg largely confirms Perry's framing of these two competing models of masculinity in his comparative study of British Columbia and Queensland. In addition, he further develops the concept of frontier masculinity, noting a general movement away from a nineteenth-century moralistic model of manliness towards a more "hearty" version of frontier gender formation. He writes that, during the early nineteenth century, sobriety, piety, education, and earnestness became fundamental to British men's ideals. A number of missionaries, advice writers, and journalists expounded these gender expectations in Britain, and their proponents carried them overseas to the colonies. Towards the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the defining features of manliness shifted, with greater emphasis placed on "athleticism, moral courage, hardiness, and endurance."²⁶ Hogg associates these attributes with life on gold rush "frontiers," and he details how these qualities could be distorted to justify violence against women and Indigenous peoples.

This work also highlights the fact that such discourses were racialized as much as they were gendered.²⁷ Perry and Hogg both explore the ways

²³ Robert Hogg, *Men and Manliness on the Frontier: Queensland and British Columbia in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

²⁴ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

²⁶ Hogg, *Men and Manliness on the Frontier*, 16.

²⁷ Scholars have examined the relationship between imperialism, race, and gender in a variety of colonial contexts. See, for example, Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly" Englishman and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, *Bodies in Contact:*

in which colonial discourses perpetuated racial inequalities in colonial British Columbia. For instance, Hogg writes that, on the mining frontier, white men solidified their culture by “constructing non-white, non-British masculinities as inferior and ‘uncivilized’.”²⁸ In their analyses of race and gender, Perry and Hogg provide foundational frameworks for understanding frontier masculinity. Building from their work, it is essential to note that the form of nineteenth-century manliness I examine in this article conformed to a heteronormative gender ideal that was defined in relation to women. While this normative vision of rough and respectable masculinity triumphed publicly on the mining frontier, the gold rushes also provided space for diverse relationships between men. These bonds conform to historian Nayan Shah’s conclusions on the interracial and gender fluidity of intimacy in migration societies in the North American west.²⁹ Looking at international migrants, he underlines multiple configurations of relations between men of different ethnic backgrounds, upsetting racialized and gendered binaries that often characterize work on intimacy in migrant communities.³⁰ This work, as well as Perry’s findings on homosocial and homoerotic relationships in British Columbia, challenge historians to depart from the rigid categorizations that often characterize scholarship on intimacy in frontier societies.³¹ With that said, this article focuses especially on miners’ attempts to publicly recast their reputations as socially palatable, an ideal that necessitated conforming, at least superficially, to moralistic, heterosexual Victorian standards while also expressing a distinctive version of rough masculinity.³²

In tracing this version of gold rush manliness, a number of important sources provide a window into the discourses of race and gender in the Cariboo goldfields. In this work, I draw primarily from the *Cariboo*

Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

²⁸ Hogg, *Men and Manliness on the Frontier*, 14.

²⁹ Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

³¹ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 21.

³² This is not to imply that intimate relations in the Cariboo fell easily or strictly into heterosexual categories. As historian Steven Maynard writes, by focusing on gender expression, historians often overlook sexuality in studies of manhood, despite the fact that queer theory and scholarship produced by gay men are foundational to masculinity studies. Adele Perry’s scholarship on men in British Columbia demonstrates the presence of homosocial and homoerotic relationships, which were often furtive and therefore difficult to trace in the historical record. See Steven Maynard, “Queer Musings on Masculinity and History,” *Labour/Le Travail* 42 (1994): 183–97; Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 22.

Sentinel, Barkerville's local newspaper, which was established in 1865. In addition, I use correspondence published in Victoria's *Victoria Daily Chronicle* and *Daily British Colonist* as well as in New Westminster's *British Columbian*. These sources provide public, textual representations of people in the Cariboo. When working with public documents, I read for the ways in which newspapers discursively depict leisure and masculinity, interrogating these representations for the ways they connect "roughness" and "civilization" under the larger rubric of white men's respectable rough leisure culture. In addition to public documents, I also rely on the diaries of miners, colonial administrators, travellers, and settlers as well as drawing on colonial correspondence, saloon and court records, poems, and other bits of ephemera.³³ Similarly, I read these sources for local discourses and representations of masculinity, race, and leisure, keeping in mind their personal, more private nature.

While these sources provide a picture of white men's leisure and identity construction in the Cariboo gold rushes, they are by nature colonial documents. Historical anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler, in her work on the Dutch East Indies, notes that such records are actively constructed, reflecting a deeper vision or framework to allow colonists to imagine "rubrics of rule" in imperial spaces.³⁴ These archives, as Stoler points out with Frederick Cooper, are themselves "cultural artifacts," and their silences reflect institutional processes of erasure and marginalization.³⁵ Consequently, documents from the Cariboo gold rushes represent only a cross-section of society – in particular, white settlers who recorded their histories with prejudices, preconceptions, and stakes in the creation of colonial knowledge. Although Indigenous peoples and non-white migrants played crucial roles in the gold rushes, their voices have been largely written out of the early colonial record.³⁶

In attending to these archival silences, this research is framed by a growing body of scholarship on settler colonialism that focuses on understanding newcomers' strategies of dispossession and displacement in the British Columbian context.³⁷ According to historian Laura Ishiguro,

³³ I conducted the majority of this research through British Columbia Archives, University of British Columbia's Rare Books and Special Collections (UBC RBSC), and BC Historical Newspapers (digitized through UBC). While historians have examined many of these documents, my emphasis on public representations provides a fresh perspective on settler men's attempts to assert their rough reputations as respectable.

³⁴ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4.

³⁵ Stoler and Cooper, eds., *Tensions of Empire*, 17.

³⁶ Jorgenson, "Into That Country to Work," 109.

³⁷ Laura Ishiguro, "Histories of Settler Colonialism: Considering New Currents," *BC Studies* 190 (Summer 2016): 5.

settler colonial scholarship serves to address this unique form of lasting hegemony while also deconstructing binaries and providing frameworks for understanding how power relations have been continually negotiated and contested by Indigenous peoples and people of colour. Indeed, as Ishiguro notes, Indigenous peoples, non-white migrants, and others marginalized from the historical record have always actively challenged settler colonialism; accordingly, this historiographical approach refuses a simple understanding of the colonial project as absolute or complete.³⁸ As such, this article attempts to read settler narratives against the archival grain in order to expose one facet of identity construction that characterized the precarious imperial project in British Columbia.

