
Colonial Proximities



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Renisa Mawani

Colonial Proximities
Crossracial Encounters and Juridical
Truths in British Columbia, 1871-1921



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Contents

List of Illustrations / vi

Acknowledgments / vii

- 1** Heterogeneity and Interraciality in British Columbia's Colonial "Contact Zone" / 1
- 2** The Racial Impurities of Global Capitalism: The Politics of Labour, Interraciality, and Lawlessness in the Salmon Canneries / 35
- 3** (White) Slavery, Colonial Knowledges, and the Rise of State Racisms / 77
- 4** National Formations and Racial Selves: Chinese Traffickers and Aboriginal Victims in British Columbia's Illicit Liquor Trade / 122
- 5** "The Most Disreputable Characters": Mixed-Bloods, Internal Enemies, and Imperial Futures / 163

Conclusion: Colonial Pasts, Entangled Presents, and Promising Futures / 201

Notes / 212

Bibliography / 245

Index / 259

Illustrations

Figures

Kincolith Mission [c. 1870] / 2

Metlakatla [c. 1900] / 3

Royal Agricultural and Industrial Society Exhibition and Celebration at New Westminster, 1892 / 9

“Saturday Night”: Scene at the Beaver Cannery, 1896 / 39

BC Canneries, weighing cans, 1913 / 47

Richmond Canneries, Iron Chink beheading salmon, 1913 / 50

Saloon on Dyke Road, Steveston [c. 1900] / 59

Hotel in Port Essington [189-] / 62

Yalis, Alert Bay, “Cannery employees” [n.d.] / 75

Residents of the Cape Mudge reserve [c. 1910] / 78

Alert Bay potlatch gifts [n.d.] / 98

Chinese Rescue Home, Victoria, 1906 / 116

Lillooet’s Chinatown [190-] / 123

Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie, 1875 / 148

Victoria’s Chinatown [c. 1900] / 155

Old Songhees Indian Village, Victoria [n.d.] / 158

Tables

- 1 Victoria, BC: Convictions for offences committed in 1891 / 131
- 2 Summary of all cases before the Victoria Police Court, 1891 / 132

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Colonial Proximities

1

Heterogeneity and Interraciality in British Columbia's Colonial "Contact Zone"

In September 1900 a "Lady Correspondent" writing for the *New Caledonia Interchange*, an Anglican newspaper circulating in northern British Columbia, described in detail the reopening of the Kincolith church.¹ The new "Christ Church," she wrote with great excitement, had recently been rebuilt in Kincolith, a Nisga'a village located at the mouth of the Nass River. For the Lady Correspondent, whose identity we are never told, the church opening marked a critical moment of imperial triumph, formally commemorating the first Christian outpost in British Columbia's remote and rugged Nass Valley. The Reverend Robert Tomlinson, one of the early missionaries in the region, had long aspired to establish a permanent European Christian settlement, one that was modelled on Metlakatla, an Indian village located farther south that had been built under the tutelage of lay-missionary William Duncan. For Tomlinson and others, Metlakatla was firm evidence of colonial possibilities and thus a model of inspiration. In a few short years, the village had been transformed from a colonial outpost into a site of bustling industries and a configuration of row houses that were fondly reminiscent of working-class Britain.² But these aspirations were temporarily derailed when, in 1893, the original church and the village of Kincolith were tragically destroyed by fire. Seven years later, in 1900, after an assiduous campaign to rebuild and re-establish a Christian presence in the Nass Valley, a new church – an imposing eighty-foot white structure – was rebuilt by the Git-Gingolx under the careful supervision of the Anglican missionary Archdeacon William H. Collison. It was the culmination of these successes and failures, pasts, presents, and futures that the church opening commemorated.

The much-anticipated restoration of the Kincolith church, as the Lady Correspondent informed her readers, was marked by an elaborate celebration that included two days of festivities. Mission workers invited a number of guests to observe the occasion, including "white men from the neighboring canneries" as well as local aboriginal communities.³ On the first night, all



The first church in Kincolith, photographed here, was destroyed by a large fire in 1893 and was rebuilt in 1900.

Kincolith Mission [c. 1870] | Frederick Dally photo | Image #B-03555 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

the “visitors in the village were feasted throughout by the Volunteers and Firemen in their respective halls,” she wrote. The following day, “the mission-house party received invitations to a six o’clock supper,” a more formal and exclusive affair that the Lady Correspondent detailed as follows: “One might have imagined oneself in an *English* restaurant to see the waiters in their white coats, and the many small tables at which the guests were seated. During the meal we were entertained by songs from the waiters, also by a *funny Indian who dressed as a Chinamen* [sic], *acted his part splendidly, and added greatly to the amusement of all by joining in the songs, and giving his own squeaky solos from time to time.*”⁴

Given the explosion of postcolonial studies over the past three decades and the rich insights this literature has spawned, the Lady Correspondent’s description of the Kincolith church opening, as I describe it above, is in some ways hardly remarkable or unique. As was the case in many colonial contexts, the emplacement of flags and the construction of buildings, monuments, parks, and other cultural accoutrements were indeed imperatives of empire.⁵ The eighty-foot Christ Church was a symbol of conquest, British civility, and superiority in a remote and rugged outpost that demonstrated



Metlakatla was regarded by many missionaries, including Rev. Robert Tomlinson, to be a model of civilization, progress, and modernization.

Metlakatla [c. 1900] | Image #G-04699 courtesy of Royal BC Museum, BC Archives

the global reach of empire. If we follow this familiar trajectory, the Kincolith church opening represents the triumphs of imperial expansion: the sure assertion of Christianity and the forward march of European progress and resettlement. The physical structure of the church and the celebrations surrounding its reopening could be construed as unabashed claims to imperial ownership and possession, ones that were strategically performed before an aboriginal and white working-class audience as a sign of things to come. At the same time, the Lady Correspondent's narrative also implies an underlying desire for home. That a newly built Christian church in a remote region of northern British Columbia heavily populated by aboriginal peoples could, in her eyes, resemble an "English restaurant" reveals the ambivalent interplay between past and future that was so central to colonialism: a nostalgia and yearning for the metropole, on the one hand, and a desire for conquest and resettlement, on the other.⁶

In other ways, however, the church opening and its theatrical scene are suggestive of racial orders and colonial desires that still require further investigation. That a white and aboriginal audience was entertained by a "funny Indian who dressed as a Chinamen" provokes an important set of

questions concerning the racial configuration of British Columbia's colonial contact zone.⁷ At the same time that the church opening illustrates the global impulses of empire, as well as its internal vulnerabilities and contingencies – as evidenced by the fire, for instance – it also reveals something distinct of the proximities and crossracial intimacies that colonial milieus encouraged. That a “funny Indian” would perform as Chinese and sing to white onlookers not only suggests that the contact zone was a space of racial diversity and multiplicity but also, and more importantly, reveals a heterogeneity that in and of itself was generative of new racial orders and colonial desires. For one, the church performance suggests that the prevailing distinctions separating European from Native that seemed so resilient along Canada's west coast in earlier historical moments were profoundly unsettled and possibly even disrupted with the arrival of the Chinese. Migrations across the Pacific, from China to what is now British Columbia, shifted colonial identities and reconstituted terrains of racial power in ways that need to be more fully explored.⁸

The Lady Correspondent's description of the church reopening and its commemorative festivities condenses, consolidates, and illuminates the conjunctive themes of this book. European efforts to deterritorialize and “civilize” aboriginal peoples and trans-Pacific flows of Chinese migration were not successive processes but unfolded in overlapping temporalities that produced uneven and contradictory colonial geographies of racial power. *Colonial Proximities* pursues these dynamics by exploring the transnational and intersecting lineaments of colonial projects, the social and juridical knowledges that imperial circuits and mobilities produced, as well as the legal responses and modalities of governance that were inspired and enabled through the colonial regime's production of competing racial truths.

Over the past decade, postcolonial scholars have critiqued and disrupted what Anne McClintock has termed the “sanctioned binaries” of “colonizer-colonized, self-other, dominance-resistance, metropolis-colony, [and] colonial-postcolonial.” Like others, McClintock argues that these dichotomies have glossed over the contradictory and unanticipated effects of colonial power and thus have not been wholly adequate “to the task of accounting for, let alone strategically opposing, the tenacious legacies of imperialism.”⁹ Despite these critiques, a central theme in social and legal history has been to conceptualize the colonial context as a site of relations, encounters, and contestations between European and Native, a place where prevailing distinctions between colonizer and colonized were imposed, asserted, and worked out.¹⁰ Many scholars have unsettled these divides in useful ways, arguing that the colonial contest produced a range of “in-between” subjects who complicated and sometimes even subverted racial and cultural distinctions.¹¹ Yet, scholars have been less engaged with questions of non-European migration and its

effects on constellations of colonial power. Histories of aboriginal-European contact and of Pacific migrations to British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada, for example, are still assumed to have unfolded in different historical periods, spaces, and trajectories that are rarely thought to converge or connect.

