

## REFLECTION

### *Whiteness and BC History in the Age of COVID-19*

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AS AN ANALYTIC CATEGORY, whiteness is both remarkably present and remarkably absent in scholarship on British Columbia. Take, for instance, the titles of articles published in *BC Studies*. Of the 561 articles published since the journal was founded in 1969, there have been three with white or whiteness in the title: Timothy Stanley's 1995 "Schooling, White Supremacy, and the Formation of a Chinese Merchant Public in British Columbia"; Soren Laren's "Collaboration Geographies: Native-White Partnerships during the Re-settlement of Ootsa Lake, British Columbia, 1900–52," published in 2003; and Jade Norton and P.M. Baker's 2007 "The Experience of Whiteness among Students at a BC University: Invisibility, Guilt, and Indifference." A search of reviews and review essays finds more, much of it associated with discussion of a handful of monographs, most notably Patricia Roy's landmark 1989 study of anti-Asian politics, *White Man's Province*. If one puts aside the tensions and disconnects between the related categories of white and settler, we find another five articles with the word "settler" in their title, bringing us to a total of eight essays out of 561.<sup>1</sup>

A survey of *BC Studies* article titles is admittedly an inadequate means of measuring where and how whiteness figures in British Columbia's historiography. We can enumerate some of the reasons why. Article titles are often not reflective of the substance of the work. The study of British Columbia is certainly not limited to the pages of *BC Studies*, and critical Indigenous and anti-racist scholarship has often been published in a range of other places. But the modest and intermittent place of whiteness in *BC Studies* articles can't be easily explained away. A search for other categories makes clear the comparative visibility of the categories within which whiteness is most routinely articulated in relationship to, in this particular context. If we search for the word "Chinese" in the titles of

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<sup>1</sup> The search mechanism is available at <https://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/issue/archive>.

*BC Studies* articles, we get more than twenty-five results. A search for the terms “Indigenous,” “Aboriginal,” “First Nations,” and “Indian” produces a good deal more. Other communities and identities remain much less visible. This includes Black British Columbia, which is the subject of only a handful of articles, reviews, and review essays in *BC Studies*.

The relative and comparative infrequency with which the language of white and whiteness appears in titles of *BC Studies* speaks to the way that this racial category is at once present, powerful, and notably – and perhaps dangerously – unmarked. The presumption that whiteness is the norm has long been raised by critical race scholars, and it is a point that has been put in sharp relief by the events of 2020 and 2021. This time has seen the visibility of the Black Lives Matter movement; the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indigenous, Black, and racialized people; the escalation of anti-Asian racism associated with the pandemic, and the ongoing impact of routine and deadly anti-Indigenous racism in Canadian health care, child welfare, and justice. As Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (Aki-Kwe) and Harmony Johnson (σεῶακῶς) explain, the 2020 independent review of British Columbia’s health care system made clear the extent, visibility, and cost of anti-Indigenous racism across all regions and settings.<sup>2</sup>

In the summer of 2020, historian T.J. Tallie wrote about the connections between white power, Black life, and COVID-19. Recognizing the ways that whiteness has what Tallie calls an “asymptomatic lethality” confronts the claims of innocence that lie at the core of US narratives and “instead focuses on the daily, deadly potential that white people can bring in a society structured through supremacist violence.”<sup>3</sup> This framing can be extended north of the medicine line. The statement from Black Lives Matter Vancouver published in *BC Studies* in the fall of 2020 reminds us that Canada does not sit “atop a high moral ground.”<sup>4</sup> How have histories of whiteness, and white power, worked here? How has whiteness, in all its invisibility, produced the histories that *BC Studies* has engaged for more than five decades?

By “here” I mean British Columbia, but I recognize that these histories are often shared and mirrored by those in Canada as a whole and, in different ways, the settler colonial world and North America. However,

<sup>2</sup> Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond (Aki-Kwe) and Harmony Johnson (σεῶακῶς), “This Space Here,” *BC Studies* 209 (Spring 2021): 7.

<sup>3</sup> T.J. Tallie, “Asymptomatic Lethality: Cooper, COVID-19, and the Potential for Black Death,” 8 June 2020, <https://nursingclio.org/2020/06/08/asymptomatic-lethality-cooper-covid-19-and-the-potential-for-black-death/>.