Finally, I approach gender and race in the Cariboo gold rushes through the lens of leisure primarily because this focus repositions and reconsiders gold rush narratives. An emphasis on leisure represents a departure from much of popular gold rush history, which has highlighted miners' ceaseless labour.³⁹ By focusing on debates about leisure, I intend to dismantle stories British Columbians have told themselves about the gold rushes and to do something similar to what Susan Lee Johnson has done in her *Roaring Camp*, which focuses on the California gold rush.⁴⁰ As Lee Johnson suggests, many miners in the California gold rush felt devoid of "society," which was thought to revolve around "familial, relational, and community concerns," usually seen as the preserve of white women.⁴¹ Inspired by Lee Johnson's approach, this study seeks to examine leisure practices and politics in the Cariboo in order to cast new light on a specific labour-based colonial context.

In order to investigate the relationship between gender, race, leisure, and colonialism in the Cariboo, I break this article into three parts. I first examine the ways in which nineteenth-century commentators, popular historians, and academic historians have viewed white miners and Cariboo culture. I then investigate how white men in the Cariboo asserted the possibility of connecting these two cultures of masculinity to produce a local form of settler gender performance. I conclude by identifying how white men worked to make their culture exclusive, arguing that this form of masculinity shored up their gendered and racialized power in the Cariboo.

³⁸ Ibid., 13.

³⁹ Marie Elliot, *Gold and Grand Dreams: Cariboo East in the Early Years* (Victoria: Horsdal and Schubert, 2000).

⁴⁰ Johnson, *Roaring Camp*, II.

⁴¹ Susan Lee Johnson, "Bulls, Bears, and Dancing Boys: Race, Gender, and Leisure in the California Gold Rush," *Radical History Review* 10 (1994): 5.

IRRECONCILABLE REPRESENTATIONS

Building on this structure, I first chart the construction of two visions of gold rush masculinity – rough and respectable – as polar opposites. Scholars tend to emphasize the place of rough masculinity in the gold rushes, exploring how colonial governments and commentators viewed mining culture as uncivilized and therefore disruptive to a larger settler project. Popular historians have instead highlighted and celebrated miners as hardworking “pioneer” men who laid the groundwork for settler British Columbia. These differing representations are rooted in a subset of primary sources, especially the records of journalists, priests, colonial commentators, and government officials – white men who, in the 1860s, repeatedly discussed, critiqued, and defended their perceptions of the Cariboo by constructing dichotomous representations of mining society.⁴²

Over the past century, popular historians have taken up the writings of nineteenth-century commentators who praised miners, celebrating their honesty, lawfulness, and hard work as critical in pioneering the foundations of settler British Columbia. These authors proffer an image of Cariboo gold-mining society characterized by congeniality and order, emphasizing the apparent honesty of British miners.⁴³ In 1920, Agnes Laut reproduced this image by highlighting the lack of criminality associated with British and Canadian miners, especially compared with American miners.⁴⁴ Likewise Marie Elliott, writing in the twenty-first century, contends, “From our vantage point more than a hundred years later, we see them [miners] as courageous, resilient, and willing to gamble.”⁴⁵ For her, miners’ enterprise and endurance were essential to the development of the colony. Like Laut, she underscores the point

⁴² According to Peter Bailey, historians have perpetuated this dichotomy in studies of working-class men more broadly. Although the BC gold rushes attracted men from all socioeconomic backgrounds, these men have been represented in terms analogous to Britain’s working class, where men have been described as dichotomously rough or respectable without the chance of moving between these two polarities. Bailey intervenes to argue that working-class men have always navigated between both categories, writing that strict divisions provide an oversimplified framework for understanding this facet of working men’s culture. See Peter Bailey, “Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability,” *Journal of Social History* 12, 3 (1979): 337.

⁴³ F.W. Lindsay, *The Cariboo Story* (Lytton, BC: F.W. Lindsay, 1958); Beverley Boissery and Bronwyn Short, *Beyond Hope: An Illustrated History of the Fraser and Cariboo Gold Rush* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2003), 63; Richard Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields* (Victoria: Heritage House, 2013), 13, 22, 46–48; *British Columbia and Yukon Gold Hunters: A History in Pictures* (Vancouver: Heritage House, 2015), 29.

⁴⁴ Agnes Laut, *The Cariboo Trail: A Chronicle of the Gold-fields of British Columbia* (Victoria: TouchWood Editions, 2013), 10.

⁴⁵ Marie Elliott, *Gold and Grand Dreams: Cariboo East in the Early Years* (Victoria: Horsdal and Schubert), xii.

made by nineteenth-century commentators that “miners wanted law and order.”⁴⁶ Popular histories that imagine goldfield society in these ways fundamentally link miners to the colonial project because they position them as respectable “pioneers” capable of settling and reproducing British law and society in British Columbia. In doing so, they also reflect broader ways in which settler colonial myths of hearty pioneers have been canonized in literature, folklore, and national tradition.⁴⁷ By neglecting or glossing over the violence and roughness associated with the goldfields, these writers have drawn on one body of nineteenth-century sources while ignoring those that detail the racialized and gendered violence, crime, alcohol use, and roughness associated with the goldfields.

On the other hand, academic historians have emphasized miners’ “roughness” and, by extension, their incompatibility with the aims of colonial commentators and administrators in British Columbia. For example, scholars such as Adele Perry, Jean Barman, and Robin Fisher have underscored the transient nature of mining cultures and communities.⁴⁸ In a particularly striking example, Fisher separates mining culture from the goals of the settler project, speculating that if “the mining areas returned to their pre-1858 conditions after the miners had departed, their impact on the Indians might have been as transitory as their presence.”⁴⁹ In doing so, he implies that miners were ephemeral and distinct from the aims of settler colonialism, which depended on white immigrants establishing a long-term presence and recreating British social structures. This viewpoint fails to address the implications and cultural impact of their presence.

In brief, popular historians have drawn on nineteenth-century sources that emphasize the lawfulness and congeniality of mining culture, imagining miners in the Cariboo as “civilized” and reputable, hardworking men who had the ability and vigour to create a lawful settler community. Academic historians counter these narratives, drawing on nineteenth-century critiques of mining culture and miners’ violent or rough practices. In doing so, they position mining life as antagonistic to or incompatible with the economic, familial, and social goals of settler colonists.

