

MAKING SENSE:  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

MAKING SENSE: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, AND  
SETTLER COLONIALISM

By LIAM MIDZAIN-GOBIN, B.SOC.SCI, M.A.

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TITLE: Making Sense: Indigenous Peoples, Data Collection, and Settler Colonialism AUTHOR: Liam Midzain-Gobin, B.Soc.Sci. (University of Ottawa), M.A. (University of Ottawa)  
SUPERVISOR: J. Marshall Beier 230: iv-230

## LAY ABSTRACT

For many, Canada as a multicultural and inclusive country stretching from the Pacific to the Atlantic Oceans, and north to the Arctic circle is taken for granted. However, what we recognize as Canada in 2020 has only existed since the 1999 formation of the Territory of Nunavut, and even the territory that comprises Canada only came into formation with Newfoundland and Labrador's 1949 entry into Confederation. This is to say that Canada in its current form is not natural. Rather, it was constructed over time through the incorporation and colonization of Indigenous lands and territories. This dissertation argues that despite an official discourse of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and the need to renew settler Canada's 'most important' relationship, colonization remains ongoing. Looking to federal demographic statistics and provincial land use and management policy, it argues that settler authority being continually re-made through the government knowing Indigenous peoples and their territories in ways that legitimize colonization as the normal pursuit of "peace, order and good government."

## ABSTRACT

Though it is often taken for granted with an assumed naturalness, settler colonial sovereignty relies on the settler state's realization of Indigenous territorial dispossession, and the erasure of indigeneity. More than singular or historical events, dispossession and erasure are ongoing, and are best understood as contemporary, and structural, features of settler governance because of the continued existence of Indigenous nations. As a result, seemingly stable settler states (such as Canada) are in a constant state of insecurity, due to Indigenous nations' competing claims of authority. As such, settler states are continually working to (re)produce their own sovereign authority, and legitimacy.

This text argues that knowledge is central to the (re)production of settler sovereignty, and hence, settler colonialism. Understood this way, knowledge is both produced and also productive. What we 'know' is not only framed by the cosmologies and ontologies through which we make meaning of the world, but it also serves as an organizing tool, structuring what interventions we imagine to be possible. Focusing on government policymaking, this text documents the erasure of Indigenous knowledges, cosmologies, and imaginaries from settler colonial governance practices. It does so through an analysis of the Aboriginal Peoples' Survey, the settlement of, and territorial allotment in, British Columbia and provincial land management policies such as the Forest and Range Evaluation Program. Using this empirical work, it argues that this erasure enables the reification of settler imaginaries over Indigenous territory, which in turn creates the conditions within which settler colonial authority is legitimized and sovereignty continually remade through policy interventions. While the text largely centres on territory in what is today Canada, it also offers a view into the way in which (settler) coloniality more broadly is continually upheld and remade. Indeed, when viewed through the lens of a global colonial order, the continual remaking of settler sovereignty enables the constitution of international and global politics.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project such as this is not only the work of one person. This is especially true of the dissertation that follows. The work was completed with the financial support of the Government of Ontario and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through the Ontario Graduate Scholarship and the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships Program—Doctoral Scholarship, respectively.

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## Introduction: ‘A radical departure’

‘See that over there, and that there, and over there? It all used to be forest as far as the eye could see.’ These words were spoken to me during the Fall of 2017 as I was being driven along Highway 16 across Wet’suwet’en<sup>1</sup> territory (yintah), which spans much of the area between the municipalities of Houston and Terrace in northwestern British Columbia (BC). I was there on an exploratory fieldwork trip, seeking to work with the Wet’suwet’en nation<sup>2</sup> as a part of a community-based project for my PhD research. This trip had brought me here, sitting alongside one of the leaders of the Unist’ot’en Action Camp (UAC or Camp) who had recently been selected as one of the heads of a Clan in the nation,<sup>3</sup> and them pointing out cattle ranches along the highway, describing to me the way the yintah was being transformed into settler property.

He continued, speaking with a tone that was at once both amused, but intentional: ‘Every time they come in to cut down forest to clear the space for a ranch, they have to meet with us, and it is always the same story: the ranches are necessary for ‘protein production.’ What they never seem to get, even after we’ve told them I don’t know how many times, is that we already get protein from those forests. They’re where we hunt moose and other game for food. You should put that in your book.’

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<sup>1</sup> As with many Indigenous languages, there are multiple spellings for the different words. One of these is the name of the Wet’suwet’en themselves, which has also been spelled “Witsuwit’en” in the past. I follow the nation’s own contemporary spelling throughout this text, though defer to other authors when quoting from them.

<sup>2</sup> I use ‘nation’ intentionally, similarly to the way that I use ‘clans’, ‘houses’, ‘governments’, ‘communities’, ‘individuals’, and other descriptors throughout the text. Each refers to different groups and entities of different sizes and levels within the broad self-identified collective Indigenous peoples. More specifically, ‘nations’ is typically the preferred term to use when referencing political communities with their own distinct governance models, legal orders, and history, such as is the case for the Wet’suwet’en.