<sup>4</sup> Black Lives Matter Vancouver, “This Space Here: Black Lives Matter Vancouver Calls on the City to Dismantle Systems of Violence and Oppression,” *BC Studies* 207 (Autumn 2020): 8.

the histories and the scholarship that has analyzed them have their own particular patterns in British Columbia. Let us turn to some of the ways that scholars have both written about and failed to write about whiteness in the particular place of British Columbia before returning to the present moment and the sharp new light it casts on the past and how we understand it.

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Gikino'amaagwinini explains that the familiar language of history and education in settler Canada works to naturalize colonization and dispossession, making it appear “inevitable and benign.”<sup>5</sup> Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt demonstrate that there are real and palpable costs to the formal or informal denial of race and racism in contemporary Canada. They explain that the “denial of racialized hierarchies blocks the potential for Indigenous suffering to be recognized and addressed” and renders invisible the stereotypes that many non-Indigenous people hold.<sup>6</sup> This obscures the lived reality of Indigenous and racialized people, and also occludes the historical processes that have produced them.

Addressing that lived reality and how it has been produced means addressing whiteness. Whiteness, explains Sherene Razack, “is the colour of domination.”<sup>7</sup> Like all racial categories, whiteness is a fiction that is made meaningful through historical processes, articulated in relation to others, and lived in intersection with other identities and structures. The particular trick of whiteness is the way that it has been both simultaneously ascribed with power and made invisible, especially for those who embody it.

There is much about whiteness in British Columbia that we do not know, or do not know well enough. We know that whiteness was a crucial part of colonial and settler power, and was also produced through and legitimated by it. In mid-nineteenth-century British Columbia, taxonomies of race were both local and global, and they could expand and retract in specific circumstances. The Vancouver Island treaties, negotiated between 1850 and 1854 between Hudson's Bay Company chief factor and Vancouver Island governor James Douglas and First Nations, spoke of Indigenous land becoming “the entire property of the white

<sup>5</sup> Gikino'amaagwinini, “Naming as Theft and Misdirection,” *BC Studies* 195 (Autumn 2017): 107.

<sup>6</sup> Gina Starblanket and Dallas Hunt, *Storying Violence: Unravelling Colonial Narratives in the Stanley Trial* (Winnipeg: ARP, 2020), 67–68.

<sup>7</sup> Sherene H. Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 11.

people for ever.”<sup>8</sup> Whiteness was about colonial power and authority, and it was produced in relationship to Indigenous people and racialized newcomers. Cole Harris and Robert Galois explain that the 1881 census revealed three British Columbias: one Indigenous, one Chinese, and one white.<sup>9</sup>

These divisions were produced and reinforced over time. Henry Yu reminds us that “racial hierarchy is not just a set of beliefs, but also a set of legal, economic, and social arrangements that took a great deal of political work to both make and unmake.”<sup>10</sup> They were not always stable or easily explained and justified. Renisa Mawani explains that colonial officials in early provincial British Columbia expressed confidence in their ability to determine who was white and Chinese but were “far less sanguine in their efforts to identify and differentiate ‘Indians’ from ‘half-breeds.’” The passage of the *Indian Act* in 1876 reflected this anxiety and sought to fix it, as it continues to do.<sup>11</sup> The terrain of the intimate was a site where race was produced and maintained. It was also a space where presumptions of racial lines were complicated and at times undone. Nayan Shah studies migrant, South Asian men in early twentieth-century western Canada and the United States, themselves the subject of efforts to locate them between “Asiatic” and “white.” Shah shows how relations and connections forged between men in the “transit zones” of farms, bunkhouses, and rough downtown districts were used to further justify their marginality and exclusion from citizenship.<sup>12</sup>

Whiteness was made and remade at the level of formal and informal politics. Lara Campbell’s recent book argues that suffragists remained

<sup>8</sup> For the full text of the Vancouver Island Treaties, see <https://www.leg.bc.ca/dyl/Pages/1850-Douglas-Treaties.aspx>. Brian Egan makes the point about the language of whiteness in these documents in his “Resolving ‘the Indian Land Question,’? Racial Rule and Reconciliation in British Columbia,” in *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies in Canada*, ed. Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audrey Kobayashi (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 218.

<sup>9</sup> Cole Harris and Robert Galois, “A Population Geography of British Columbia in 1881,” in *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 137–60.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Yu, “A Provocation: Anti-Asian Exclusion and the Making and Unmaking of White Supremacy in Canada,” in *Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada’s International History*, ed. Laura Madokoro, Francine McKenzie, and David Meren (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 32.