Both of these historiographical representations of mining culture reflect and reproduce patterns in nineteenth-century sources that either condemn or celebrate white miners in British Columbia. Nineteenth-century commentators tended to represent white miners in one of two

⁴⁶ Ibid., xxii.

⁴⁷ For more on this point, see Furniss, *Burden of History*, 65.

⁴⁸ Barman, *West beyond the West*, 85; Hogg, *Masculinity and Manliness*, 161; Marshall, “No Parallel,” 47.

⁴⁹ Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict*, 101.

ways. One group of writers, comprised largely of metropolitan missionaries and outside observers, emphasized the roughness of mining culture and its incompatibility with the goals of the settler colonial project. On the other hand, a second group of writers highlighted the lawfulness, intelligence, and courage of miners, emphasizing their fundamental importance to the colonial project.

Of those who critiqued mining society, mission groups and missionaries produced the most significant body of nineteenth-century sources about miners' incompatibility with settler colonialism. From London, Oxford bishop Samuel Wilberforce denounced white gold miners who made fortunes mining and subsequently found "the leeches of dissipation and corruption, of lust and of drunkenness."⁵⁰ For Wilberforce, "roughness" was not only disreputable but also sacrilegious. Within colonial British Columbia, missionaries reinforced Wilberforce's view of gold miners and the corrupting influence of mining society. Reporting to the head of the Columbia Mission, Reverend C.L. Brown wrote that, in the Cariboo, "the mass of people (with the exception of a respectable muster of Canadians) were reckless and ungodly."⁵¹ In a similar manner, Reverend Evans emphasized the "prevalence of Sabbath desecration," which was, according to him, "unparalleled in any other part of Her Majesty's dominions."⁵²

Along with missionaries, some journalists wrote disapprovingly of mining culture and its divergence from respectable norms. Reflecting on the busiest years of the gold rush, one writer remembered how "the great institutions of religion were trampled in the dust, and God's name was continually blasphemed. Theatres, gambling houses &c., were many and prosperous, and the cup of the voluptuary was full and overflowing."⁵³ Other commentators – generally writing from outside the Cariboo – emphasized their belief that miners were antagonistic to the colonial project, highlighting their transient work patterns or rough and rugged aesthetic. James Douglas suggested that miners leave nothing but "desolation behind."⁵⁴ A correspondent for the *Victoria Daily Chronicle* wrote in 1863 that mining "is not fit for any one who can make a living in civilized society," citing the examples of men who "stumble

⁵⁰ *Third Report of the Columbia Mission with List of Contributions, 1861* (London: Rivingtons, 1862), 49.

⁵¹ *Fifth Annual Report of the Columbia Mission for the Year 1863* (London: Rivingtons, 1864), 6.

⁵² BCA, H/F/H15, Early Churches in Barkerville, 1967, Gerald Hallowell Fonds, extract of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Evans, 3 November 1863, 2.

⁵³ "The Depression – Its Causes," *British Columbian*, 28 August 1867.

⁵⁴ As quoted by Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, 75.

into fortunes” only for “the purposes of gambling and riotous living for a short seasea [*sic*].”⁵⁵

These discourses illustrate one way in which white Cariboo miners were imagined and represented as unrespectable men. Missionaries and journalists – especially those writing at a distance from the Cariboo – viewed white men’s mining culture as uncivilized, rough, and problematic for the creation of a settler society. By emphasizing the moral depravity and social excesses of mining culture, they produced a largely metropolitan discourse that chastised mining society and set it apart from the settler society they actively worked to cultivate.

In contrast, miners, local missionaries, and goldfield elites often challenged metropolitan critiques and attempted to legitimize the rough culture of the Cariboo by presenting it as civilized, lawful, hardy, and regionally appropriate. Indeed, by emphasizing these qualities, local writers argued that rough mining culture could fit with the wider objectives of the colonial government and the development of a settler nation regardless of the ways in which it transgressed the goals of some moral reformers, missionaries, and other colonial commentators.

Many journalists and magistrates, for example, highlighted the “law-abiding” nature of Cariboo miners. Justice Matthew Baillie Begbie, mainland British Columbia’s first colonial judge, took great pains to underscore the tranquility and lawfulness of the mining population.⁵⁶ In one instance, he described the “sober and quiet” miners, many of whom refrained from working on Sundays.⁵⁷ Missionaries within the Cariboo also emphasized miners’ respectability, writing that gold miners had “an amount of intelligence that is not to be found in any other labouring class – an intelligence of sort [*sic*] not to be excelled perhaps in any society.”⁵⁸ Others wrote of the requisite physical strength and endurance needed to successfully hunt for gold. As one writer put it, in the Cariboo “may be found, in body and brain, the representatives of the strength and

⁵⁵ “Williams Creek,” *Daily British Colonist*, 24 July 1863.

⁵⁶ Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, 56. As Loo shows, British miners and colonial officials were particularly interested in maintaining an “economic order” and establishing institutions of state power to preserve laissez-faire liberal capitalism. The imposition of legal structures in the Cariboo, however, could be challenged by localism. Public representations of miners as either lawful or unlawful demonstrate some of the tensions between lawfulness and local “disorderliness.” See Barry M. Gough, “Keeping British Columbia British: The Law-and-Order Question on a Gold Mining Frontier,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 38, 3 (1975): 269–80. Gough’s work on the BC context details the establishment of British law and order during the early years of the gold rushes.

⁵⁷ As quoted by Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority*, 56.

⁵⁸ *Fifth Report of the Columbia Mission*, 14.

flower of the human race.”⁵⁹ The *Cariboo Sentinel* was one of the most vocal advocates for the honest, hardworking, and upright character of white miners, writing of the “patient endurance” and “calm fortitude” that made them “desirable colonists.”⁶⁰ These Cariboo writers argued that white miners were law-abiding, honest, orderly, and intelligent. Their particular type of hardworking individualism, according to these sources, was essential to the development of a settler colonial society.

Nineteenth-century commentators perceived mining culture in contrasting and conflicting ways. Some imagined miners as rugged, ethical, and brave colonists, while others viewed them as immoral taints to the settler project. In these representations, the possibilities of white men’s roles in colonial British Columbia appeared dichotomous: rough, problematic miners or respectable, civilized settlers. The divisions between these models have largely been reflected in historical representations of the Cariboo gold rush. These perspectives offer important insights into the Cariboo gold miners because they establish two contrasting but integral elements of mining culture and masculinity.