<sup>3</sup> Governance responsibilities in the Wet’suwet’en nation are split in multiple ways. One way is the distinction between Band Council governments whose authority is derived from the *Indian Act*, and traditional leaders who derive their authority from their Clans. The other split is regarding the division of territorial authority, wherein Band Council governments maintain authority only within the defined space of the villages, whereas responsibility over the broader yintah is divided among each of the Clan and House leaders. There is a deeper discussion of this in Chapter 5.

Our conversation lasted nearly the entire day, spanning a wide range of topics from research methods and plans, to the fact that we were driving on the infamous ‘Highway of Tears’, on which countless Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered, to the Burns Lake Indian Residential School (IRS) and its ongoing legacy in the area. It was these comments and my subsequent questions upon which I look back as a clarifying moment for my research. There were more affective moments throughout the day, in particular when discussing the Burns Lake IRS or especially the legacy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) along the highway. These conversations changed my own relationship to settler colonial violence. However, this story about protein production was unique. It made clear to me the way that differences in knowledge between Indigenous peoples and settlers—what Kukutai and Walker (2015) call ‘recognition gaps’—are exploited to further settler colonial dispossession. Going into the day, I would not have considered forests as sources of protein production in the matter of fact way they were described to me. Nor had I, despite understanding on a conceptual level that ranches were each sites of Indigenous dispossession, connect this dispossession to Indigenous lifeways, relationships to territory<sup>4</sup> and nature, and crucially, *Indigenous knowledge systems* in the way they were being described by the head of the Clan.

As I reflected on this moment over the coming days, months, and years, it became clear that I would indeed need to ‘put that in [my] book.’ The community-engaged project I had

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout the dissertation I use both ‘land’ and ‘territory’ to refer to the spaces on which life is lived. In doing so I follow Elden’s (2010) distinction between the two, where land is understood as embodying a political-economic relationship, and territory as a political technology. In doing so, however, I acknowledge that this distinction remains somewhat unsatisfying. Elden himself identifies these distinctions, along with the political-strategic ‘terrain’, as not being a comprehensive account of land. Indeed, as becomes more clear throughout the text, economic or technological understandings of the political nature of land do not capture the intersubjective nature of Indigenous nation’s relationships to their lands, and the constitutive nature of land’s role in governance systems and other relationships as they exist outside of settler imaginaries. However, there does not appear to be a consensus within the Indigenous resurgence literature regarding terminology, and while a more fulsome theorization of the terminology is beyond the scope of this project, my usage here seems consistent with the way others such as Coulthard (2014) and Rifkin (2014) have each used the terms.

planned to undertake when I loaded up my car to drive from Hamilton, Ontario to northern BC would need to be put aside in favour of what I was learning while on the yintah. This dissertation is the result of these reflections, and the research and analysis they shaped. Instead of researching the process of, and discontinuities involved in, data collection in Indigenous communities, my project became one about the role that knowledge plays in enabling contemporary settler colonialism.

### *Knowledge Production and Settler Coloniality*

Over the following pages I argue that knowledge, its production, and its mobilization in the form of government policymaking, is central to the (re)production of settler coloniality. To make this argument, I look to the production of demographic knowledge and policies relating to the organization, allotment, and contemporary management of land. However, this is not an argument that knowledge is necessarily the causal driver of settler colonialism. Rather than a linear, causal mechanism that understands knowledge as the driver of settler colonialism, I use government documents (including demographic surveys, reports, technical notes, and policy statements, among other documents) to illustrate the foundational and legitimizing role that knowledge plays in settler colonial governance by creating the conditions within which settler coloniality is continually remade. Specifically, I understand knowledge as both produced and as productive in that what is known then structures which interventions are deemed possible by policymakers. In so doing, I focus on the work of governments, both federal and provincial, to exclude Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies from decision-making processes in land management and organizational policy. This in turn enables the reification and ‘making concrete’ of settler imaginaries as a way of resolving that particular form of insecurity felt by colonial settler states whose sovereignty rests on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

Crucially, this argument rests on an analysis of governance practices and the knowledge systems which underpin and sustain them. In this respect, my analysis is focused on government policy rather than the legislative structures such as the *Indian Act* or court decisions that are oftentimes the focus of work on Indigenous politics within Canada (Bird et al., 2017).<sup>5</sup> By looking to policy instead of legislation, I am better able to analyze the relationships and relations of power which are inherent to the policies, but which also are brought into being, maintained, and erased by them. This includes not only the relationships between Indigenous peoples, nations, and governments, but also those which Indigenous peoples maintain with each other and the rest of Creation. Such a lens allows for a more deeply contextualized analysis, one attentive to the interconnectedness of people with territory, water, plants, and animals and insects—that is, those non-human elements understood as spiritual beings that make up ‘Creation’ in Indigenous cosmologies (Coulthard, 2014; Estes, 2019; Mills, 1994; Sioui, 1992; Sioui & Brierley, 1999; Simpson, 2011; Stark, 2013; Todd, 2018)—an interconnectedness that remains at the heart of Indigenous legal orders and modes of governance. In turn, an attention to relationships also helps uncover the relations of power which operate to sustain settler colonialism and coloniality more broadly.