Throughout this book, I argue for a wider analytic and historical approach, one that characterizes the colonial contact zone as a space of racial intermixture – a place where Europeans, aboriginal peoples, and racial migrants came into frequent contact, a conceptual and material geography where racial categories and racisms were both produced and productive of locally configured and globally inflected modalities of colonial power. Specifically, my interest lies in tracking *how* encounters between Chinese migrants, aboriginal peoples, Europeans, and mixed-race populations in British Columbia prompted colonial agents, missionaries, and legal authorities to generate new forms of colonial knowledge and emergent practices of racial governance. How were British Columbia's racial populations – white, aboriginal, Chinese, and “half-breed” – constituted dialectically against one another and in a shifting and unstable racial order? What types of knowledges did colonial administrators generate about these communities, and how were they shaped by prevailing anxieties about the real and imagined interminglings across racial divides? In what ways did racial truths and their corresponding struggles inform the biopolitics of “state racisms” in their multiple forms? And finally, how did the emergence of new internal and external “enemies” shift existing terrains of colonial rule along circuits that reshaped constellations of colonial power, forms of legality, governance, and ultimately racial exclusion? The racial intricacies of the Kincolith church opening demand a set of analytic tools that can trace the asymmetries of colonial power in ways that might continue to productively unravel the “sanctioned binaries” of colonizer/colonized.

Anthropologists, historians, socio-legal scholars, and others have already remarked on the colonial contact zone as a variegated site that was generative of multiple racial identities. Writing of labour conflicts in Sumatra's plantation belt, Ann Laura Stoler observes North Sumatra to be “one of the most heterogeneous regions of Indonesia, its rural population including Indigenous Malays, Karo, Simalungun, and Toba Bataks, ethnic Chinese, Indians, and a large number of immigrant Javanese.”¹² More recently, Sally Engle Merry has explored the ways in which “early contact and labor immigration in Hilo [Hawaii] produced two distinct patterns of racial and class subordination” and corresponding identities that worked to distinguish native Hawaiians from Chinese and Japanese sugar plantation workers.¹³ Aisha Khan has argued that “cultural, racial and religious diversity has been a defining feature of Trinidad since the nineteenth century.”¹⁴ Working closer

to home in British Columbia, Cole Harris has described Canada's most westerly region as "multiracial" and "polyglot."¹⁵ Although these scholars and others have usefully observed racial heterogeneity in different colonial localities, there has been little discussion as to how proximities between non-European migrants and indigenous populations facilitated emergent affinities and political alliances, contacts and encounters that prompted new colonial knowledges, typologies, and strategies of racial governance.

My starting premise in this book builds on these insights of racial heterogeneity. Beginning here, I track how physical and discursive proximities, contacts, and encounters produced additional regimes of racial truths and added modes of legal and nonlegal governance. Given British Columbia's large aboriginal population historically and its strategic location along the Pacific, the region is a rich site in which to examine the making of racial identities and the new truths of race that crossracial encounters demanded. Specifically, my objective is to trace how colonial agents generated and articulated social and juridical categories in ways that accentuated, amplified, and sometimes even blurred racial divides not only between European and aboriginal but also between indigenous and migrant and between internal and external. In what ways did the putative racial distinctions between these disparate populations and the fears and anxieties that underwrote them (re)organize colonial relations along Canada's west coast?

In her important and now classic book *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt describes the "contact zone" as "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict."¹⁶ The contact zone, she elaborates, "is an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal co-presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect."¹⁷ Written over fifteen years ago, Pratt's insights have had a tremendous influence on shaping the fields of colonial and postcolonial studies.¹⁸ Despite the rich potential that her analysis offers for tracing the multiplicity of contacts and encounters between peoples geographically and historically dispersed, many scholars who have engaged with Pratt's ideas have highlighted the "spatial and temporal co-presence" of indigenous peoples and Europeans. Although these historiographies have provided crucial insights into certain types of colonial identities, interrelations, conflicts, and coexistences, there were other "promiscuous alliances" that were also constitutive of colonial contexts and that dramatically shaped their entangled trajectories and contemporary sediments, often in unpredictable ways.¹⁹

In *Colonial Proximities* I argue for a reworking of Pratt's influential concept of the contact zone. By paying close attention to the heterogeneity, diversity,

and multiplicity of "peoples geographically and historically separated" and coexistent in the same space, I offer a critical analysis that pushes the possibilities of her conceptual frame along other trajectories and in different directions.²⁰ My aim here is not to divert attention from the rich colonial historiographies detailing indigenous-European relations but to place these within a wider analytic field and to push in ways that allow a different rendering of imperial and colonial histories. "European exploration and expansion from the late fourteenth century on," David Theo Goldberg explains, has been "the history of miscegenation and cultural mixing, of increasing physical and cultural heterogeneity." However, the "history of growing demographic and cultural heterogeneity in the western hemisphere and among northern countries," he writes, "has reduced the dramatic nature of this heterogeneity to the second half of the twentieth century."²¹ During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, British Columbia's contact zone was marked by interracial encounters, proximities, and miscegenation. Emphasizing these histories might provide insights into how demographic and cultural shifts generated new social and legal knowledges of racial superiority and inferiority that then circulated across the region's disparate topography.²² Ultimately, placing aboriginal-European contact and Chinese migration in the same conceptual lens might illuminate the variegated forms, patterns, and rhythms that underpinned colonial encounters and the racial epistemologies and modes of regulation that contoured imperial terrains.

Along Canada's west coast, as was the case in the Caribbean, Australia, the United States, and elsewhere, colonial administrators were confronted by a racially diverse population that, by the mid-nineteenth century, also included Chinese communities of various proportions and symmetries.²³ In what is now British Columbia, Chinese migrants arrived from the 1850s onward, during a formative period of British settler colonialism. There is now an important and proliferating literature on the Chinese in Canada. Yet few of these scholars have pursued genealogies of migration and colonialism together.²⁴ This is not to suggest that colonialism has not figured in histories of migration; it certainly has. What many social and legal historians of labour and immigration have argued is that early Chinese migration to North America was in response to the demands of global capitalism, a system that was integral to and flourished alongside European imperial expansion, albeit not always in consistent and complementary ways.²⁵ But how exactly did Chinese migration change the patina and force of colonial power? As I argue in subsequent chapters, the growing Chinese presence in British Columbia generated new struggles over land, resources, and labour, additional opportunities for state and nonstate coercion and violence, and renewed constitutions of race and racisms. Indeed, traces of these conjunctive threads and the emergent and inchoate colonial formations that underwrote them

are evident in the Lady Correspondent's narration of the church opening in Kincolith. By the 1900s, as her narrative suggests, migrants from China had been drawn into existing matrices of colonial power, creating new conditions of possibility in which an Indian could burlesque in "yellow-face."

Just as racial heterogeneity and interraciality produced shifting constellations of power, these conditions also created fissures and potentialities for anticolonial resistance and subversion. In British Columbia, local authorities became increasingly anxious that a racially diverse colonial populace might eventually subvert plans to build the region into a permanent white settlement colony. Racial encounters between aboriginal and mixed-race peoples, Chinese migrants, and Europeans, as well as the physical proximities between these populations both in labour camps and in urban locales, created new opportunities for friendships, political alliances, and intimacies of other kinds.²⁶ If the minstrel show offers insights into the overlapping and contradictory dimensions of race and racisms and their emergent hierarchies in sustaining regimes of white superiority, as many scholars have now claimed, then the church opening poses an important set of questions concerning not only the racial configurations that were constitutive of British Columbia's colonial contact zone but also those that threatened to undermine it.²⁷ For an Indian to convincingly perform as Chinese, he required a repertoire of truths that distilled Chineseness in a comprehensible way, knowledges that were in some ways contingent on close and repeated contact and thus familiarity. It was through these intimate proximities that racial taxonomies and boundaries were both blurred and clarified. Indeed, it was amidst the threats of racial heterogeneity that the colonial regime sharpened its epistemic foundations and its assemblages of "state racisms" that continue to shape our social, political, and legal landscapes in old and new ways.²⁸

Without compromising the region's rich geographic and demographic specificities, this book is also an attempt to locate histories of British Columbia within a broader global field.²⁹ Too often, scholars writing of Canada's most westerly province have approached it as though it were truly at the "edge of empire," a locale physically and intellectually cordoned off from other parts of the world.³⁰ Although colonialism was always rooted in temporal and spatial particularities, it was also a global phenomenon that linked diverse and disparate geographical contexts in a wider terrain of power and knowledge.³¹ Colonial authorities in British Columbia often drew unevenly on a range of racial epistemologies and strategies of racial-legal management that were borrowed from other colonial settings, including those geographically proximate (the United States) as well as those farther distant (North Africa).³² While these "truths" of race were never simply imported and were always (re)constituted and modified in relation to the local demands of colonial rule, what these dynamics reveal is the ongoing interplay between



Royal Agricultural and Industrial Society Exhibition and Celebration at New Westminster, 1892. The crowds gathered at Columbia and Front Streets included Chinese and aboriginal men.

Stephen J. Thompson photo | Vancouver Public Library, VPL 8748

the local and the global, the universal and the particular. My purpose in this book is to raise some broader questions that connect colonial comparisons, racial knowledges, and technologies of governance in British Columbia with those unfolding elsewhere. What can these crossracial encounters and the many legal and nonlegal efforts to suppress them tell us of the inconsistent, contradictory, and ambiguous racial truths that colonial bureaucracies produced and on which colonialism flourished, and the instabilities and failures of colonial governance?

The chapters to follow are intended to illuminate the heterogeneity of British Columbia's contact zone, the production of racial categories and juridical truths, and the multiple and entangled terrain of state racisms. My interest throughout is to explore the inconsistencies and contradictions that have sustained these historical processes and their epistemic and material

fields. But to get at these points, let me first elaborate on the three interconnected and persistent themes that are threaded disparately throughout the book. Below, I sketch out and foreground my analytical inspirations and political investments in ongoing discussions of colonial comparisons, the biopolitics of state racisms, and colonial knowledges and racial deaths.