RESPECTABLY ROUGH WHITE MEN

These contrasting viewpoints, however, obscure the ways in which white men asserted a new form of idealized manhood – one in which rough culture and respectable settler practices reconfigured each other. This contention offers important insights into how manliness was defined in one local context in mid-nineteenth-century British Columbia. While many outsiders – including members of the colonial government – viewed mining culture as transgressing colonial aims, white men in the Cariboo asserted a specific model of masculinity that reworked colonial expectations, assumptions, and ideas about settler culture into a particularly local form. Indeed, white men in the region repositioned drinking, sparring, and revelry as potentially respectable activities – a kind of civilized roughness.

Saloons played critical roles as spaces for this culture.⁶¹ For many observers, saloons became inextricably associated with theft, crime, and violence, with records from the period emphasizing their prevalence in

⁵⁹ BCA, H/F/H15, Early Churches in Barkerville, 1967, Gerald Hallowell Fonds, Thomas Derrick, “Cariboo,” 1870, 13.

⁶⁰ “The Cariboo Sentinel,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 June 1865; “Miners Are Celebrated,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 8 July 1867.

⁶¹ BCA, GR-0598, *Richfield Court Notes, 1862–1869*. The Richfield Court Notes from 1862 to 1869 reveal a number of instances in which saloons were sites of violence and theft. See Furnte, “Letter from Cariboo,” *Daily British Colonist*, 6 January 1865.

gold rush era taverns.⁶² Although these spaces facilitated a number of different activities, the principal pastime associated with saloon culture was drinking, which writers described as having a near-universal appeal among white men in the Cariboo. As shown, miners in British Columbia were well known – and criticized – for their drinking habits. For Cariboo residents, however, saloons served as links between rough and civilized activities by providing communal spaces in which white men could meet and forge a shared community. Often magistrates, aristocrats, and other professional men spent time drinking alongside miners in the Cariboo.⁶³ For all of these men, saloons also provided space for lectures, book sales, and church services in addition to acceptable drinking and revelry.⁶⁴

In their writings, some men represented casual gambling and bar games such as billiards as forms of socially acceptable leisure, even though outsiders often heavily criticized these activities.⁶⁵ Privately, a number of individuals reported in their diaries and journals that they played cards, though this activity could also be subject to public scrutiny.⁶⁶ For example, in a few instances white men in the Cariboo were tried for operating gambling houses, but in these cases, the community generally defended the men and their gambling.⁶⁷ In one example, an “informer” took Mr. W. Sterling to court for keeping a gambling house, where Sterling pleaded guilty to the charge. According to the *Sentinel*, magistrate Maynard Ball took a “lenient view” of the case, while a large group of spectators attended the trial, showing “public disapprobation” towards the “informer” – clearly positioning him as an outsider and rallying around Sterling. Indeed, after the trial concluded, Barkerville residents started a subscription to cover the costs of Sterling’s fines, all of which he donated to the Cariboo hospital.⁶⁸ In this case, the community’s reaction to the trial reflects a wider defence of white men’s gambling and saloon culture. Additionally, Sterling asserted his own respectability, despite his associations with gambling, by publicly donating the money to the

⁶² “Rev. Dr. Evans on the Dance Houses,” *Daily British Colonist*, 14 November 1861.

⁶³ For example, see BCA, MS-2443, Frederick Dally Papers, 25; BCA, MS-0750, Henry Maynard Ball, Diary, 163; Walter B. Cheadle, *Cheadle’s Journal of a Trip Across Canada, 1862–1863* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1971), 370; “Telegraphic,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 May 1866.

⁶⁴ “Lottery for Books,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 23 December 1871; “Letter from Cariboo,” *Daily British Colonist*, March 27, 1868; BCA, H/F/H15, Early Churches in Barkerville, 1967, Gerald Hallowell Fonds, extract of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Evans, 3 November 1863, 2.

⁶⁵ For shifting respectability norms about gambling in the context of nineteenth-century America, see Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps, Dream Books, and Bucket Shops: Gambling in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990).

⁶⁶ Cheadle, *Cheadle’s Journal*, 370.

⁶⁷ “Police Court,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 26 November 1870; *Cariboo Sentinel*, 16 September 1867.

⁶⁸ “Police Court,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 26 November 1870.

hospital. Other articles linked casual bar games such as billiards even more directly to social acceptability. In an 1863 *Daily Chronicle* article, for example, an unnamed correspondent wrote that fifteen billiards tables were being imported to the region's bar rooms. Without these tables, he thought, the Cariboo would be "secluded from the world."⁶⁹ These activities, typically associated with roughness, could provide a sense of civilization and society in the Cariboo.

The *Sentinel's* coverage of colonial holidays also illustrates how miners could use "rough" activities to celebrate respectable settler traditions and shared colonial histories. In particular, writers discussed holidays by emphasizing the links between public celebration and imperial loyalty. Reporting on the Cariboo's celebration of Dominion Day on 2 July 1868, the *Sentinel* praised the "men who ha[d] thus laid aside their toils and their various duties to celebrate Dominion Day ... not with any desire to enjoy senseless sport and maddening pleasure, but to show their love and loyalty" to the recently united country, Canada.⁷⁰ The *Sentinel* made drinking culture important to displays of imperial loyalty, arguing that such practices were not disreputably rough but, rather, enabled a particular kind of rough respectability in the mining community that connected it with a wider imperial world.

While many white men in the Cariboo attempted to position their rough culture as civilized, they also adapted typically "respectable" institutions such as the church and library in order to accommodate rough mining practices. The confluence of these two cultures is especially evident in church records from the period. Missionaries who travelled to the Cariboo before 1865, when the Cariboo Wagon Road was completed, wrote of their experiences in ways nearly identical to the accounts of miners from the period. Like miners, missionaries "slept in strange places" without comfort and clamoured for beans, bacon, and coffee.⁷¹ In a letter to the *Christian Guardian* dated 20 November 1863, Methodist reverend Browning related an account of his journey to the Cariboo, where he "slept on a hard floor in a crowded cabin" and "ate food neither varied nor tempting."⁷² While missionaries' journeys to the Cariboo often resembled miners' accounts, their work was decidedly different. Missionaries avowedly went to the Cariboo in order to preach,

⁶⁹ "Later from Cariboo," *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 16 August 1863.

⁷⁰ "Dominion Day," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 July 1868.