Centring relationships in my analysis also allows me to engage with both the subjective and objective (material) aspects of colonization.<sup>6</sup> Especially in the contexts of settler colonialism as it exists in Canada, Indigenous peoples have been dispossessed both of their identities (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Andersen, 2014), as well as of their territories (Harris, 2002). However, by

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<sup>5</sup> The *Indian Act* is especially prominent in literature on Indigenous peoples and settler colonialism in Canada. This is understandable insofar as the *Act* has historically been the central tool of Canadian administration of Indigenous peoples—a situation which continues into the present day despite critique of it and moves from the federal government to govern Indigenous peoples and territories through individual pieces of legislation. The *Act* continues to touch on issues of Status and identity, governance (including imposing Band Councils on First Nations), and lands and territories (including through the reserve system. For more information see: Hanson, web; Vowel, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> For a greater engagement with this, see Fanon (1991), from whom Coulthard’s (2014) work draws.

centring relationships in my analysis, the text also suggests a dissolution of the difference between the two. This is done by highlighting some of the ways in which land intimately connects nearly all other aspects of life to uncover the profound impacts data collection practices and policies targeting land use and the division of territory have on the seemingly non-territorial aspects of settler colonialism. By knowing Indigenous peoples more fully through settler-defined demographic data, the federal government upholds a false dichotomy premised on colonial views of subjectivity. In dispossessing Indigenous nations of their territory, allotment policies enacted by both the provincial and federal governments also undermined and—wittingly or unwittingly—severed the relationships that nations had with the rest of Creation. Indigenous peoples are intimately connected to their territories—and the ‘space’ created by them. Indeed, not just a container for life, Indigenous nations hold relationships with and responsibilities to the territory that ultimately offers them the necessary aspects of life: food, shelter, etc. This is to say that in Indigenous cosmologies, land is not something ‘out there’ but provides a context without which life itself would not take place. Colonial delegitimization of traditional Indigenous systems of governance furthered this severing of relationships, and the binarization of subjectivity and materiality (Beier, 2005). Knowledge was, and is, essential to the interconnected processes of dispossession and assimilation, including, as I show in Chapter Six in relation to provincial land management policies, by directly enabling the practices by which settler policymakers attempted to realize these processes by giving them an evidentiary basis on which to progress the colonial encounter.

This argument draws deeply on the critical International Relations (IR) literature, and scholarship on Indigenous politics and colonization in settler colonial states. Especially important to my analysis are the areas of critical security studies in IR, and Settler Colonial



Studies and Indigenous resurgence. Both of these literatures are closely connected to other disciplines, and as a result my analysis also draws notably on work in Geography, Sociology, and Political Theory. The project's connection to literature on settler colonialism may be the most obvious of these disciplines, but my text offers clear contributions to both it and IR. I outline those contributions to each in turn.

Looking first to the study of settler colonialism in Canada, much of the literature centres the relationship of the federal government to Indigenous peoples. This is understandable given that responsibility for Indigenous peoples rests with the federal government through section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, which was subsequently re-affirmed in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. However, such a literal reading of the division of legislative powers between federal and provincial governments misses the way much of the work of dispossessing is done through provincial land use and management policy. This is especially notable in the case of BC, where the lack of treaties between Indigenous nations and the Crown has left a seeming void into which the provincial government has stepped and assumed its own authority to act. There is little scholarship on the relationships between provinces and Indigenous nations, a gap that this text begins the work of filling by analyzing provincial land management policies. Further, my focus on questions of knowledge in policymaking offers a new contribution to understanding the work of self-determination and decolonization for Indigenous nations as they enact their own policies and practices through their governments.

Drawing on IR literature in a text focused on the reproduction of settler colonialism is perhaps a more abstract move than is drawing on the literature around Indigenous politics and settler colonialism. Indeed, much of my thinking about these issues comes from my own academic background in IR. However, IR, and especially critical security studies, have much to

offer the study of settler colonialism through their attention to sovereignty, and the continual remaking of authority and legitimacy. The same is also true the other way, with settler colonialism illuminating much about the foundations of international relationships, security, and global order. Indeed, as I discuss further in Chapter One, there remains a fundamental, and existential, insecurity at the heart of the settler project. This manifests in the settler state needing to continually re-affirm its own sovereignty and legitimacy in the face of continued Indigenous existence from prior to assertions of settler authority. While I did not begin as such when the project was conceived, my dissertation also comes (in part) as a supportive, affirmative response to Howell and Richter-Montpetit's (2019a, b) critique of the whiteness of critical security studies—and in many ways, critical Western IR more broadly. In their texts, Howell and Richter-Montpetit argue that both securitization theory (2019b) and Foucauldian security studies (2019a) are rooted in a liberal politics that ignores its own anti-Black and anti-Indigenous foundations. Because of this, the assumptions of a 'civilized politics' of securitization theory ends up privileging Europe as a sort of desecuritized 'moral standard' (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019b). In a similar way, the "methodological Whiteness"<sup>7</sup> of Foucauldian security studies results in crucial blind spots in its analyses.