Colonialism and the Logics of Comparison

In his seminal book *Orientalism*, Edward Said offers us a series of critical insights into the comparative modalities of European imperialism.³³ Empire, as he makes clear throughout, flourished on comparisons that were drawn simultaneously along multiple scales: between putatively different races, across broader geopolitical formations, and between the "great empires" themselves. Drawing from Foucault, Said cautions that these comparisons were rarely benign or descriptive but were constituted in a variegated field of power/knowledge, a terrain that rendered these connections to be evaluative and expository.³⁴ Although colonial bureaucrats frequently drew parallels between metropole and colony, thus likening the "Oriental" to what Said describes as (marginal) "elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor)," they also highlighted similarities and differences across the numerous populations and vast geographies of the Orient more generally.³⁵ In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said pushes this point further and invites his readers to "speak on overlapping territories" and "intertwined histories."³⁶ His directives remain pertinent reminders of the need for renewed approaches to conceptualizing and tracking overlaps and conjunctive threads, including those that have been less conventional in imperial and colonial histories.

Since the publication of *Orientalism* and subsequently *Culture and Imperialism*, postcolonial critics have both followed and exceeded Said's analytical approach, pointing to the resilience of imperial formations, their territorial conjunctures and disjunctures, and the knowledges and identities these processes engendered.³⁷ Although these connections have stimulated important discussions across various disciplines, saturating what Frederick Cooper has recently termed "one of the most notable blind spots in the western world's examination of its history," these trajectories have been remarkably uneven, opening some sites of comparison, foreclosing others, and thus creating new "blind spots" in the process.³⁸ Said's own analysis of the mutually constitutive relations between Orient and Occident, East and West, self and other, and European and Native has encouraged a wide range of scholarly pursuits into the dialectical production of identities, geographies, epistemologies, and legalities.³⁹ Yet, the preoccupation with these questions, no matter how important, has diverted attention from other less evident comparative projects. In the chapters to follow, I pursue the intertwined threads of colonial histories by tracing several encounters between aboriginal peoples, Chinese migrants, Europeans, and mixed-race populations. If the

contact zone was indeed a space of heterogeneity, interraciality, and proximity, as I claim throughout, how did colonial authorities make sense of these multiplicities and what sorts of racial truths did they produce in the process?

By now, scholars of colonialism have cogently argued that race and racism were products of the colonial encounter.⁴⁰ The categorization of humans into races, types, and taxonomies, as Pratt and others contend, was an "explicitly comparative" project.⁴¹ Postcolonial and critical race scholars have long traced the comparisons and contingencies through which racial identities were produced. However, the comparative and convergent aspects of colonial racisms require further scholarly attention. It was precisely the putative differences *between* racial types (Indians, "half-breeds," Chinese, and whites) that enabled colonial authorities in British Columbia to create racial taxonomies and to assert hierarchies of colonial power. Racial comparisons naturalized the myth of European superiority, but in so doing they also rendered some populations to be worthy of imperial improvement and progress and others to be expendable. The family-tree metaphor, McClintock explains, ensured that a "host of inferior groups could now be mapped, measured and ranked against the 'universal standard' of the white male child."⁴² But less clear is how colonial and racial (a)symmetries fractured the self/other dichotomy and in so doing produced a range of racially inferior populations against which the qualities of Europeaness were sharpened and clarified. Although comparisons between Native and European populations, and their measurement against the alleged and infallible standards of universal maleness, certainly generated coercive modalities of racial power, the continued emphasis on a white/European core limits inquiries into other types of comparisons and the contradictory, indefinite, and unpredictable conditions in which racial categories and state racisms were produced and effectuated.

That colonial truths and racial identities never had an ontological essence and were always shifting and relational has now become a defining feature of postcolonial studies. But colonial administrators – as I point out in Chapters 4 and 5 – defined and calibrated their understandings of racial difference across a wide and uneven field, one that shifted and changed in response to the emergence of new racial threats, including the arrival of migrant populations from China and the production and proliferation of mixed-race ones. In British Columbia's colonial contact zone, Indian Agents, missionaries, and legal authorities drew on and created truths of race that were both local and global at the same time. It was precisely amidst racial intermixture and heterogeneity, in the proximities between aboriginal peoples, whites, Chinese, "mixed-bloods," and other Others, that colonial authorities drew what they believed to be immutable racial distinctions between these seemingly different populations. Although these differentiations were always implicated in sustaining European cultural and racial supremacy, what these

broader comparisons illustrate is that racial logics, even those circulating within the same geographical context, were never linear, consistent, or straightforward and were anything but immutable. Racial distinctions that were drawn between the colonized (dividing "vulnerable Indians" from "despotic Chinese," for example) shifted the constitution and distribution of state racisms and their corresponding colonial policies.⁴³ To fully understand these processes and their internal contradictions demands an analytical approach that tracks these multiple points of encounter; how were racial categories – their shifting conditions of possibility as well as their renewal, refinement, and redefinition – historically and spatially articulated on the ground?

The study of colonial categories, from Said onward, has consumed a significant amount of intellectual energy in postcolonial studies. Although many scholars have explored the formation of racial orders, arguing that colonial identities have left deep imprints and thick residues in our global present, others have insisted that colonial taxonomies were always accompanied by material effects that legitimized specific configurations of privilege and violence that are still evident in our contemporary moment.⁴⁴ In British Columbia these sediments continue to shape the current political-legal landscape and are palpable in ongoing struggles over aboriginal land claims and the inconsistent state recognition of historical injuries. What these contestations suggest is that racial categories were not merely aimed at drawing or reifying biological and cultural distinctions. On the contrary, taxonomies of race were fostered and forged through deep political investments that carried serious consequences for those racially defined. These differentiations and divisions enabled colonial regimes to decide whose lives were infused with promise, whose lives were "wasted," who, by virtue of their racial designations, could make claims to property and racial privilege, and who was to be indentured and enslaved.⁴⁵ "The role of race thinking in rendering the bodies of natives, slaves, and other infrahumans worthless or expendable," Paul Gilroy explains, "is a pivotal issue in specifying how the racialization of governmental practice impacted upon the pragmatic exercise of colonial power."⁴⁶

Colonial Proximities aims to track not only the making of colonial categories but also the types of comparisons these taxonomies made possible and those they rendered impervious and incomprehensible. British Columbia's colonial archive reveals that aboriginal-European relations and histories of Chinese migration do indeed have "overlapping territories" and "intertwined histories," to borrow again from Said. These conjunctive threads are materialized in the cautionary assessments made by colonial agents who lamented the interminglings between these communities and the seemingly dangerous liaisons between "full-blooded" Indians and those of mixed-race.⁴⁷ Importantly, the unrelenting and unitary logic of the European-Native binary that

continues to inform colonial historiographies, albeit often in subtle ways, has ingrained a false perception: that colonial anxieties only centred on some racial proximities and relations and not others. Racial logics and the practices they effectuated, as I argue in this book, had multiple genealogies and loci.

The disorderly conditions of interraciality that composed late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century British Columbia inspired a topography that was racially infused and politically charged. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, Indian Agents and missionaries routinely expressed concerns surrounding crossracial contacts of various types and their putative effects on white settlement. But colonial authorities, as I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, were not concerned solely with aboriginal-European relations, nor did their unease centre on sexuality alone. Rather, Indian Agents and missionaries speculated that crossracial encounters between Chinese, Indian, and mixed-race populations and their resulting intimacies, friendships, and affinities might also unsettle imperial visions of European resettlement and white superiority in other ways. In particular, many lamented the potentially degenerating effects that Chinese migrants and "half-breeds" might have on aboriginal peoples – influences that many argued would not only hinder colonial efforts to civilize the Native populace residing along the West Coast but would ultimately jeopardize colonial triumph.

Crossracial encounters in the colonial contact zone produced racial anxieties of various kinds that informed and influenced the constitution and development of new knowledges and the enactment and enforcement of laws and governing projects. Encounters between white women and Native men, as Ann Laura Stoler has so convincingly argued, were already overdetermined as loci of danger and contamination, sites of intimacy that revealed the porosity and permeability of colonial boundaries and that demanded vigilant surveillance and intervention.⁴⁸ Although the colonial contact zone was saturated with anxiety, as Stoler and others have shown, the term "colonial anxiety" is not always historically and analytically worked through.⁴⁹ What precipitated colonial anxieties? What were their conditions of possibility? What sorts of political opportunities did they open up and foreclose? Why did certain crossracial encounters evoke passionate and even frantic responses at specific moments but not at others? What was invested in racial purity and what was at stake? Feminist historians have provided crucial insights into some of these questions through the politics of heterosexuality and racial (im)purity.⁵⁰ Building on these, I explore a broader range of affects, from suspicion and enmity to other forms of intimacy, including friendships and political alliances. If racial meanings were always sites of conflict, struggle, and contestation, colonial anxieties were equally vexed as opposed to rigid. Since the chapters to follow hinge so much on questions of crossracial proximity and the multiple sources and

changing articulations of colonial anxiety, a few brief clarifying points are necessary.

In an early essay entitled "Not at Home in Empire," Ranajit Guha offers an important distinction between fear and anxiety. Dwelling on the memoirs of Francis Yeats-Brown, Guha traces his isolation and alienation in the "foreign" and "unsettling" landscape of India. Yeats-Brown, Guha argues, "could not find his bearings in a colonial environment where the 'unimaginable' scale of things was beyond his comprehension."⁵¹ But what made him feel so isolated, Guha explains, "was not therefore fear predicated on any given object but simply an indefinite and pervasive anxiety about being lost in empire."⁵² Guha draws on Yeats-Brown as both an object of study and a mode of critique. Indian historiography, "with its statist bias," he claims, "reads fear for anxiety."⁵³ In a subsequent essay with a similar title, Barry Hindess critiques and elaborates on Guha's distinction. Fear, he argues, "arises in relation to some specific and impending threat – the imminent prospect of battle or violence, a breakdown in law and order." Anxiety, he explains, "is more diffuse, lacking a clearly appropriate positive response – the gathering of intelligence or preemptive strike or the prohibition of a demonstration."⁵⁴ Whereas fear, both Guha and Hindess claim, enables the celebration of empire as a heroic epic, anxiety, they suggest, remains a much more neglected and undertheorized dimension of colonial historiography, one that illustrates the fissures and instabilities of colonial power.