⁷¹ Wright, *Barkerville*, 126; BCA, H/F/H15, Early Churches in Barkerville, 1967, Gerald Halliwell Fonds, extract of a letter to the general superintendent of missions from the Rev. A. Browning, 20 November 1862, 3–4.

⁷² *Ibid.*

but their services took on a distinctly regional character that suited the mining population. On 17 July 1862, Reverend Browning described giving a number of sermons in gambling houses.⁷³ His first experience preaching in a saloon was at Beaver Lake, where he met a “gentlemanly proprietor,” a card dealer who quickly offered up his table, and an overwhelmingly “kind” and “attentive” audience.⁷⁴

Many miners seem to have responded enthusiastically towards the idea of a missionary presence in the Cariboo. Although ministers’ letters may have inflated the successes of their services, their correspondence reveals a number of conversations with miners grateful for their ministrations. Often, early missionaries report attentive audiences and emphatic cheers of support at their services.⁷⁵ An 1863 letter in the *Daily British Colonist* described the large number of miners who attended religious services: “It was truly a most impressive sight to see these hardy sons of toil reposing from their arduous labors, and in the religious communion forgetting the anxieties of this uncertain life.”⁷⁶ Reports of miners attending religious services – while cheering and participating in other unconventional ways – highlight the overlapping and compatible nature of “civilized” and “rough” cultures of leisure in the Cariboo.

Although Cariboo inhabitants did not always have access to organized religious services, some white men worshipped privately. For example, in 1862 an anonymous miner explained his life as one that bridged rough mining culture and more respectable forms of settler leisure. On some days he played cards and drank stout, while on others he found “a deal of pleasure in reading [his] bible” and thinking about his family at home in England.⁷⁷ In another instance, after hunting a beaver, one group of men was so thankful that they attempted to offer gratitude, praying to their God “without a studied prayer,” while one of the group’s members “sang one of his favourite hymms [*sic*].”⁷⁸ Informal, independent worship practices illustrate some of the ways in which “rough” miners participated in supposedly civilized practices.

Lectures offered another source of community in the Cariboo. Men in the Cariboo gave talks on topics ranging from religion to infrastructure, some of which appear to have been directly relevant to the Cariboo’s place

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ BCA, H/F/H15, Early Churches in Barkerville, 1967, Gerald Hallowell Fonds, extracts of a letter from Rev. A. Browning, 20 November 1863, 3; *ibid.*, “Rev. Thomas Derrick’s Journey to Cariboo.”

⁷⁶ “Multum in Parvo,” *Daily British Colonist*, 3 September 1863.

⁷⁷ BCA MS-o676, Anonymous Miner, Louis Lebourdais Papers, *Diaries*, box 5, file 17, 12.

⁷⁸ BCA, E/B/P32, J.B. Pearson, “To Cariboo in 1862,” 9.

in a larger colonial project. In 1867, Legh Harnett spoke a few times on the colonization of British Columbia, detailing new possibilities for resource exploitation and land use, for example, while another lecturer discussed the imperial adventures of a famed British captain.⁷⁹ Lectures sometimes generated funding for community institutions such as the library, which also offered miners links to civilized settler leisure activities.⁸⁰

The library's use by miners and town elites alike highlights the ways in which civilization was taken on and adapted by miners in the Cariboo. The library and Literary Institute had their most prosperous period at the height of the gold rush, in the early and mid-1860s. In 1863, one *Colonist* correspondent speculated that the books in the library would be "eagerly read during the winter months by the miners, when the frost and snow confine[d] them to their huts." In practice, white men used these institutions and in their diaries described reading for fun.⁸¹ Although the popularity of the Literary Institute and library varied over the course of the 1860s, reaching a low point in 1868, one event from 1864 indicates the importance of literary events to a large proportion of the community in the Cariboo.⁸² In spring of that year, a correspondent for the *Daily British Colonist*, Cosmopolite, wrote of a "grand entertainment" at the Literary Association in the house of Miss Jeanette Morris.⁸³ According to Cosmopolite, 250 miners attended the Literary Society's event, and their collective weight made the floor of the house fall through. Two hundred other guests waited outside and ultimately "could not be received."⁸⁴ Overall, the existence and popularity of the Literary Institute and library provide an indication of the ways in which the Cariboo community valued both saloon culture and more civilized activities. It certainly did not imagine them as mutually exclusive.

Many white men moved between rough and traditional settler leisure activities in the Cariboo. Contrary to existing scholarship on the Cariboo gold rush, which has largely positioned "rough" and "civilized" as distinct cultures of leisure, white men brought together the spaces, values, and activities of both in order to produce their own version of settler masculinity in the Cariboo.

⁷⁹ "Mr. Harnett's Lecture," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 September 1867.

⁸⁰ "Another Lecture," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 5 September 1867; "Lecture," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 2 September 1865; "Mulum in Parvo," *Daily British Colonist*, 3 September 1863.

⁸¹ BCA, MS-2664, Robert Scott, *Diary* (Snowshoe Creek), 19 October 1863–2 February 1867, box 1, file 3, n.p.; BCA, 676 5/17, Louis Lebourdais Papers, box 5, file 17; BCA, Warren Lambert, *Diary*, 1862, 16.

⁸² Gordon Selman, "Adult Education in Barkerville, 1863–1875," *BC Studies* 9 (1971): 42.

⁸³ Cosmopolite, "Every Day Life in Cariboo," *Daily British Colonist*, 12 May 1864.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

LEISURE, POWER, AND PRIVILEGE

In dictating social norms through exclusive definitions of civility and ruggedness, these men imposed social hierarchies that were both racialized and gendered.⁸⁵ This section explores how white miners created and reinforced their position of privilege not only through their participation in a variety of diverse activities but also through their efforts to define the boundaries of roughness and civilization.

Colonists maintained and reinforced hierarchical social systems through their clear and repeated efforts to exclude other people from their civilized rough culture and the ideals associated with it. Overall, white men convicted of crimes, white women, and Indigenous and Chinese men and women were viewed as firmly rooted in either roughness or civility, without the possibility of moving between the two; contrary to this, British miners defined themselves as having sole access to civilized rough leisure activities in the Cariboo. This section illuminates the discursive, legal, and social processes that helped white men bolster their social position in the Cariboo goldfields in part through the exclusive politics of leisure.