Despite claims of a more attentive Canadian critical security studies (de Larrinaga & Salter, 2014), there remains a need for a deeper engagement with what Howell and Richter-Montpetit (2019b: 15) identify as the "constitutive role of racist and colonial relations of force and expropriation in the making of the modern order, including ongoing security projects". I take up this call by illustrating the way in which whiteness and settler coloniality<sup>8</sup> reproduce

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<sup>7</sup> They draw here on Bhabra's (2017) work which put the concept forward.

<sup>8</sup> Of course, these are of course both co-constitutive, with settler coloniality resting easily within—as well as helping to shape—a world system ordered by whiteness. I acknowledge this less to muddy the waters, and more to illustrate

themselves through the enacting of practices and the reinforcing of relationships that erase Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies. In this sense, I am focused less on the practicing of security ‘on-the-ground’ through typical means of policing, military interventions, and bordering. While these are important topics to discuss in relation to settler colonialism and Indigenous peoples, this work is being done elsewhere (Bell & Schreiner, 2018; Crosby & Monaghan, 2018; Midzain-Gobin, 2019). Instead, my text turns a security-centric lens onto security-generating government practices that are outside of those that we may traditionally understand as moments of securitization in IR. Notably, settler sovereignty is reified through knowledge production practiced in the collection of demographic statistics, territorial allotment, and management policies and practices. I argue that these practices, operating in the everyday, support the state’s resolution of the insecurity at the centre of settler colonial occupation. They do so by continually erasing Indigenous claims to authority, reifying the colonial imaginaries through which settler sovereignty—and thus authority and legitimacy—is affirmed. In this way, I connect the literatures on knowledge and cosmology in IR with critical security studies, understanding each through the lens of settler colonialism as it is manifested in what is today Canada. In so doing I am aligning myself with Frowd’s (in Salter 2019) call to address racist violences of the ontological and cosmological variety, as well as the developing literature on the racialization of sovereignty in the context of settler colonialism (Nisancioglu, 2019). This also allows me to deliberately align myself with decolonial IR’s call for reclamation and centring of the non-European, captured in Sabaratnam’s (2017: 40) statement: “to say that colonised peoples had not only history (i.e. a past of significance) but also *historical significance* was—and in some sense remains—a radical departure from the common assumptions of modern scholarship.”

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the manner in which the two cannot easily be separated, and in which I am not seeking to do so in identifying each here.

My text helps to do this by destabilizing the assumed naturalness of settler cosmologies and imaginaries.

### *Working as a Settler*

Before outlining the dissertation's central argument, it is important that I start the work of unpacking those relations of power inherent in this study. Reflected in my opening story are not only the gaps in imagining and interpreting the world as it appears, but also my own positionality with regards to my research. Following Alcoff's (1988: 433) understanding of positionality, identity and subjectivity are defined not only by internal experiences such as those I experienced on the drive, but also in relation to "the external context within which that person is situated." This is literally the position of the person (or group) in society. In this respect, I am 'outsider' to my research area, insofar as I am from southern BC—which can at times feel like a world away from the space in northern BC where I centre in this research. However, I am not an outsider to the research field itself. As a settler Canadian scholar of colour, I am myself implicated in those relations that I analyze in this text.

Most notably, as a settler Canadian, there are many ways in which I benefit directly from the erasure of Indigenous nations and indigeneity on which Canada has been built. This is the case in terms of what Harris (2004: 168) calls the "experienced materiality of colonialism", in which I include the sorts of infrastructures described by Harris, but also the financial benefits of Indigenous dispossession in the form of the Canadian Pension Plan's investments, the profits brought to the financial sector, or even relatively unfettered access to Indigenous territories. The benefits accruing to me through being a settler-citizen also include those that exist on a subjective level. Described as 'settler entitlement' (Mackey, 2016) or 'unconscious expectation' (Bell, 2008), the subjective benefits of settler colonialism can be read as amounting to a

‘common sense’ (Rifkin, 2014) of Canada as a state without a history of colonialism—let alone a colonial present (Veracini, 2015).<sup>9</sup> Affectively, this produces what can be known as a settler comfort that naturalizes the privileges and benefits associated with being a settler, effectively masking the relations of power and dispossession of Indigenous nations which make them possible.