<sup>11</sup> Renisa Mawani, “Half-Breeds, Racial Opacity, and Geographies of Crime: Law’s Search for the ‘Original’ Indian,” *Cultural Geographies* 17, no. 4 (2010): 492–93. See also her *Colonial Proximities: Crossracial Encounters and Juridical Truths in British Columbia, 1871–1921* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010). On the *Indian Act*, see, among others, *Talking Back to the Indian Act: Critical Readings in Settler Colonial Histories*, ed. Mary-Ellen Kelm and Keith D. Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Nayan Shan, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

largely committed to racial restrictions on the franchise and exclusionary immigration legislation. Indigenous and racialized communities who were also excluded from the vote were left on their own to fight for it during the years following the Second World War.<sup>13</sup> Tim Stanley's study of school segregation and protest in interwar Victoria documents how anti-Chinese racism became a "texture of life" and helped to fix the "unnamed categories of 'Canadian' and 'white'."<sup>14</sup> John Price's *Orientalizing Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific* links anti-Asian racism in Canada to foreign policy in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> These points are picked up and expanded in critical directions by contributors to the 2017 collection, *Dominion of Race*.<sup>16</sup>

We know that whiteness was made at work and in labour movements and protest. Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audrey Kobayashi point out that the origins of whiteness studies in the United States are bound up with studies of labour, slavery, and abolition.<sup>17</sup> In the context of British Columbia, we can point to an analogous connection between studies of whiteness, work, the labour movement, and anti-Asian racism. The connections have been made since the 1970s. The titles of the two standard monographs on the topic – Peter Ward's *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy towards Orientals in British Columbia*, published in 1978, and Roy's *A White Man's Province*,<sup>18</sup> make clear some of the ways that whiteness was on the table. Around the same time, sociologist Gillian Creese's study of early twentieth-century Vancouver workers published in *BC Studies* mapped the conditions under which practices of cross-racial solidarity were fostered or diminished.<sup>19</sup>

The interests in the intersections between work, the labour movement, and whiteness in British Columbia that developed in the 1970s and 1980s

<sup>13</sup> Lara Campbell, *A Great Revolutionary Wave: Women and the Vote in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020), chaps. 5 and 9.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 6, 9.

<sup>15</sup> John Price, *Orientalizing Canada: Race, Empire and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> *Dominion of Race: Rethinking Canada's International History*, ed. Laura Madokoro, Francine McKenzie, and David Meren (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audrey Kobayashi, "Introduction: Where Is the Great White North? Spatializing History, Historicizing Whiteness," in *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies in Canada*, ed. A. Baldwin, L. Cameron, and A. Kobayashi (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1978); Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Gillian Creese, "Exclusion or Solidarity? Vancouver Workers Confront the 'Oriental Problem,'" *BC Studies* 80 (Winter 1988–89): 24–51.

largely stayed there. Roy's 2003 monograph picked up the story in the first half of the twentieth century, when "white British Columbians had largely circumscribed Asian economic activities as they consolidated their 'white man's province'."<sup>20</sup> Questions of race and labour addressed by sociologists in the 1990s were, to some extent, discussions of white working histories and political subjectivities.<sup>21</sup> But the sustained scholarship on whiteness, labour, and protest that developed south of the border in the 1990s and 2000s did not materialize here. As Fred Burrill has recently noted, the insight that whiteness is central to class formation and politics has had limited "intellectual purchase in Canadian labour history."<sup>22</sup>

The analytic possibilities of approaching labour history through the lens of critical race scholarship is made clear by transnational research, including some that addresses the particular context of British Columbia. Here I am thinking of Shah's *Intimate Strangers* and also Kornel Chang's sharp 2012 study of the connections between migration, labour, and radicalism in the US-Canada borderlands. Chang situates his subject within the Pacific and imperial world and shows how the compelling language of transnational, working-class community that emerged in the early twentieth century was predicated on notions of white racial unity. Efforts to forge connections between labour radicals associated with the Industrial Workers of the World and South Asian anticolonialists and Chinese nationalists in the early twentieth century still "reproduced the historical pairing of whiteness and manliness."<sup>23</sup>

Some of the richest and most rigorous engagements with whiteness in the context of British Columbia are those that centre processes of colonialism and dispossession, and interrogate whiteness in relationship to settler identities and histories. My own *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia*, published in 2001, falls in this category. It was inspired by the feminist scholarship calling for critical attention to whiteness and especially white womanhood that developed in the 1990s in response to the critiques of Black, Indigenous, and

<sup>20</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Alicja Muszynski, *Cheap Wage Labour: Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); Rennie Warburton, "The Workingmen's Protective Association, Victoria, BC, 1878: Racism, Intersectionality and Status Politics," *Labour/Le Travail* 43 (1999): 105-20.