In defining their culture, white men in the Cariboo worked to differentiate themselves from other non-Indigenous men whom they viewed as degraded or corrupt. Those who claimed access to a civilized rough culture were united by their racial identities and statuses as white men, although they came from varying social and class backgrounds.⁸⁶ These men defined themselves in contrast to other white men who participated in criminalized behaviour. Historian Christopher Herbert argues that, in California, white men who committed crimes were viewed as socially inferior, distinct from idealized white manliness.⁸⁷ Similar patterns emerge in the Cariboo as writers depicted men who gambled professionally or mixed drinking culture with disorderly violence and theft as debased outliers.⁸⁸ White men had many reasons to emphasize the depravity of felonious men's activities, including the fact that excessive drink, disorderly violence, and professional gambling threatened white

⁸⁵ Adele Perry's work on men in backwoods British Columbia also details these processes of social inclusion and exclusion by focusing on how miners' everyday practices disrupted nineteenth-century gender expectations. Despite the powerful and exclusive nature of mining culture, moral reformers, as Perry shows, targeted miners as a group to be refined and reshaped in colonial British Columbia. Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 20–47; 79–96.

⁸⁶ Wright, *Barkerville*, 56; Patrick Dunae, *Gentlemen Emigrants from British Public Schools to the Canadian Frontier* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1981), 40.

⁸⁷ Herbert, "Life's Prizes Are by Labor Got," 342.

⁸⁸ James Anderson, *Sawney's Letters* (Toronto: Bibliographical Society of Canada, 1950), 3.

men's efforts to claim saloon culture and organized fighting as respectable and socially acceptable forms of leisure.

The *Sentinel* and the courts often admonished men convicted of crimes, depicting them as distinct aberrations of broader settler ideals of respectability. Cariboo writers viewed white men who committed crimes or behaved belligerently as threats to the community's reputation. Although many men gambled informally, commentators often viewed professional gamblers as deeply problematic and ultimately irredeemable.⁸⁹ For instance, James Anderson wrote that professional gamblers "lurk[ed] for their prey," and he wished them "banish'd frae the creek forever."⁹⁰ Similarly, miner J.B. Pearson wrote of a man who had robbed the members of his group on their way to the Cariboo. This man, who had posed as the head of navigation to steal the group's guns, had "devious and despicable" occupations, acting as proprietor of a "dance house" and a "runner and crimp for sailors' boarding houses."⁹¹ Pearson discussed with disdain the man's "prolonged spree" and his belligerent behaviour at dance halls.⁹² Both Pearson and Anderson censured these white men who committed crimes, positioning them as distinct from themselves. Accordingly, such gamblers could be tried and convicted, despite the fact that casual gambling was an integral part of white men's culture in the Cariboo more broadly.⁹³ Through such discursive and legal sanctions, white men in the Cariboo exerted considerable effort to define the manhood and activities of professional gamblers or criminals as lesser, degraded, and distinct from the idealized version they created for themselves.

While white men who engaged in criminal activities were seen as failures of potential rough respectability, white women were even more rigidly excluded from the possibilities of any errant behaviour in the Cariboo. In particular, these women were expected to bring settler civilization and respectability to backwoods communities.⁹⁴ When white women did engage in activities like drinking, gambling, and dancing for wages in the Cariboo, commentators heavily scrutinized and chastised their behaviour.

⁸⁹ BCA, E/B/A13.1A, R.H. Alexander, *Diary 1862*, 19 October 1862, 71; "News from Williams Creek," *Daily British Colonist*, 10 September 1862; *Tenth Annual Report of the Columbia Mission*, 28.

⁹⁰ Anderson, *Sawney's Letters*, 3.

⁹¹ BCA, E/B/P32 J.B. Pearson, "To Cariboo in 1862," 19.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ BCA, E/B/A13.1A, R.H. Alexander, *Diary 1862*, 19 October 1862, 71; "News from Williams Creek," *Daily British Colonist*, 10 September 1862.

⁹⁴ Perry, "Fair Ones of a Purer Caste," 505.

As Adele Perry has shown, colonial promoters, reformers, and journalists throughout British Columbia saw white women as essential to the stable, ongoing settlement of the colony because of these characteristics and their supposed civilizing influence.⁹⁵ Discussions about white women's innate sensibilities were accompanied by very specific expectations about how settler women should behave and in what activities they should engage. In one article on women's rights, for example, the *Sentinel* wrote that "men and oaks were made to be twined, and women and ivy were made to twine around them."⁹⁶ These discourses fundamentally linked ideal womanhood to domesticity, in line with the nineteenth-century Victorian domestic ideology, which argued for increasingly divided gender roles in heterosexual nuclear families. According to proponents of the domestic ideology, women should take care of the home and family while men laboured in the public sphere.⁹⁷

In keeping with these discourses, the *Sentinel* represented white women as particularly critical in the Cariboo, promoting the idea that settler women would "refine and polish" the Cariboo's population.⁹⁸ Drawing on ideas about gender and domesticity, one anonymous miner longed for his tent to be "brightened up by the smiles of a woman, and tidied up by a woman's hand."⁹⁹ Likewise, one editor of the *Cariboo Sentinel*, Alexander Allan, echoed this sentiment in his personal letters, writing: "One woman who can cook contributes more to the happiness of society than 20 who cannot cook."¹⁰⁰ Jokes in the newspaper also discussed women's roles, suggesting that "the best furniture in a house is a virtuous woman."¹⁰¹ Finally, the policies that led to the mission-sponsored bride ships, which transplanted marriageable British women to the colony in the 1860s, reflected colonial officials' deeply held belief in white women's civilizing potential.¹⁰²

Some of the settler women who lived in the Cariboo confirmed colonial commentators' hopes and took on "civilizing" roles. Of the seventy-five white women who travelled to the Cariboo during the gold rush,

⁹⁵ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 140.

⁹⁶ "Men and Women," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 11 October 1866.

⁹⁷ Anna Davin, "Child Labour, the Working-Class Family, and Domestic Ideology in 19th Century Britain," *Development and Change* 13, 4 (1982): 639.

⁹⁸ "Our Moral, Social, and Political Condition," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 28 February 1867.

⁹⁹ *Cariboo, the Newly Discovered Goldfields of British Columbia* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1975), 7–8.

¹⁰⁰ BCA, E/B/A15, Alexander Allan Letterbook, 10.

¹⁰¹ *Cariboo Sentinel*, 16 September 1867.