This comfort, and the benefits and privileges that produce it, can be understood as structuring our own engagement with the world. We can see this in the different levels of empathy enacted as we relate to each other, but also in our levels of curiosity and willingness to look outside of our own experience. Indeed, in my own case, the privileges I enjoyed as a settler scholar led me to initially seek what I saw as a novel and in some ways more important research project that looked outside of questions of land and territory. However, as I touched on above, and more fully explore in my methodological discussion, to actually speak to the more pressing concerns of the nation required me to look outside of my own assumptions. Doing so required a process that Smith (2017), herself drawing on D’Costa (2006), refers to as ‘unlearning’. Described as the deconstruction of the ‘assumptions’ we have developed as a result of our positionalities (Smith 2017: 203-205), undertaking processes of unlearning offer us the opportunity to transcend our own comforts. While always ‘in process’ or in a state of becoming—that is to say, never final—these processes of unlearning allow us to move outside our own understandings of the world, to unpack our assumptions and to literally unlearn the ‘common senses’ that we have accrued.

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<sup>9</sup> This self-understanding on the part of settler Canadians is further entrenched by politician’s claims of Canada not having a history of colonialism, as both Prime Ministers Steven Harper and Justin Trudeau have done. In these statements, politicians conveniently locate colonialism which took place on the territory that today makes up Canada in the context of British imperialism, sometimes even placing Canada in the position of a colonial subject. For more on this see: Midzain-Gobin and Smith (forthcoming).

Beginning a process of unlearning is not always easy, not for the least because of the masks which come with comfort. However, these privileges do not accrue to all equally, and my own identity as a settler Canadian of colour complicates my own implication in the settler colonial relations of power in three ways. The first is that my identity as a person of colour already positioned me within the racial hierarchy that continues to define both Canada (Razack, 2002; Razack et al., 2010) and the global order (Sajed, 2013), with whiteness as the structuring logic of this hierarchy. This means those settlers who are white maintain a degree of privilege, even amongst those of who, as a result of being settlers, already occupy a privileged position in the colonial relations of power. Second, and in part as a result of this positioning outside of whiteness, I was perhaps quicker to seek out my own process of unlearning as I viewed it as a sort of act of solidarity and support for another marginalized (albeit differently), community. That is, my positionality in part motivates me to seek out opportunities for solidarity and allyship. Third, when I did travel to the Wet'suwet'en yintah I was accepted more quickly than might have been a white settler because of the assumptions of my own experiences of marginalization. While there is room for speculation on this count, when I described myself as a settler Canadian the same Clan leader who I drove with across the territory replied that I 'wasn't really' since I 'didn't look like a settler' either.

So, while I bring certain comforts as a result of my own identity as a settler Canadian, I have also been deliberate in seeking out opportunities to move outside of my own comfort. This has been a process in some respects made easier by my identity as a person of colour, as I have been able to navigate the racialized hierarchies we are all implicated in. This navigation has in some respects been deliberate as over the years I have sought to cultivate a critical approach to my own positionality. More than just being critical of settler colonialism, I understand the term

as it is used by Mutimer, Grayson and Beier (2013: 4) to describe a process of “revealing the workings of a social system, so as to inform and mobilise those oppressed by the system and incite transformation”. I seek to mobilize this approach in both my everyday positionality to my role as a researcher, and as such I am seeking a type of “engaged political subjecthood in research” (Mutimer et al. 2013: 4). Doing so means being attentive to the way in which my identity and positionality impact my own research—while also appreciating that the combination of my political organizing work and interest in returning to BC informed my selection of the Camp as an initial site to visit while building my project.

My positionality as a settler of colour also extends outside of the immediate confines of this dissertation project to my larger place in the colonial context of Canada, and the various networks and webs of relationships that make it up. On a professional level, I am to an extent able to benefit an academic and researcher working in the context of universities and colleges pledging to respond to calls to diversify, and to support efforts towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. In such a moment, work on indigeneity and Indigenous peoples can be quite attractive for these institutions, and for the academic publishing industry more broadly. In this respect, my being of colour may only heighten the appeal—as I am able to simultaneously support their aims of diversity and reconciliation. Despite such a discourse of diversity and reconciliation, transformative change in these institutions is never straightforward, especially when it would require the transfer of power and authority necessary to realize those decolonial aspirations I seek to put into practice. Indeed, on a personal level I have my own commitments to solidarity and allyship through organizing work in pursuit of decolonial, transformative change. As I discuss further in Chapter Two, these commitments were central to my selection of the Camp as a site for my research, and indeed, to my motivation for pursuing work on questions of

indigeneity more broadly. With this, we can see one illustration of the ways in which my roles as academic and accomplice overlap. In so doing, however, my identities also support each other, with my organizing strengthening my access to people and spaces as a researcher, and my analysis, as I then approach my academic work not only with the more information, but through lenses of self-reflexivity developed through my own experiences.