In pulling apart these distinctions between fear and anxiety, Guha and Hindess usefully conceptualize the latter as a diffuse but constitutive feature of the colonial encounter. While they emphasize the contingencies and vulnerabilities of empire in important ways, their respective narratives seem to underestimate the excessive and coercive state responses that colonial anxieties precipitated and provoked.⁵⁵ Drawing from Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha insists that the colonial contact zone was always already underwritten by anxiety. The "colonial space of consciousness and society," Bhabha writes, was "marked by a 'Manichean delirium.'"⁵⁶ Unlike the formulations proposed by Guha and Hindess, anxiety for Bhabha is contingent on and productive of corporeal and psychic violence. No matter how ambiguous and unfounded these apprehensions, the uncertainty and contingency of colonial contacts and their potentially destabilizing effects often engendered illiberal reactions from colonial administrators and bureaucrats, including discipline, force, and violence.

Drawing from Bhabha, legal theorist Colin Perrin further complicates the distinction between fear and anxiety by explaining how prevailing fears of racial proximity are productive of anxiety. "The assertion of the stereotype," he contends, might "be read as the anxious response not of an other which strays too far, but to an other which comes too close. In this proximity the

status of the other, as determinately distinct from the self, becomes unclear."⁵⁷ But proximities between aboriginal, mixed-race, and Chinese peoples, as I emphasize throughout, precipitated anxieties, albeit for different reasons. Like the distances between colonizer and colonized, these other encounters also revealed "the inconsistency of a [European] self."⁵⁸ Specifically, these colonial proximities disturbed the self/other divide, creating opportunities for affinities, friendships, and intimacies that jeopardized the quest for racial purity. Indeed, missionaries, Indian Agents, and legal authorities frequently expressed concerns regarding racial proximities and interracial interminglings between Indians, Chinese, and mixed-race populations. These anxieties – no matter how diffuse – generated myriad laws and policies that, on the surface, had little to do with interracial sexuality or sociability but were clearly directed at governing and ultimately preventing crossracial contacts, albeit unsuccessfully. In British Columbia, as I document in Chapter 4, these legalities included technologies of governance aimed at enforcing racial segregation through restrictions on liquor and on interracial drinking. Contrary to Hindess' claims of anxiety and the absence of an imminent or impending threat, these legal responses did not always target a specific exigency or event but were motivated by a looser set of political objectives concerning spatial distance, and those racial Others who came too close. Thus, colonial anxiety is not a transcendental concept but a historical assemblage contingent on specific temporalities and geopolitical coordinates that need to be mapped out and worked through.

Despite prevailing anxieties of racial contamination, migration from China, along with other transnational and historical forces, rendered racial heterogeneity and interracial proximity to be central features of British Columbia's colonial contact zone. As I discuss in the following chapter, the demands of global capitalism *encouraged* intimacies and encounters that were both sporadic and patterned; aboriginal women and men, along with their Chinese and white male counterparts, laboured together in the salmon canneries, socialized, and forged a variety of intimate and political relations during the work day and in nonworking hours. These encounters and the apprehensions that underwrote them prompted colonial agents to develop a repertoire of comparative racial truths as well as a series of legal and spatial modalities of governance. Although the latter were not always successful, they were aimed at reinscribing racial boundaries, discursively, symbolically, and materially. Importantly, the management of encounters across racial divides was motivated by biopolitical concerns over the life and longevity of white settlement. In drawing racial boundaries, colonial agents not only forged distinct races or populations but also marked out and politicized a continuum of good vs. bad, superior vs. inferior, and fit vs. unfit "species," identifying those who might enhance or inhibit the settler population – those whose

lives were worth cultivating and those who needed to be expunged and how.⁵⁹ It is to the question of biopolitics and the heterogeneity of state racisms that I now turn.

The Plurality of Colonial State Racisms

Over the past two decades, Michel Foucault's fragmented but prolific writings and lectures on modern power have generated a wide-ranging, vibrant, and sustained discussion within postcolonial studies and beyond.⁶⁰ Scholars have debated and reworked Foucault's insights, including the triangle he proposed between sovereignty, discipline, and government; his work on biopower and sexuality; and the relationships he traced between power, knowledge, subjectivity, and subjection. Like their contemporaries in other fields, postcolonial scholars have valued Foucault's speculative insights on the qualities, characteristics, and contradictions of modern power, as well as its productive and generative impulses. However, colonial vistas have produced scholarly approaches that have been skeptical and critical of Foucault's priorities and absences.⁶¹ From Said onward, many postcolonial scholars have deployed Foucault's conceptual tools to study imperialism's discursive regimes, particularly the knowledges generated by the colonial state. Whereas Stoler has importantly and explicitly tracked the imperial circuits visibly absent from Foucault's analytic frames, more recently, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Achille Mbembe have respectively plotted alternative genealogies of modern power through colonial and postcolonial histories of non-Western milieus.⁶² As these few examples illustrate, Foucault's insights have spawned important questions and new directions in colonial and postcolonial studies.

Interestingly, postcolonial engagements with Foucault have been uneven and inconsistent. To date, and despite Foucault's recently published "*Society Must be Defended*," his remarks on biopolitics and state racisms have received considerably less engagement than have other aspects of his work.⁶³ Although Stoler's seminal book, *Race and the Education of Desire*, questioned and ultimately reworked Foucault's characterization of biopolitics as well as his chronologies of racisms, few scholars have since engaged these questions in any sustained or systematic way. I do not intend to provide an exhaustive discussion of the biopolitics of state racisms here, as these themes are historically and empirically developed in the chapters to follow. Rather, what I explicate below is how Foucault's concepts, and the discussions they have initiated and sustained, inform the central problematics of this book. As discussed earlier in this chapter, my own interest lies in inserting a plurality into the biopolitics of state racisms.

One of Foucault's most significant contributions to social and cultural theory has been his genealogies of modern power, especially the trajectory

he traces from the eighteenth century onward. What Foucault articulates at this historical juncture is the emergence of what he describes to be a new and distinct constellation of power. The centuries leading up to this period, as he documents most notably in *Discipline and Punish*, witnessed a dramatic shift in the sovereign's control and jurisdiction over his subjects. In earlier moments, power was centralized in the state and was exercised through the spectacle of death and through public torture in particular.⁶⁴ Yet, in later periods, as Foucault argues, power became increasingly decentred and dispersed, operating less through public displays of violence and intimidation and increasingly through the surveillance of subjects and through their domestication and discipline. What Foucault charts at the close of the eighteenth century is the rise of what he terms "a 'biopolitics' of the human race."⁶⁵ An extension and interpretation of discipline, this articulation of power is novel in that it focuses not only on maximizing the capacity of the body (via development and self-government) but also on fostering and maximizing life. Whereas discipline is individualizing, aimed at creating "docile bodies," the biopolitics of governmentality, Foucault insists, is massifying, aimed at enhancing the biological life of the "species."⁶⁶ These changing political objectives inspired interventions aimed at "protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race."⁶⁷ Importantly, Foucault explains the shift from sovereignty to biopower as one of convergence and complementarity: "I wouldn't say exactly that sovereignty's old right – to take life or let live – was replaced," he clarifies, "but it came to be complemented by a new right ... It is the power to 'make' live and 'let' die."⁶⁸

These discussions of modern power are by now familiar and have been the subject of vigorous debate and critique in postcolonial studies and in social and cultural theory. Although much of the contestation and discussion in other fields has emerged precisely because Foucault's comments were so splintered and speculative (for instance, did governmentality replace sovereign power or complement it?), postcolonial scholars have problematized Foucault's conceptualization and chronology of power, including its internal logics and articulations. Given that his own ontological moorings and orientations were so firmly rooted in Western European history, many have argued that his analyses of power, while useful, are limited both geographically and conceptually.⁶⁹ In her colonial reading of *The History of Sexuality*, for example, Stoler argues that the distinctions between people and population that have been so central to Foucault's formulations of the massifying qualities of biopower are unconvincing when we transport them to the colonies. In colonial contexts, she explains, people and populations were often created and cultivated in precisely the same historical moments.⁷⁰ I elaborate on these insights in Chapters 4 and 5. Briefly, aboriginal, Chinese, and mixed-race populations in British Columbia's contact zone, I contend,

were counted, arranged, and defined along multiple axes of difference, including biological and phenotypical distinctions, cultural indices, and moral virtues. At precisely this same historical moment, judicial authorities overseeing and adjudicating liquor charges were carefully contemplating and evaluating mixed-race peoples along similar criteria.