¹⁰² Adele Perry, "Oh I'm Just Sick of the Faces of Men: Gender Imbalance, Race, Sexuality, and Sociability in Nineteenth-Century British Columbia," *BC Studies* 105–6 (1995): 33.

80 percent married there.¹⁰³ As colonial promoters expected, many of these women became key players in the Cariboo's movement towards a more traditional settler colonial society rooted in narrow ideals of respectable leisure. White women played central roles in offering men civilized leisure in gold rush towns, and many were active in the Cariboo Literary Society and Amateur Dramatic Association. These roles were dictated by – or confirmed – a number of social expectations that encouraged them to provide a sense of civilized society.

Given many colonists' expectations that white women would serve civilizing objectives by providing opportunities for heterosocial leisure, settler women who overstepped the boundaries of traditional propriety received little support and sometimes faced significant consequences in public discussion. As one journalist suggested, "We have amongst us a sprinkling of the daughters of Eve, but I am sorely afraid they have digressed a little further from the path of rectitude than their erring mother." These women were far from the "angels in petticoats" he expected them to be.¹⁰⁴ In 1862, at the beginning of the Cariboo gold rush, one correspondent wrote that nine "prostitutes" lived on Williams Creek. As he put it, they "dress[ed] in male attire and swagger[ed] through the saloons and mining camps with cigars or huge quids of tobacco in their mouths, cursing and swearing."¹⁰⁵ While it is clear that sex workers were present in the Cariboo, Sylvia Van Kirk's work on women in the gold rushes demonstrates the difficulty of accounting for accurate numbers of women engaged in this work, suggesting that estimates by historians have been disproportionately sensationalized.

At the same time, records from the period reveal that a small number of settler, Chinese, and Indigenous women did participate in the sex trade in the Cariboo.¹⁰⁶ These women's experiences were shaped by the conditions of the goldfields, which were demographically, socially, and economically dominated by European men, some of whom obtained great wealth from their claims and looked to spend it on the company of women. Sex work in the Cariboo remained relatively clandestine, however, conforming to patterns found in other mining towns, where this form of labour may have been monitored but rarely criminalized, and where colonial promoters often viewed men as possessing "a fixed

¹⁰³ 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 Victoria Strong-Boag (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1992), 22.

¹⁰⁴ "A Glimpse of Cariboo," *Daily British Colonist*, 24 August 1866.

¹⁰⁵ "News from Williams Creek," *Daily British Colonist*, 10 September 1862.

¹⁰⁶ Wright, *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*, 81.

quantity of ... sexual energy.”¹⁰⁷ This was used to encourage the immigration of British women, but it also provided a useful explanation for sex work and mixed-race partnerships in the colony.

Aside from the question of sex work, discussions about women's behaviour continued throughout the 1860s. In 1868, for instance, the paper was still decrying white women's supposed transgressions. In an article entitled “Poor Humanity,” one *Sentinel* writer complained about seeing “two finely dressed and good-looking women as the accused and accuser of breaking the peace.” The accused, Hattie Lucas, provided the court with “a torrent of uncomplimentary language” and was charged with throwing stones at Mrs. Mary Sheldon's house.¹⁰⁸ This *Sentinel* article detailed all the particulars of the case with shock, surprise, and despair. Hattie Lucas had not simply sworn and broken the peace, she had transgressed gender norms that viewed her, and other white women, as gentle civilizers integral to the settler colonial project. Thus, although some white women participated in the region's rough culture – drinking, gambling, swearing, and smoking tobacco – they were generally criticized for their participation in these activities.

Writers' censure of women who transgressed gender norms indicates that white men had exclusive access to “rough” activities in the Cariboo. Saloons and taverns were respectable spaces for only men's leisure.¹⁰⁹ Because white women were discursively and sometimes legally disciplined for participating in rough activities, the expectation that these women should be harbingers of civilization effectively served to exclude them from white men's civilized rough culture.

Through their construction of a civilized rough leisure culture, white men also created and enforced social codes that excluded Aboriginal peoples in the Cariboo. These exclusions generally focused on access to alcohol and drinking culture. While white men worked to exclude settler women from tavern culture because of their imagined association with civility and domesticity, local discourses positioned Indigenous individuals as entirely and inflexibly disreputable. Colonial legislation banned First Nations peoples from buying alcohol and engaging in saloon culture, and writers often censured them for engaging in public revelry.

¹⁰⁷ Perry, “‘Oh I'm just Sick of the Faces of Men,’” 27.

¹⁰⁸ “Poor Humanity,” *Cariboo Sentinel*, 26 July 1868.

¹⁰⁹ “News from Williams Creek,” *Daily British Colonist*, 10 September 1862; BCA, H/F/H15, Early Churches in Barkerville, 1967, Gerald Hallowell Fonds, extract of a letter to the general superintendent of missions from Rev. A. Browning, 9 March 1864, 3. Other sources reveal instances when friends of miners in the Cariboo tried to break up their relationships with women who were reputed to engage in saloon culture. See, for example, BCA, E/B/W72, James Morton to William Winnard.

Constructions of Indigenous women as distinct from the possibility of civilization often determined their treatment in the Cariboo, especially when they participated in certain forms of settler leisure. Through such discourses, white men's efforts to position these women as outside the realm of civilization were fundamentally linked to colonial conceptions of race and gender. The gold rushes transformed white settlers' conceptions of Indigenous women; whereas the fur trade had been dependent on intermarriage, the gold rushes contributed to increasingly sexualized and deeply critical understandings of Indigenous women.¹¹⁰ In this context, public representations framed Indigenous women as entirely unable to meet expectations of settler civilization. In 1871, for instance, a woman called Gentle Annie was charged with being drunk and disorderly in public. The newspaper criminalized her behaviour, describing it as "conduct so unbecoming to a lady."¹¹¹ The *Sentinel's* emphasis on Gentle Annie's public behaviour reflected colonial fears about Indigenous women in nineteenth-century British Columbia, which equated their public presence in towns, drinking, and other forms of supposedly "immoral" behaviour with racialized and gendered inferiority.¹¹²

Aboriginal peoples' exclusion from the Cariboo's civilized rough ideal was also mandated and enforced by harsh legal punishments. In a piece of 1854 legislation, the colonial government made it illegal for settlers to sell alcohol to Indigenous peoples.¹¹³ Throughout the gold rush, a number of Chinese and white men were charged with selling liquor to the region's Aboriginal population.¹¹⁴ Similarly, colonial justices exerted grossly unfair legal punishments on Indigenous peoples, and Christopher Herbert suggests that this played out for small- and large-scale criminal transgressions.¹¹⁵

Taken together, the *Cariboo Sentinel* and the colonial courts positioned Indigenous peoples as outside the possibilities of settler civilization. In doing so, these public discourses and legal institutions excluded them from the Cariboo's dominant culture, which moved between settler ideas of roughness and respectability. These exclusions bolstered the social respectability of white men's rough leisure practices, distinguished white men from "others," and allowed them to claim their own activities as uniquely civilized.