<sup>22</sup> Fred Burrill, "The Settler Order Framework: Rethinking Canadian Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail* 83 (Spring 2019): 183.

<sup>23</sup> Kornel S. Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the US-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 118.

racialized women.<sup>24</sup> Along with historians in a range of other geographical contexts, I was reaching for ways to think about nineteenth-century settler societies outside of the logic of nation and region. In an era before digitized newspapers and searchable databases, I was also slowly encountering an archive that was undeniably racialized, imperial, and violent in a range of ways. What strikes me now is how poorly prepared I was to engage the Indigenous people and territories documented in these records. I had completed an undergraduate degree without reading a single Indigenous author from the northern part of the continent.

Historians have continued to map the mutual dependence of whiteness and colonialism within the particular space of British Columbia. Paige Raibmon's argument that historians need to attend to the "microtechniques" of dispossession is worth sitting with here. "Our past is heavy with the accumulated multigenerational weight of these microtechniques of dispossession, these intimate interactions between policies and practices over time," she explains.<sup>25</sup> So is Laura Ishiguro's careful consideration of the "settler everyday" in colonial and early provincial British Columbia. In her 2019 *Nothing to Write Home About: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia*, Ishiguro shows how we can locate "the affective and everyday configurations of white settler power in Canada" by attending to settlers' food, letters, and endless declarations of boredom.<sup>26</sup> Donica Belisle's new work on the making of whiteness through sugar in twentieth-century British Columbia echoes this point.<sup>27</sup>

Ishiguro also alerts us to a critical and enduring concern: namely, whether engaging whiteness as a category can work to recentre something that is already central, or double down on a social category and experience that is already omniscient and authoritative. This isn't a new question: a version of it has been present since the awkward birth of "whiteness studies" in the 1990s. In 2002, Cynthia Levine-Rasky introduced a volume of essays dedicated to "working through whiteness" by noting that the dilemmas and dangers "are sufficient in number and significance to

<sup>24</sup> Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (London: Verso, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> Paige Raibmon, "Unmaking Native Space: A Genealogy of Indian Policy, Settler Practice, and the Microtechniques of Dispossession," in *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest*, ed. Alexandra Harmon and John Borrows (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 78–89.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 214.

<sup>27</sup> Donica Belisle, "Eating Clean: Anti-Chinese Sugar Advertising and the Making of White Racial Purity in the Canadian Pacific," *Global Food History* 6, no. 1 (2020): 41–59.

tempt abandonment of the whole project.”<sup>28</sup> An analogous discussion has occurred around the possibilities and limits of settler colonial studies. In focusing on settlers and settler colonialism, do we risk losing the hard-fought-for and revelatory focus on Indigenous people and, critically, Indigenous scholarship?<sup>29</sup>

The risk of recentring white and settler subjects and scholars is not an abstract one. Geographers Sarah De Leuw and Sarah Hunt note that critical self-reflexivity has not unseated the “discursive and material power” of white settler scholars.<sup>30</sup> In 2020, the remarkable circulation of US sociologist Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* has provided a case in point. DiAngelo’s book topped bestseller lists on both sides of the border.<sup>31</sup> This speaks to the power of a good narrative hook and also to the potential of discussions of whiteness to become circular, limited, and, in one way or another, about white people. The spot that DiAngelo’s book took might have been better occupied by an author from the rich and long-standing critiques of whiteness and the work it does offered by Indigenous, Black, and racialized authors.

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We can think of whiteness as a wage, as David Roediger does. We can think of it as a kind of property, as Cheryl Harris has.<sup>32</sup> We can think of whiteness as a necessary technology of colonialism and capitalism. We can think of it as a lived experience that situates people in a chosen and easy place in what US geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines as racism – namely, the “state-sanctioned or extralegal production and

<sup>28</sup> Cynthia Levine-Rasky, “Introduction,” in *Working through Whiteness: International Perspectives* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 18.

<sup>29</sup> J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, “A Structure, Not an Event: Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity,” *Lateral: Journal of the Cultural Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (2016), doi:10.25158/L5.1.7. See also Corey Snelgrove, Rita Kaur Dhamoon, and Jeff Corntassel, “Unsettling Settler Colonialism: The Discourse and Politics of Settlers, and Solidarity with Indigenous Nations,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 3, no. 2 (2014): 1–32; and Joanne Barker, “Introduction: Critically Sovereign,” in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, ed. J. Barker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 1–44.