### *Colonial Imaginaries*

As I analyze the role that knowledge plays in the reproduction of settler colonial relations, I engage with two expressions of it: ‘colonialism’ and ‘coloniality’. While the two are related, they are not interchangeable, with each being used to describe a specific form of colonial relations. Central to decolonial theory, Sabaratnam (2017) traces the concept of coloniality back to Quijano’s (1992; 2000) work, also identifying Mignolo (2002; 2007) and Grosfoguel (2002) as having helped shape the concept. The concept itself describes a sort of underside of European modernity, described as the “racist, dualistic hierarchy of the human which enables forms of conquest, appropriation, violence and domination” (Sabaratnam 2017: 136). This is to say that coloniality refers to a racialized “colonial model of global power” (Tucker 2018: 219) operating “in a grand historical and rather abstract register” (Sabaratnam 2017: 136). Coloniality and modernity then are co-constitutive, each being tied to the other in their own development and the development of today’s world.

Understood this way, coloniality operates on a broad, global scale, and yet, its enactments through practices of dispossession and marginalization are more localized and situated (Tucker, 2018). It is in this situatedness that we can locate colonialism, described by Sabaratnam (2017: 136) as “one specific historical instantiation of ‘coloniality’.” I follow this distinction in the text that follows in that where I speak of colonialism I am speaking of this specific manifestation of



colonial power, the specific set of practices; where I refer to coloniality I am speaking of the broader relations of power underlying a colonial world order. In the language of specifically *settler* colonial relations, we can understand settler colonialism as a specific case of structured and ongoing dispossession that underpins the construction of a broader coloniality.

Engaging with both in my project is necessary as being attentive to the practices of colonialism helps us avoid the singular “broad brushstroke and one-dimensional ways” an attention to only coloniality tends to understand those “knowledges, realities, and lifeworlds that are marginalized by Eurocentric biases and universalism” (Tucker 2018, 223). My analysis seeks to avoid universalizing in this way in my focus on the reproduction of settler coloniality in what is today Canada, and an attention to specific colonial practices of (patriarchal) governance aimed at dispossession and erasure of indigeneity. My reference to ‘settler coloniality’ is deliberate in that it reflects my own understanding of Canada as an already international space. Within this space, many nations are already in the process of coming together and entering into relations,<sup>10</sup> as they have been for generations prior to the arrival of European settlers. In so doing they have produced overlapping and mutually-reinforcing relationships to territory and Creation, modes of governance, and legal orders. Understood this way, the inter-national character of the space is more expansive than the multicultural vision of Canada today.

Throughout the text I refer to ‘imaginaries’ in terms of collective understandings. This view of Canada as an international space reflects one such imaginary; however, it is not the way in which Canada is understood by most settler Canadians. As I pointed to above when discussing my own positionality, the understanding of Canada held by many is not that of a state implicated in contemporary colonialism or the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous nations. Instead,

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<sup>10</sup> For a much more in-depth series of analyses of these relations and processes, see: Beier, 2009.

Canada is understood to be a benevolent actor, and importantly, a relatively unitary one in which ‘a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian’.<sup>11</sup> Drawing on work by Bronfen (2005), Bruyneel (2017), Dobbernack (2010), Edkins (1999), Latour (2005), and Sajed (2013), I describe this as a ‘settler’ or ‘imperial’ imaginary, though it is just as accurate when described by Mackey (2016) as a ‘settler fantasies of entitlement.’ In the text I understand this settler and imaginary as reflecting Lockean understandings of ‘improvement’, whereby a hierarchical relationship exists between humanity and land, rather than the relational one discussed above. Within this, the imperative exists for the transformation of land, with “Land [...] remade in the image of agriculture” by man (Thistle 2015: 111) in moving from a state of nature to that of civilization. Indigenous nations too have imaginaries, which are closely tied to Indigenous cosmologies, relationships, and legal orders. Indeed, the tension central to my analysis is that between them and those settler imaginaries which guide government policymaking, a tension described by Littlebear (2000) as ‘Jagged Worldviews Colliding’. While there remains the possibility of multiple imaginaries co-existing alongside each other without colliding,<sup>12</sup> as described by Agathangelou and Ling (2009) as ‘multiple worlds’, the hierarchical and racialized relations of power in settler imaginaries preclude such worlds from being built. Instead, as I outline in the text, settler imaginaries are reified through government policy, constructing what is today Canada. Taking the language from above, coloniality is instantiated through settler colonial

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<sup>11</sup> Here I want to acknowledge Québec nationalism, and the fact of a particular ‘collective cultural imaginary’ (Bronfen, 2005) among Québécois that would be different than that of an Anglophone identity within Canada. However, despite this distinction, because the Québécois imaginary also—like that of an Anglophone Canadian imaginary—coheres around an assumption of settler authority and superiority, there is little difference between them in terms of a relations of power vis à vis Indigenous nations.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, such a vision is represented in the Two Row Wampum of 1613, which is meant to represent coexistence between the Dutch and Haudenosaunee as “two paths or two vessels, travelling down the same river together. One, a birchbark canoe, will be for the Indian People, their laws, their customs, and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs, and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither of us will make compulsory laws nor interfere in the internal affairs of the other. Neither of us will try to steer the other’s vessel” (Keefer 2014: web).

practices of erasure and dispossession, which combine to produce the settler ‘replacement’ described by Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013).