The differentiations that Foucault makes between sovereign power and biopower with reference to their temporalities and chronologies have been among the most contentious aspects of his work. Focused on the intensities of colonial violence, Paul Gilroy has directly called into question Foucault's characterization of sovereignty and governmentality. "As far as orthodox histories of European statecraft are concerned," Gilroy writes, "problems like the disappearance of public torture are understood to identify a significant stage in the development of a new type of power: capillary, biopolitical, and primarily directed toward the management of population." Colonial histories, he contends, demonstrate precisely the excesses of modern power and the persistence of coercion and violence.⁷¹ In the colonies, Gilroy explains, we see "a distinctive association of governance with military power and martial law," a convergence suggesting that the configurations of biopower operating in colonial histories were quite distinct from those that Foucault so famously sketched out in the European context.⁷² Similarly, Mbembe, while explicitly engaged with Foucault's conceptions of the biopolitical, also questions the utility of his characterizations of modern power, especially given the excesses of sovereignty, death, and violence in our current historical moment: "Is the notion of biopower sufficient to account for the contemporary ways in which the political, under the guise of war, of resistance, or of the fight against terror, makes the murder of its enemy its primary and absolute objective?"⁷³ Mbembe, like Gilroy, insists that "modernity was at the origin of multiple concepts of sovereignty – and therefore of the biopolitical."⁷⁴

More recently, given geopolitical developments post-9/11, many scholars have revisited Foucault's distinctions between sovereignty, governmentality, and the biopolitical beyond the colonies and the global South. There is now a growing consensus that differentiations between these iterations and expressions of power did not unfold successively and were not as pronounced as social and cultural theorists once claimed. While Judith Butler has disturbed the neat binaries of sovereignty and governmentality in her discussion of the "war prison," Mitchell Dean contends that "Foucault's concepts of government were situated in a much more complex topography of rule."⁷⁵ Sovereign violence, he contends, "is woven into the most mundane forms of government."⁷⁶ In "*Society Must Be Defended*," Foucault offers suggestive kernels of biopower and sovereign power as conjoined and braided as opposed to distinct. The life, longevity, and well-being of the masses, he claims, was often contingent on the death of "internal enemies," precisely those

who placed the future of the race into question. For Foucault, this interface between sovereignty and the biopolitical is most evident in the rise of state racism. Focused on the Nazi state, Foucault traces their convergence through the twin and seemingly paradoxical impulses of life and death. "The Nazi state," he explains, "makes the field of life it manages, protects, guarantees, and cultivates in biological terms absolutely coextensive with the sovereign right to kill anyone, meaning not only other people but also its own population."⁷⁷

The interconnections between sovereignty and biopolitics, as I suggest in later chapters, were clearly evident in the formation of settler colonialism and in the rise of state racisms on which white settlement depended. In British Columbia, from the 1870s onward, the simultaneity and convergence between concerns over life and death were manifest in various legal regimes, including the Indian Act. In their efforts to civilize aboriginal peoples, the Dominion and then federal governments enacted and repeatedly revised this legislation, aspiring to cultivate governable subjects, on the one hand, while punishing aboriginal populations through coercion and violence, on the other. Through the contradictory objectives of improvement, civilization, segregation, and assimilation, the Indian Act spanned questions of ethics, schooling, and marriage, directing "Indians" on the virtues of cultivating the self and on the appropriate conduct that these interventions prescribed. At the same time, the law provided Indian Agents, police constables, and other colonial officials with a considerable degree of sovereign power to intervene in the minutiae of aboriginal peoples' lives and to punish those who defied the objectives and practices of colonial governance. The Indian Act, as I discuss more fully in Chapter 4, was a coeval expression of sovereignty and biopower. The law was directed at shaping the conduct and choices of aboriginal peoples while at the same time determining matters of life and (cultural) death through liberal and illiberal policies.⁷⁸

These colonial readings of Foucault have certainly expanded and enriched understandings of modern power, the place of empire in Western modernity, and the constitutive relations between metropole and colony. But what of state racism, or more accurately, state *racisms*? In the last section of *The History of Sexuality*, where Foucault begins his discussion of racism in "its modern 'biologizing' statist form," he tracks its emergence in the second half of the nineteenth century but hints at its earlier formations.⁷⁹ In "*Society Must Be Defended*," which is based on lectures he delivered in the same year *The History of Sexuality* was published, Foucault points to a much earlier periodization and development of racism through the "war of the races" that characterized early Europe. Importantly, Foucault's observations on "the human race of races, the distinction among races, the hierarchy of races," imply an underlying heterogeneity not only of race, which has been the subject of much scholarly engagement, but also of racisms.⁸⁰

Building on Foucault and on the work of postcolonial scholars, I chart the *numerous* distinctions that colonial administrators inserted and drew between aboriginal, European, Chinese, and mixed-race populations. These differentiations, I claim, produced a multiplicity of uneven and inconsistent knowledges of racial difference and informed a shifting hierarchy of races. This racial order was not merely aimed at distinguishing and dividing non-Europeans from Europeans, thus demonstrating the latter's superiority, but was also deeply rooted in colonial preoccupations with the putative racial similarities and distinctions between aboriginal peoples, mixed-race populations, and migrants from China. Colonial agents routinely differentiated between these racial populations as a way to determine whose presence could be tolerated in the settler regime; which populations could live without compromising the (European) masses, and which were too dangerous and thus expendable.

Racism, for Foucault, interrupts the continuity between life and death, marking "the break between what must live and what must die."⁸¹ He explains racism as taking on a relationship of war, that the death of some will enhance the lives of others: "The more inferior species die out, the more abnormal individuals are eliminated, the fewer degenerates there will be in the species as a whole, and the more I – as species rather than individual – can live, the stronger I will be, the more vigorous I will be ... I will be able to proliferate."⁸² State racism indeed fragmented the biological field by demarcating a racial order in which certain populations were seen to be good, fit, and superior and others were distinguished as degenerate and thus disposable.⁸³ But racial superiority and inferiority, as I point out below, were also internally fragmented and marked by *degrees of difference*. Although some racial Others (aboriginal peoples) could be tolerated in the settler regime and eventually civilized through moral training, there were other Others (Chinese and mixed-bloods) who were deemed to be too distant from the values of European modernity to be improved and assimilated and who thus needed to be expunged. Importantly, distinctions between "fit" and "unfit" were determined with reference to the longevity not only of northern European populations but also of aboriginal ones. Thus the inferior races were those who imperilled whiteness *and* Indianness, albeit in different ways. Civilization and exclusion were twin strategies in the politics of elimination but ones that translated into a *spectrum of deaths* that could be biological, political, and/or cultural. I elaborate on these points in the following section, but first, a few more clarifying remarks are needed on state racism.

Foucault draws important distinctions between racial enemies as "either external or internal, to the population and for the population."⁸⁴ Here again, he gestures toward the heterogeneity of state racism. Although not building on Foucault directly, David Theo Goldberg provides critical insights into

the multiplicity of racial projects and the identification and designation of internal enemies.⁸⁵ Specifically, Goldberg offers an interesting intervention into the multiplicity of racisms by tracing the coexistence of "conceptually distinct and seemingly mutually exclusive" traditions of racial rule – distinctions that he terms "naturalist" and "historicist" understandings of race.⁸⁶

Tracking the simultaneity and complementary development of these racial traditions in political theory from the seventeenth to nineteenth century via Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill, Goldberg shows us that, like race, racisms have never been unitary, static, or monolithic. Rather, the racial state from early on, he argues, was constituted through competing understandings of race, thus fomenting diverse expressions and intensities of racisms. In Goldberg's formulation, Hobbes viewed "natives" to be "in a prehistorical condition of pure Being naturally incapable of development and so historical progress," whereas Locke, whose ideas were later developed by Mill and then by August Comte, historicized racial distinctions in ways that opened uneven possibilities for racial development.⁸⁷ Thus, for Locke, as Goldberg explains, the "Indians" and "Negroes" of North America had not yet invested in the physical and moral labour that would render them racially comparable to Europeans. But through hard work and European tutelage, there was always a chance that these populations might eventually achieve a higher threshold of racial development and thus civilization.⁸⁸

In many ways, Goldberg's discussions of the naturalist and historicist conceptions of race hint toward the heterogeneity of state racisms on which Foucault remarks. Referring to these competing strains as "racial rule in the contrasting styles of state formation," and thus never calling them "state racisms" per se, Goldberg usefully begins to sketch out the multiple and formative axes of racisms and their variegated effects: "From the 1880s until at least the 1930s ... American Indians were regarded in the US as assimilable while people of African descent were considered segregable because the two groups were seen to occupy different rankings on prevailing racial hierarchies. The former were deemed open to evolutionary progress, of being whitened precisely, in the way the latter prevalingly were not."⁸⁹ Here, Goldberg highlights the competing but coexistent racial projects underway in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century United States and the inconsistent and shifting racial knowledges that informed them. Goldberg does not fully explain how differences between American Indians and people of African ancestry were constituted and mobilized. However, his distinctions between naturalist and historicist understandings of race, ones that I return to and explicate more fully in Chapter 4, are useful not only for parsing state racisms and illuminating their tandem trajectories and uneven qualities but also for illustrating how these expressions of racial power worked together in contradictory ways. The tensions between them worked to sustain racial

truths of European superiority and informed practices of racial exclusion aimed at extending the life of the settler population.

Informed by these wider discussions, the chapters that follow examine the multiplicity and heterogeneity of colonial state racisms. Specifically, I explore and analyze the ways in which demographic and cultural changes, namely the growing presence of Chinese migrants and a proliferating mixed-race population, disturbed British Columbia's colonial-racial topography in ways that generated new anxieties and modes of legal and nonlegal governance. The presence of various "internal enemies," to use Foucault's lexicon, and their proximate distances and intimate encounters prompted colonial authorities to reconsider, redraw, and recalibrate existing racial boundaries that distinguished "Indians" not only from "whites" but also from mixed-bloods and Chinese. Competing racial truths inspired a barrage of racist practices that prescribed the governance of some and the illiberal use of force against others. The first function of state racism, Foucault contends, "is a way of separating out the groups that exist within a population to subdivide the species it controls, into the subspecies known, precisely, as races."⁹⁰ Ultimately, these taxonomies, as I point out in the following section, enabled the colonial state to determine the politics of life and death – that is, which populations could remain in the settler regime and under what conditions and which were to be killed, socially, politically, and culturally. It is to these questions of life and death that I now turn.