¹¹⁰ Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality," 249.

¹¹¹ "Drunk and Disorderly," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 8 July 1871.

¹¹² Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers*, 192.

¹¹³ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 40.

¹¹⁴ *Cariboo Sentinel*, 22 July 1871; "Police Court," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 15 August 1866.

¹¹⁵ Herbert, "Unequal Participants," 68.

Similarly, interactions between white and Chinese men in the goldfield towns illustrate some of the ways in which Chinese men were excluded from white men's idealized culture. Chinese men were an important part of Cariboo gold rush society, although racialized boundaries profoundly shaped their experiences. Until 1864, for example, white men attempted to physically exclude Chinese miners from the goldfields by patrolling the trails from Williams Creek in violent gangs and establishing blockades to regulate access.¹¹⁶ When Chinese miners made it to Williams Creek, they tended to establish Chinatowns in order to form support and safety networks with one another.¹¹⁷ Barkerville's Chinatown had a number of businesses, some of which sold drugs and alcohol and also provided other services that facilitated local leisure.¹¹⁸

However important Chinese businesses were to Cariboo leisure, the courts also reprimanded Chinese individuals for running businesses and lottery houses, despite the fact that gambling was openly practised among white miners on the creeks.¹¹⁹ Popular games among Barkerville's Chinese residents included fan-tan, dominoes, and card games such as White Pigeon Ticket.¹²⁰ Although both white and non-white miners engaged in gambling, in 1871, the courts condemned three Chinese men for gambling and keeping a lottery house. The results of the case are unclear, but the judge threatened the men, warning them that "if they were proved hereafter to be carrying on any lottery he should send them to jail for three months as rogues and vagabonds."¹²¹

Along with legal inequalities, *Sentinel* writers decried "Chinese [g]amblers" whom they viewed as "passionately addicted ... coolies" or "heathens." In addition to these denigrations, the newspaper wrote of the "childlike exultation[s]" of Chinese men who won games.¹²² Here, white men associated Chinese men's gambling with addictive, problematic

¹¹⁶ "Letter from Beaver Lake," *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, 11 June 1861; Herbert, "Unequal Participants," 84. This overtly racist animosity foreshadowed later policies of exclusion formalized by the Canadian government. According to Peter Ward, after 1871 anti-Chinese sentiment became fundamental to public discourse in settler and governmental circles, resulting in the formation of the Anti-Chinese Association as well as the 1885 passage of the *Chinese Immigration Act*, which legislated the head tax and a slew of other racist policies. See Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy towards Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 42.

¹¹⁷ Herbert, "Unequal Participants," 54.

¹¹⁸ Tzu-I Chung, "Kwong Lee & Company and Early Trans-Pacific Trade: From Canton, Hong Kong, to Victoria and Barkerville," *BC Studies* 185 (2015): 154.

¹¹⁹ "Our Moral, Social, and Political Condition," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 28 February 1867.

¹²⁰ Tzu-I Chung, "Kwong Lee & Company and Early Trans-Pacific Trade," 157.

¹²¹ *Cariboo Sentinel*, 14 January 1871.

¹²² "Chinese Gamblers," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 13 May 1867; "A Squabble among the Heathen Chinese," *Cariboo Sentinel*, 11 November 1871.

behaviours or religious beliefs. By positioning Chinese men who gambled as uninhibited heathen or children, the *Sentinel* both “othered” Chinese men and drew boundaries around access to white men’s civilized rough culture. While gambling was an integral part of mining culture and white men’s assertions of manliness in the Cariboo, Chinese men faced critical legal and social censure when they participated in these same activities.

While settler men asserted the respectability of both their rough and civilized leisure activities, white women were presumed to be civilizing forces and thus were barred from any association with rough culture. In contrast, white men discursively excluded Indigenous men and women from participating in activities central to white men’s leisure cultures by associating them with disreputability. Likewise, as illustrated by the *Sentinel*’s frequent censure of Chinese men’s activities, white men sought to exclude Chinese individuals from this particular form of settler sociability.

CONCLUSION

This investigation sheds light on the intricacies of settler colonial social configurations in British Columbia. A number of factors made colonial reformers and commentators see white miners as imperfect settlers; for instance, they often shared living quarters with one another, hunted for gold, participated in saloon culture, lived as bachelors, and failed to form white heterosexual families aimed at long-term settlement.¹²³ However, although reformers and administrators had specific ideas about what constituted a respectable settler colonial society, supposedly rough white men also contributed to the social and cultural colonization of British Columbia in goldfield towns. Many of the white men who lived and worked in the Cariboo’s goldfield towns imposed their own assumptions and practices in gold rush societies. These men contributed to the colonial project at a regional level by enforcing a racialized and gendered masculine ideal through their leisure practices. While their activities often diverged from the aims and cultural expectations of colonial commentators in metropolitan areas, their sustained efforts to exclude other groups from their ideals of respectability are important components of British Columbia’s gold rush history.

Overall, these men, and the gold rush communities of which they were a part, fundamentally affected British Columbia by marking an intensified turn towards long-term colonial occupation, settlement, and political structures. This colonial project has not ceased, despite ongoing

¹²³ Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 21–23, 38–40.

resistance from Indigenous peoples. It is in this context that the history of mining culture, gender, race, and leisure in the Cariboo becomes crucially important. Popular and powerful narratives about gold rushes continue to frame miners as hearty pioneers who laid the foundations of British Columbian society. As scholars have demonstrated, these myths need to be interrogated to understand these men's place in the violence and dispossession of settler colonialism, which continue to shape British Columbia today. Their work emphasizes how "rough" white miners in British Columbia's backwoods both bolstered and undermined the aims of the colonial project. A focus on the politics of leisure sheds new light on this history. As this article demonstrates, these men's representations of their pleasure activities served to assert and shore up their social dominance in goldfield towns.