Importantly, as I understand them in this text these imaginaries are grounded in cosmologies, the definition of which I join Allan (2018) in taking from Howell (2002: 196), who writes that they are “any composition or cultural construct relating to the structure or process of systems of creation: the origins of physical elements of earthly or astronomical spheres, the genesis of the material world, the order and function of the observable universe.” In the context of IR, Allan (2018: 11) conceptualizes them as being comprised of ontology, episteme, destiny, temporality, and cosmogony. For my purposes, in this text I engage with only the first three. Further, with regards to destiny I move away from a more God-centric, Western view of destiny towards one closer to that mobilized by those working through theories of Indigenous resurgence. For these theorists, humanity’s place within Creation is fundamentally relational, instead of hierarchical (Coulthard, 2014; Estes, 2018; Simpson, 2011; 2017). Framed this way, imaginaries exist not only on a subjective level, but on a material (objective) one as well. Both are a part of my analysis here, as both are targeted by settler colonial governance.

On the subjective level, imaginaries exist as a sort of ‘sense of self’ or what Sajed (2015) describes as a ‘collective vision’. I describe this in terms of Indigenous nationhood or indigeneity, and as I touched on above but develop further in the text, settler colonial governance seeks to homogenize Indigenous nations while incorporating Indigenous individuals into the settler state. A similar process occurs for Indigenous territories, which are re-imagined by settlers as *terra nullius*, that is ‘empty’ or ‘unoccupied’ land (Borrows, 1999). In re-imagining Indigenous territory this way, it is opened to be remade into settler property, principally as Crown Land. Here I follow Said’s (1979: 55) use of the term ‘imaginative geography,’ which he

describes as the process by which “space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us.” What I am taking from this is the way in which the image, assumptions and ‘implicit understandings’ (Morrissey, 1997) that we hold in our minds are transposed onto land. In the case of settlers in BC I discuss here, this is done using maps and other colonial technologies. Thus, an imperial imaginary of the time understood the territory as open for settlement, with maps being what Morrissey (1997: 29) calls “a decipherable manual for the newcomers.” When paired with this imaginary, practices of settler colonial governance have worked not only to reify settler sovereignty, but continue to reproduce it into the present day. This not only works to reaffirm the ‘geographic imaginaries’ (Shapiro, 2007) that make up our contemporary vision of the international, but also global coloniality.

### *Chapter Breakdown*

The rest of the text unfolds over four parts comprised of six chapters and my Conclusion. The first part describes how I did the research. It begins with Chapter 1 in which I outline my conceptual and theoretical framework. The framework rests at the intersection of critical security studies, settler colonial studies and decolonial IR theory, which, when read together, offer insight into the way in which the reproduction of settler sovereignty (and thus, settler coloniality is made possible. I begin by theorizing what I call a ‘relationship of (a)partness’ that understands Indigenous individuals and territories to be made a part of Canada, while indigeneity is erased, or left apart. This serves to delegitimize Indigenous (or other non-state) legal orders and their consequent claims to sovereign authority that produce a sense of settler insecurity. I then argue for understanding the role of knowledge in this process, with the reification of settler knowledge over existing Indigenous knowledges. Finally, I close Chapter 1 by speaking to the decolonial

ethos at the heart of my project. While I do not claim the project is decolonial, as it continues to centre the settler state, I am guided by the imperatives towards recovery and rediscovery at the heart of the decolonial project.

Chapter 2 picks up on the theoretical analysis of Chapter 1 and outlines the ‘ethnographic sensibility’ that informed my research design. The chapter opens with a discussion of my approach to the project, including the Community-Based Participatory Research model which I operationalized on my first fieldwork visit to Wet’suwet’en yintah in northern BC in Fall 2017. In following through on this model, and as a part of my process of unlearning, I had to confront my initial unease at centring land and territory in my analysis. Doing so was a process, one which saw me ultimately shift my project to one seeking to better understand the role of BC Government in reproducing settler coloniality as I came to better understand the immediate pressures facing the Wet’suwet’en today. The shift in my project meant much of my subsequent research took policy as my ‘field’, with my second fieldwork trip taking me to archives across British Columbia and Ottawa, with interviews done in Vancouver and Victoria. The chapter moves on to outlining the critical discourse analysis I undertook with the documents and interviews I gathered, finally closing with my reflections on undertaking a project centring settler policymaking through a lens privileging decolonial ethics.

Chapter 3 opens the second part of my text, which is focused on the work of the federal government. It also begins my empirical analysis by studying the collection of demographics data through the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (APS). The broadest survey of Indigenous peoples in Canada, analyzing the APS allows me to illustrate the way in which Indigenous peoples and their territories are known to policymakers. Using a politics of misrecognition framework, the chapter argues that the APS mobilizes settler framings to make Indigenous peoples legible to the state—

and thus governable within settler modernity. In addition to beginning my empirical analysis, this chapter also begins the work of collapsing the subjective and material in my analysis, as I understand both to be captured in demographic data collection.