The Juridical Production of Colonial Truths and Racial Deaths

Colonialism, as postcolonial scholars have so cogently argued, was not only a military and economic endeavour but also a cultural one that generated a stockpile of new truths demarcating and amplifying racial and cultural difference. For Nicholas Dirks, the production of colonial knowledges was critical to empire's global expanse, as it "both enabled conquest and was produced by it." In "certain important ways," he writes, "knowledge was what colonialism was all about."⁹¹ Over the past decade, since Dirks offered these bold assertions, many have critiqued the cultural and discursive turn and its trajectories within postcolonial studies. But whereas critics have rightly insisted that the production and accumulation of knowledges was only one part of the colonial project, most would agree that it was not an insignificant one.⁹² To be sure, empire was contingent not only on the proliferation of knowledges but also on the coercion and violence that the formation of categories and the aggregation of populations made possible. There is now a growing body of scholarship that explores the constitutive relations between the symbolic and material assemblages of colonial rule. And as socio-legal scholars have pointed out law too is an important site where relations between power, knowledge, subjection, and coercion are

deeply intertwined and visibly materialized. Colonial legal cultures, as John Comaroff observes, "were simultaneously languages of practice; symbolic and ritual systems; abstract principles for the production of social order, citizenship, and subjection; and immanent material realities."⁹³ It is these entangled relations between the discursive and material dimensions of colonial legalities and governmentalities that I aim to unravel below.

Colonial epistemologies, as many scholars have now demonstrated, were drawn from a range of knowledges that differed not only in content but also in form. Colonial truths were generated through a multiplicity of "knowledge formats," including surveys, statistics, enumeration, observation, ethnography, legal codes, and legal evidence – what Bernard Cohn has termed "investigative modalities."⁹⁴ Cohn was one of the first, and has been one of the few, to examine law's role in the production of colonial truths, a project that still requires further critical inquiry.⁹⁵ Although the literature on law and postcolonialism has grown considerably, particularly in the past two decades, much of this scholarship has centred on law's role in facilitating empire, notably its place in consolidating colonial authority, and on indigenous resistance to colonial juridical processes.⁹⁶ To date, the role of ethnographic, historical, and scientific truths in imperial expansion has been well documented. But further inquiry is still needed to track the contradictory ways in which law and legal knowledges intersected with, sustained, and even disrupted these other ways of knowing.⁹⁷

To be clear, questions concerning law's claims to racial truth are not entirely new. Critical race theorists and legal historians working in the North American context have long problematized the ways that law has both drawn from and produced its own racial epistemologies. In his path-breaking book *White by Law*, Ian Haney López documents the making of racial categories through American naturalization cases. Here, he effectively demonstrates the complex ways that scientific and common knowledges of "whiteness" and racial otherness were imported into and reconstituted in the courtroom. Through close historical detail, Haney López traces how racial knowledges were produced and exchanged by judicial officials in ways that illuminated the asymmetries and multiplicities of racial meanings.⁹⁸ In Canada, Constance Backhouse has wonderfully traced legal histories of racism through reported legal cases ranging from the criminalization of aboriginal dance to the segregation of African Canadians. Like Haney López, she underscores the differentiated ways that Canadian courts enforced racial exclusion and the juridical conceptions of race produced by judges in the process.⁹⁹

Critical race theory has certainly furthered understandings of law's role in the production and proliferation of racial truths. Yet the conceptual coordinates of legal scholars are often located within national frames and thus do not fully problematize colonial processes and the transnational circuits

on which knowledges of race and empire thrived.¹⁰⁰ The emphasis on North American jurisprudence and on American and Canadian racial formations that has dominated much of this scholarship has obscured the longer colonial genealogies of race and racisms and the ways that historical global shifts informed and influenced both the making of racial-juridical categories and the processes of national formation. Almost a decade ago, legal scholar Tayyab Mahmud noted this point and urged critical race theorists to “keep Europe’s colonial encounter as a high priority on its research agenda.”¹⁰¹ If the colonies were indeed “laboratories of modernity” where racial types and species were cultivated by colonial bureaucracies, it is crucial to bear in mind that the racial truths they purported to identify were never contained within national borders but were routinely exchanged across metropole and colony and between the colonies themselves.¹⁰² Ultimately, these global and shifting knowledges of race and empire figured centrally in European and North American understandings of racial and national difference.

Geographical specificity has been a prevailing organizing feature of law’s claims to racial truth. Yet in postcolonial studies, scholars insist that although colonial knowledges may very well have been marked by local and geographical particularities, racial truths were often produced in a dynamic global field.¹⁰³ Administrators of empire were exceptionally mobile, frequently traveling between metropole and colony and across the empire while engaging in dialogues, exchanging ideas, and assuming new colonial responsibilities.¹⁰⁴ Through these transnational movements, authorities not only encountered and drew on new ideas of racial difference and racial management but also recuperated and reactivated older ones. Axioms of racial difference were discussed, debated, and exchanged at international venues, as several scholars have noted, but the circuitous and competing racial truths also seeped into the daily organization of colonial rule. Although race was juridified through national and regional laws and institutions, as critical race scholars and legal historians have demonstrated, racial-legal truths were seldom anchored in place and were often inflected with global meanings.

In late-nineteenth-century British Columbia, colonial agents regularly borrowed racial epistemologies from familiar and unexpected contexts. In their discussions concerning the excesses and deficiencies of Chinese migrants, as I discuss in Chapter 4, legal authorities such as Matthew Begbie, the province’s first chief justice, mobilized Orientalist ideas from regions as far away as Africa. Begbie drew on Britain’s overseas experiences to make sense of the new and unfamiliar racial exigencies facing the young colony, including the “problem” of Chinese migration. As I point out, Begbie evoked British colonial encounters with Arab and Muslim populations to understand and explicate what he claimed were the peculiar yet parallel dispositions of the Chinese. That the Chinese lacked a desire for liquor, he argued, was not proof of racial superiority but further evidence of a racial excess that could

also be identified in other "Oriental" populations, including Arabs. Whereas Arabs endangered the improvement and domestication of African aborigines and thus threatened British colonial rule in northern Africa, the Chinese, many cautioned, similarly imperilled aboriginal peoples and thus colonial governance in British Columbia. By activating Britain's other, and seemingly disconnected, colonial experiences, administrators in British Columbia cultivated a new racial grammar, one that enabled them to define and hierarchize their own heterogeneous colonial populace in ways that differentiated and distinguished "Oriental despots" from "vulnerable Indians."

Importantly, law's production of racial truths did not unfold in the courtroom alone. Critical race scholars, legal historians, and others have often focused on statutes and legal cases to illustrate the malleability of race and the legal constitution of racism. Whereas judicial officials were most explicitly and visibly confronted with deciding vexed questions of racial membership, their assessments were often informed by the determinations of other legal authorities, including police officers and low-level bureaucrats who made their own claims to racial truth.¹⁰⁵ In the colonial contact zone, where encounters across racial divides were not only pervasive but also highly politicized, Indian Agents, missionaries, and police constables were routinely charged with ascribing racial identities and grouping populations. The management of Indian reserves and urban locales, as I point out in Chapters 3 and 5, was directly contingent on determinations of who was "Indian," "half-breed," and "white," racial assessments that were initiated by Indian Agents and missionaries whose responsibilities to the colonial regime included the vigilant governance of space. Thus, juridical knowledges of race were forged in multiple sites, registers, and spatialities that often exceeded the courtroom.

In her expansive and important book *Law and Colonial Cultures*, Lauren Benton advises her readers to move beyond the conventional sites of legal exchange and to engage questions of law and colonialism through a broader conceptual lens. "When we analyze colonial law," she writes, "we must not restrict our view to particular kinds of law but must allow wide flexibility in order to identify critical moments."¹⁰⁶ Whereas Benton's methodological suggestions encourage an exploration of multiple legal formations, my focus in this book extends beyond and beneath legal statutes to consider the *conditions* that underwrote legislative enactments and enforcements in the first place. Thus *Colonial Proximities* charts law's production of racial truths through conventional sites, including legislation and legal cases, as well as through less typical "legal" sources, including colonial correspondence, government reports, and commissions of inquiry. Each of the subsequent chapters focuses partly on state-sanctioned commissions; some of these were fully formed and initiated by the Dominion government, others were set up by the provincial government, and some were inchoate bureaucratic

investigations that might have prescribed and set the groundwork for formal and institutionalized inquiries at a later time. The inquiry, as Foucault tells us, was a type of truth procedure, "a form of power management and exercise that, through the juridical institution, became in Western culture, a way of authenticating truth, of acquiring and transmitting things that would be regarded as true."¹⁰⁷ Like statutes and legal cases, commissions were also sites of legal-knowledge production and of juridical power. Indeed, commissions of inquiry were often responses to the limits and failures of law. Emerging within circumstances of crisis that warranted official investigation and state response, commissions provide a rich site in which to examine the types of proximities, relations, and practices that were believed to endanger the settler regime.