<sup>30</sup> Sarah de Leuw and Sarah Hunt, “Unsettling Decolonizing Geographies,” *Geography Compass* 12, no. 7 (2018): e12376.

<sup>31</sup> See <https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=White-Fragility-Tops-Antiracist-Bestsellers-bookpulse>; <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books/bestsellers/article-bestsellers-hardcover-non-fiction-september-19-2020/>.

<sup>32</sup> See David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991); Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1707–91.



exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.”<sup>33</sup> But it can be hard to identify these patterns of group-differentiated vulnerability if we are reticent or unwilling to name them or fumble or back away when we do so.

The particular way that whiteness comes in and out of focus is perhaps particular to British Columbia. But the reticence to discuss race, including whiteness, in specific terms is a wider Canadian pattern. Mythologies of racelessness in Canada have persisted, as Constance Backhouse explains in her still prescient 2000 book, *Colour Coded*, “despite remarkable evidence to the contrary, despite legislation that articulated racial distinctions and barriers, despite lawyers and judges who used racial constructs to access legal rights and responsibilities.”<sup>34</sup>

In keeping with this, Canadian health care systems historically have been reticent to track health outcomes along lines of race and ethnicity. Critiques of this putatively colour-blind approach have taken on new import in the current COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>35</sup> The First Nations Health Authority has documented the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on First Nations in British Columbia. Indigenous people accounted for almost 35 percent of COVID-19 cases on Vancouver Island despite making up only 7.6 percent of the Island’s population.<sup>36</sup> Provinces that have kept and released information have confirmed patterns noted elsewhere: that the pandemic has hit racialized and Indigenous people particularly hard. As far as COVID-19 goes, whiteness affords notable protection. Sixty-four percent of people in Manitoba identify as white, but only 48 percent of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 do.<sup>37</sup>

The presumption that race is not a relevant category, or a very relevant one, keeps advocates for racial justice forever on their heels. Advocates note that the lack of information diminishes our capacity to identify and

<sup>33</sup> Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 28.

<sup>34</sup> Constance Backhouse, *Colour Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900–1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>35</sup> See Kwame McKenzie, “Race and Ethnicity Data Collection during COVID-19 in Canada: If You Are Not Counted You Cannot Count on the Pandemic Response,” 12 November 2020, <https://rsc-src.ca/en/race-and-ethnicity-data-collection-during-covid-19-in-canada-if-you-are-not-counted-you-cannot-count>.

<sup>36</sup> Melissa Renwick, “Vancouver Island First Nations Face Disproportionate Burden during Pandemic: Report,” <https://www.cheknews.ca/vancouver-island-first-nations-face-disproportionate-burden-during-pandemic-report-774761/>.

<sup>37</sup> Manitoba, “COVID-19 Infections in Manitoba: Race, Ethnicity and Indigeneity External Report,” 1 March 2021, [https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/docs/rei\\_external.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/surveillance/docs/rei_external.pdf).

address structural inequalities.<sup>38</sup> Again and again, we must first prove that racism exists before we can explain the damage it does, and create change. Recognizing how race has structured Canada means making whiteness legible and accountable. We can only understand what we are willing or able to see. Since the 1970s, whiteness has sometimes come into sharp focus in studies of British Columbia. Scholars have created important and generative discussions of whiteness and its relationship to labour and protest, formal and informal politics, and colonialism and dispossession. More often whiteness has slipped from view or at least from analytic focus. We are living and writing amidst a punishing global pandemic with distinctly Canadian patterns of anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Asian racism. Data collected by the Vancouver City Police documented a 717 percent increase in anti-Asian hate crime between 2019 and 2020.<sup>39</sup> It is perhaps a good time to ask why whiteness still so often remains unspoken and unexamined, what work this relative silence performs, and how we might name and examine whiteness without reproducing its unearned and dangerous authority.

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<sup>38</sup> Bridgette Watson, "Race-Based COVID-19 Data Collection Should Be Mandatory, Says City of Vancouver Committee," 9 June 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/city-committee-race-data-covid19-1.5604442>.

<sup>39</sup> Craig Takeuchi, "COVID-19: Anti-Asian Hate Crimes in Vancouver Skyrocketed by over 700 percent in 2020," *Georgia Straight*, 18 February 2021, <https://www.straight.com/covid-19-pandemic/anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-vancouver-skyrocketed-by-over-700-percent-in-2020>.