Government commissions in their various iterations figured prominently in imperial contexts. Whereas royal commissions in the metropole gave rise to a novel set of practices and institutions that shaped the modalities of the Victorian public sphere, state-sponsored commissions in the colonies generated usable knowledges that would assist the colonial state in facilitating imperial rule.¹⁰⁸ Despite their distinct mandates and differing statuses, commissions of inquiry in colonial milieus were often viewed as serving an ethnological purpose, the aim being to document the characteristics of peoples and the contours of populations.¹⁰⁹ After months and even years of investigation, which produced a corpus of interviews with witnesses and informants and sometimes hundreds or even thousands of pages of transcripts, these bureaucratic processes mandated juridical racial truths that informed legal cultures and practices. Writing of colonial South Africa, John Comaroff observes that government commissions "gave bureaucratic currency and practical reality to the categorical structures and cultural divisions that formed the emerging ethnoscape."¹¹⁰ In so doing, commissions activated existing racial categories, generated new ones, and produced classifications and taxonomies that naturalized racial types, species, and populations. For Stoler, these modes of inquiry were "quintessential products of 'biopolitical' technologies."¹¹¹ Importantly, commissions of inquiry also connected colonial anxieties of interracial proximities and intimacies to questions of life and racial longevity in British Columbia's colonial context, a theme that I emphasize throughout.

The colonial state's investigative technologies were aimed at *knowing* aboriginal peoples as well as those many Others who complicated and potentially subverted colonial rule. In other words, these state-sponsored initiatives routinely transcended the colonizer/colonized binary, generating knowledges not only of migrant populations but also of mixed-race ones, communities that were neither fully colonized nor colonizing. Indeed, the "Report of Halfbreeds," which I discuss in Chapter 5, was intended to differentiate the *authentic* and *original* Indian from those populations whose

mixedness and invisibility placed this authenticity in question. In 1892, A.W. Vowell, the superintendent of Indian affairs in British Columbia, commissioned all Indian Agents in the province to enumerate peoples of mixed-race ancestry living on local reserves and to evaluate and assess their moral virtues and criminal impulses. Here, Indian Agents and colonial administrators produced their own commonsense lexicon of the differences between "real" Indians and those who were "not quite."¹¹² For the colonial regime, fears of contamination, immorality, and criminality underpinned crossracial encounters between aboriginal and mixed-race peoples, rendering these proximities to be dangerous and in need of spatial and legal governance while also creating new markers of racial differentiation in the process.

Colonial documentation and the production and proliferation of state knowledges have long been sites of contestation and critique. In *Empire and Information*, Christopher Bayly warns that although "European knowledge may have been hegemonic," it was "never absolute."¹¹³ The production of truth was central to the colonial state, Bayly agrees, but the "empire of information," he contends, "rested on shaky foundations."¹¹⁴ In a more recent book, Oz Frankel echoes Bayly's concerns: the "trope of the state as a monolithic and ever-ascending entity whose knowledge brims with power and whose power always knows, is at best an oversimplification."¹¹⁵ Although governments and empires aspired to produce a repertoire of usable knowledges, the political effects of these endeavours, Frankel cautions, were "uneven and inconclusive."¹¹⁶

These caveats are useful reminders of the contingency and uncertainty of colonial projects, what John Comaroff calls the "partial perspectival [and] incomplete" depths and folds of colonial states.¹¹⁷ As I sketch out in the following chapters, state-generated colonial knowledges of racial inferiority and superiority were never consistent or unified. Nor were the positions of colonial administrators. On the contrary, Indian Agents and missionaries frequently disagreed as to the prevailing racial qualities and characteristics that defined specific populations. They were equally unclear as to the possibilities of colonial governance, debating whether aboriginal peoples were civilized or civilizable and whether the Chinese could ever be assimilated into the settler regime. Although these debates certainly illustrate the "shaky foundations" of the colonial state, they also tell us more. Colonial epistemologies gained traction not always (if at all) from a unified set of social relations but from a cracked, conflictual, and contingent constellation. It was precisely because of racial ambiguity and unknowability that the juridical constitution of racial truths and the governance of colonial populations, including their encounters and proximities, were thought to be so politically urgent.

Colonial truths of territories and populations were closely intertwined with concerns over life and death – that is, whether Europeans could reside

in the colonies and whether native peoples would survive white settlement. Although the rise of statistics and the professionalization of knowledge in the nineteenth century was central to the biopolitics of colonial states, these knowledges, as Ian Hacking and others have shown, facilitated deeper investigations into the distinctions *between* populations, identifying those who might optimize or maximize the life of the settler regime from those who might compromise and inhibit it.¹¹⁸ Whereas Indians, Chinese, "half-breeds," and whites were each assigned distinct racial characteristics that were both "interior" and "exterior" – Indians practised "barbaric customs" and the Chinese were "inscrutable," for example – these classificatory schemas were accompanied by serious material consequences.¹¹⁹ "Making up people," Hacking argues, "changes the space of possibilities for personhood."¹²⁰ By distinguishing populations racially, colonial administrators not only determined the distribution of appropriate and inappropriate affects, traits, and behaviours but also restricted and circumscribed the longevity of these populations. The constitution of people (and nonpeople) in the colonial contact zone enabled violence against some, the improvement of others, and the expulsion of individuals and entire populations from local geographies – including urban settings and indigenous reserves – and from imperial and national spaces.¹²¹ These technologies of rule yielded a range of deaths that were not only biological but also social, political, and cultural.

Of late, there has been a growing preoccupation with death in critical theory. Drawing from the work of Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, scholars have debated and extended the meanings of death beyond its conventional biological definition and have analyzed it both historically and in our present moment.¹²² In "*Society Must Be Defended*," Foucault offers important albeit fragmented insights into the relationships between life, death, and racism. Here, he contends that the biopolitical function of racism was not only to maximize life but also to regulate death and to make possible the murderous functions of the state.¹²³ Inspired by Fanon, Mbembe explains that sovereignty in the colonies was always contingent on death. Sovereignty, he argues, "means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not."¹²⁴ These determinations of worthy and exterminable lives, he insists, rested on uneven taxonomies of racial personhood. Drawing from Hannah Arendt, Mbembe writes that "savage life" in the colonies was "just another form of animal life, a horrifying experience, something alien or beyond imagination or comprehension." The difference between the savage and other human beings had less to do with the colour of one's skin, and more to do with the savage's proximity to nature. "The savages are, as it were, 'natural' human beings who lack the specifically human character, the specifically human reality." Thus, when Europeans killed them, they did not think that they had committed murder.¹²⁵

Mbembe's formulation usefully develops the seemingly paradoxical emphasis on life and death in Foucault's conception of biopolitics and furthers its relevance to the colonial context. Specifically, he introduces the *range of deaths* made possible through sovereign decree. For Foucault, death was not a biological phenomenon alone but also a political one. "The fact that the other dies," Foucault remarks, "does not mean simply that I live in the sense that his death guarantees my safety." Rather, "the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer."¹²⁶ Immediately after making this comment, Foucault clarifies that his discussion of killing and death is not biological alone but is also concerned with "political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on."¹²⁷ Mbembe pushes Foucault's account beyond the notion of political death. Pointing to slavery and the rise of modern terror, Mbembe suggestively describes the slave as living in a social death an "expulsion of humanity altogether."¹²⁸ These arguments of political and social death are highly relevant for my discussions of colonialism and state racisms. Inspired by these insights what I suggest throughout is that colonial deaths were also deeply *cultural*.¹²⁹

In British Columbia only some populations were invested with life. Others, in the interests of national purity and state security, were thought to endanger the (white) masses, albeit in different ways, and thus needed to be expunged and eliminated. This expendability, however, took on multiple forms. Aboriginal peoples who were designated to be racially immature were the targets of a civilizing mission that, if successful, would eventually result in the demise of the Indian race. Under the Indian Act, as I discuss in Chapter 4, an aboriginal person who reached appropriate levels of morality and sobriety could be enfranchised and would thus cease to be an "Indian" in the juridical sense. Here, racial improvement and development translated into a *cultural death* that not only purged the individual of the excesses and irrationalities associated with Indianness but also ultimately rendered the aboriginal populace to be a relic of the past, a distant memory that was replaced with a self-governing and "modern" population. By contrast, the Chinese in British Columbia were increasingly subjected to a *political death* through restriction, deportation, and exclusion. Not only were many migrants from China to be denied entry into the nation through the head tax and Chinese Exclusion Act, but the Chinese were also sometimes deported, strategies that were aimed at protecting the settler population from internal and external threats.¹³⁰ Although I elaborate on these concepts in the chapters to follow, what I would like to highlight and emphasize here are the entangled and mutually constitutive relations between discursive and material regimes of colonial power. An analytic that examines the "overlapping territories" and "intertwined histories" of aboriginal-European relations and

Chinese migration may facilitate new ways to trace the convergent and divergent production of racial knowledges and their juridification, along with the spectrum of state racisms and racial deaths that these truths made possible.

Itineraries and Remnants from the Colonial Archive

As my discussion thus far suggests, *Colonial Proximities* is inspired by a series of conjunctive questions that explore the overlapping and comparative nature of colonial projects, the biopolitics of state racisms, and the colonial production of juridical truths and racial deaths. The chapters that follow move across a variegated empirical terrain that tracks racial labour and crossracial sociality in the salmon canneries, fears of (white) slavery and its multiple genealogies, racial anxieties over Chinese men trafficking liquor to Indians, and finally the unknowability of race, a condition that was amplified and intensified through a growing mixed-race population. Despite their distinct and disparate sites of intervention, each chapter takes up, with different intensities, the themes that I introduce above. Whereas some are focused more explicitly on tracing the interactions between white colonists, aboriginal peoples, and Chinese migrants, the multiple anxieties that undergirded these encounters, and the laws and governing projects they informed, others focus more explicitly on biopolitics and internal enemies, on how and why different racial populations were marked as impending or imminent threats to the state and the political conditions that informed these designations. Each of the chapters, in different ways, traces the shifting configuration of colonial anxieties and the spatial proximities that informed them.

To be clear, this book is not a socio-legal history of aboriginal-European relations or of Chinese migration to Canada's west coast. Informed by these rich historiographies, but focused on a set of legal entanglements, the chapters that follow examine why interracial encounters between aboriginal peoples, Chinese migrants, and other "racial enemies" provoked such deep fears concerning the longevity of the settler population. I am less interested in producing a conventional historical narrative and more concerned with navigating and building a conceptual argument about the plurality of racisms in the colonial contact zone, one that brings histories of aboriginal-European contact into dialogue with those of Chinese migration and that engages and contributes to the debates I have sketched out above. These interconnections, as I have already claimed, may open new and interesting conceptual registers for thinking through the constitution of colonial truths and racial deaths.

Thus, *Colonial Proximities* is deliberately written and organized in a way that is neither progressive, in terms of chronology, nor linear in approach. Taken together, the chapters comprise a thematic set of engagements, an

arrangement that is inspired by Foucault's notion of genealogy. Drawing from Nietzsche, Foucault explains genealogy as follows: "Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of oblivion; its task is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues to secretly animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form on all its vicissitudes." Rather, the search for descent, which is the aim of genealogy, "disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself."¹³¹ Ultimately, Foucault leaves behind methods of "conventional, empiricist historiography" and takes an approach that characterizes history to be a set of contested and discontinuous forces.¹³² The questions I raise throughout this book are informed by Foucault and his postcolonial interlocutors and are aimed at unsettling the conventional assumptions and connections concerning encounter and proximity in the colonial contact zone.

The chapters to follow explore questions of crossracial encounters, including their epistemic foundations and juridical effects. These engagements are intended to build upon and contribute to ongoing debates concerning biopolitics, juridical truths, and state racisms, but they are also aimed at posing a set of historiographical questions. The social, cultural, and political, Antoinette Burton argues, "are not simply *found* in history, but are always produced through and by historiography and its authors."¹³³ Thus my objective is, in part, to engage with historiographies of colonialism in British Columbia and Canada, noting the types of colonial relations that have incited discussion and debate and those that have been obscured, hidden, and ignored in the process. Each of the chapters draws on a deliberately wide range of archival documents, including government and missionary correspondence, commissions of inquiry, police-court records, legislation, legal cases, and newspapers. Historians have long argued that scholars interested in the past are constrained by the availability of sources, that drawing from written records preserved in the colonial archive privileges the voices of certain actors at the expense of others. Over the past decade, and more consistently over the past several years, historians, anthropologists, and others engaged with questions of empire have placed historical and archival sources in undisputable and irreparable doubt. Although the impetus for these critiques has been multiple – the "postmodern turn" alongside the growing influence of poststructuralism and postcolonial theory – the force of these intellectual shifts has prompted many to reassess the archives, the production of archival knowledges and historical "facts," and the truths that inform them.¹³⁴

Foucault's masterful arguments concerning power/knowledge have penetrated the colonial archive, albeit unevenly, raising methodological questions about colonial documents and history, more generally. For Mbembe, the

archive is "fundamentally a matter of discrimination and selection." The archive, he claims, is "not a piece of data, but a status."¹³⁵ If the "imperial archive," as Thomas Richards questions, "was a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire," one that "was shared widely and actually had an impact on policy making," how do we think of the archive as "truth," "fiction," and "status," simultaneously?¹³⁶ "If a notion of colonial ethnography starts from the premise that archival production is both a process and powerful technology of rule," advises Stoler, "then we need not only to brush *against* the archive's received categories. We need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake – *along* the archival grain."¹³⁷ If the structure of the colonial archive is "necessarily inchoate," as Anjali Arondekar claims, then our task is not to retrieve the past (as if such a retrieval were ever possible) but to question its presence, to destabilize its stability.¹³⁸

One historiographical directive has been to approach the colonial archive in ways that attend to its form and content. Another has been to read for its contours as well as its gaps and omissions.¹³⁹ Keeping these methodological suggestions at the fore, my own approach is to carefully discern both the visibilities and invisibilities of archival records and remain attuned to their presences and absences. In so doing, I consider the unevenness of colonial documents and the political conditions and possibilities that informed them. Why was it at some historical moments but not others that colonial administrators constituted aboriginal and Chinese peoples as troublesome populations and "internal enemies" who threatened the settler population? How were these distinctions drawn, and what were their effects? Why were certain episodes and proximities characterized with a heightened sense of anxiety, ones that demanded documentation and record, including royal commissions and other government-sponsored inquiries, whereas others were not? Thus I read the archives not only for what they contain, their historical and cultural vestiges, but also for what has been obscured and what is absent. "Mentions and silences," Michel-Rolph Trouillot asserts, are the "active dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis."¹⁴⁰ Let me now outline the chapters to follow.

Chapter 2 begins to explore the uneven and asymmetrical field in which colonial racisms emerged. Focused on the salmon canneries, I examine two contradictory impulses of settler colonialism. On the one hand, colonial agents demanded a ready supply of cheap racial labour to build the economic scaffolding for colonial settlement – the materials and commodities that might eventually place British Columbia on the imperial map and connect the fragile economy of a colonial outpost recently turned colony to the networks of global capitalism. On the other hand, the colonial state

commanded racial purity and segregation, biopolitical imperatives that were deemed integral to the future of the settler population and to the longevity of the white race. The colonial regime's competing demands and dual imperatives created cleavages and vulnerabilities in the politics of imperial rule. Labour in the salmon canneries was contingent on a racially ordered and hierarchized workforce, one that regularly intermingled across racial divides and often with serious moral consequences. Ultimately, the state's ambition to secure cheap labour and profits and to produce and export tinned salmon trumped the colonial desire for racial separation. Although Indian Agents and missionaries aspired to impose law and order as a means to govern and eradicate the racial excesses of British Columbia's canneries, these processes were routinely disrupted by those disorderly racial subjects who proved ungovernable.

Chapter 3 focuses less on the physical encounters between aboriginal peoples, European colonists, and Chinese migrants and more on the points of contact and convergence that tied disparate colonial anxieties to one another. As a genealogy of "slavery," this chapter begins by looking at fears of prostitution in aboriginal communities and then investigates subsequent concerns over white slavery and Chinese immigration. In tracing these (dis)continuities, the chapter explores how racial knowledges and state racisms were folded into one another in ways that drew on sedimented and emergent configurations of racial power. Specifically, my interest is in tracing how new racial threats were informed by the residues of older ones and how reformist projects activated and reinvigorated historical knowledges in ways that increased their currency and gave them added traction. Both slavery and white slavery, I argue, gestured toward an imperilled whiteness that informed spatial and legal modalities of governance. Mobility became a flashpoint of debate and a politically charged site of intervention as colonial administrators aimed to restrict the movements of aboriginal and Chinese women, albeit on different scales.

In Chapter 4, I investigate the illicit liquor trade and the physical proximities that intoxicants effectuated between aboriginal and Chinese peoples. From the 1880s onward, Indian Agents and legal authorities routinely complained of Chinese men supplying intoxicants to aboriginal peoples. Despite the lack of liquor-related convictions against the Chinese during this period, the colonial archive is littered with persistent warnings of the putatively corrupting and contaminating influences that Chinese labourers and merchants would exert on "vulnerable" and "unsuspecting" aboriginal communities. In addressing these issues, I am less concerned with whether fears of crossracial encounters forged through intoxicants were well-founded and more interested in the logics and political concerns that informed them. To be sure, apprehensions surrounding the illicit liquor trade gestured toward

larger anxieties of crossracial contacts, interracial drinking, and especially the consequences of these "inappropriate" proximities and their resulting intimacies.

The final chapter moves in a slightly different direction and questions how race was both knowable and unknowable in British Columbia's colonial contact zone. Here, I explore the presence of another racial population, the "half-breed," who, like the Chinese, was marked out as a racial enemy and was also thought to jeopardize colonial rule. Although many feared that Chinese migrants who supplied aboriginal peoples with liquor might have a corrupting influence on the native populace, colonial administrators equally feared those of mixed-race ancestry for similar reasons. From the 1870s onward, Indian Agents and missionaries routinely complained of "half-breeds," who many claimed were supplying liquor to aboriginal communities. Postcolonial scholars have already argued that mixed-race populations were considered to be dangerous in colonial milieus because they threatened to undermine white privilege.¹⁴¹ But in this final chapter, I contend that colonial agents aspired to preserve and protect the porous borders not only of whiteness but also of Indianness.

The book's conclusion returns to the broader conceptual themes that I have laid out above. The aim of this book, I remind readers, is to ask a set of analytic and historical questions that have been less conventional and thus less prominent both in the historiography of British Columbia and Canada and in colonial and postcolonial studies. Specifically, my objective is to think through colonial contacts and proximities between aboriginal, Chinese, European, and mixed-race populations, the anxieties these encounters provoked, and the legal truths and technologies of governance they inspired. Although some scholars have initiated this dialogue already by observing the heterogeneity of the colonial contest, an empirically and historically grounded study that foregrounds questions of heterogeneity and interraciality might offer insights into the rise of distinct and multiple state racisms and their junctures of convergence and divergence. As I point out in the final pages, these entangled and conjunctive genealogies of aboriginal-Chinese encounters, which form a core part of this book, have recently been celebrated as significant vestiges of the past. If "it is at the crossroads of contradictions that strategies for change may best be found," as McClintock claims, then the historical traces of colonial proximities and state racisms that I unravel throughout might hold possibilities for new social and political imaginings.¹⁴²