Following this, Chapter 4 opens my third part by moving away from an exclusive focus on the work of the federal government in remaking settler coloniality towards an in-depth study of identity to more concretely centre the question of land and territory in the Pacific Northwest. It begins by outlining the way in which colonization was increasingly driven by technological and scientific innovations taking place within the broader context of British empire. Then, it reads the history of BC through the lens of relations, using this reading to argue against a static and binary view of settler colonialism. Instead I emphasize a settler colonialism that is both dynamic and structural.

Chapter 5 maintains my focus on historical relations and policy through the *Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia* (McKenna-McBride Commission), the body that has undertaken perhaps the most expansive allotment of territory across BC. Using the Commission's archival data, I illustrate the gaps between the way the commissioners and Indigenous nations each understood the land. I argue these gaps enabled the dispossession of Indigenous nations, in part because of the way in which decisions were made on the basis of settler knowledges framed through a logic of 'improvement'.

Finally, Chapter 6 brings us to the present day, and focuses on contemporary land and resource management frameworks in BC, including the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP). Through an analysis of these frameworks, I argue that there has been a shift on the part of settler state governance towards understanding Indigenous peoples' existence on territory through the lens of culture. This shift in framing allows for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples

in colonial policymaking, while still maintaining a hierarchical relations of power in which settler ‘scientific’ knowledge is authoritative, and while also continuing to vest sovereignty in the settler state. In my Conclusion, I extend this analysis of the present-day by looking to the future.

During the time of researching and writing this text there were moves made by both federal and provincial governments that offer the potential for significant changes to the relationship between Indigenous nations and settler governments. Notably, both levels of government pledged to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the BC Government passed legislation beginning the process of implementing it at the end of 2019. Further, the BC Government is in the process of developing their Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF) as a guide for land use and management policy. In closing then, I offer a brief set of reflections on the efforts of the provincial government, while also looking to the way Indigenous nations are already reclaiming their own governance systems and legal orders absent meaningful engagement from settler governments.

## Chapter One: Settler Insecurity and Domesticating International Relations

After having outlined my project and the dissertation itself, I now turn to sketching my conceptual framework. In doing so I am not offering a generalizable or ‘testable’ framework of the reproduction of settler colonialism. Rather, while presenting the concepts and frameworks my analysis is based on, I am conscious of the specific locality of each instance of the settler colonial project. Especially given the importance of territory and relationships between Indigenous nations and settlers in the structuring of settler coloniality, its reproduction is not static from place to place, but is adapted depending on the individual conditions. Despite the situatedness of each instance of settler colonialism, I do understand there to be generally similar logics operating across settler coloniality, broadly conceived. This chapter speaks to these, presenting the concepts and frameworks that I am using to understand the way in which data collection, and its subsequent mobilization in policymaking, as well as the effects this has. Such a move privileges a blending of disciplines, and a push back against a rigid view of social phenomena. Instead, it understands phenomena to operate through particular logics – in this case primarily Foucault’s logics of biopolitics and governmentality – which, when organized through government policy, work to perpetually (re)produce the conditions in which settler colonialism is possible. This approach draws from the critical security studies school of IR, and is particularly informed by the concept of ‘emergent causality’ which takes as its aim not to establish linear lines of causal inference, but rather the *conditions under which particular outcomes are made possible* (Salter & Mutlu, 2012). Building on this, the rest of the chapter draws further on (critical) IR and Political Science, but also on the disciplines of Sociology, Settler Colonial Studies, and critical work in Human and Cultural Geography to outline the processes, logics and



outcomes which allow for the continued (re)production of contemporary colonialism within Canada.

I do this in four steps. First, I engage with the question of settler coloniality while outlining what I theorize as its constitutive ‘relationship of (a)partness’ for Indigenous peoples. This relationship is centred on the mutually-constitutive logics of assimilation and elimination/erasure, and results in the construction of settler colonial sovereignty through a particular ‘settler governmentality’. This touches not only on sovereignty through territorial logics (Agnew, 1994), but also the way settler sovereignty operates on subjects and subjectivity. Second, I outline the way in which I organize my work through a critical security studies framework – albeit, deliberately moving the field away from a framing of security as it might typically be imagined to incorporate what I describe as ‘settler insecurity’. While doing so I pay particular attention to describing what (re)production entails through the lens of sovereignty.

Third, I look to how this settler governmentality is actually put into practice in my case at hand here. In doing so I focus on the question of knowledge production, and in particular the kinds of knowledges that serve as a basis, or ‘common sense’, of policymaking. Working from Foucauldian notions of the nexus of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977), I outline an understanding of knowledge as *productive*, illustrating this through its structuring of a ‘universe of possibility’. Finally, I further my engagement with knowledge by moving back from settler colonial studies to IR, focusing my attention on decolonization through decolonial and ‘post-critical’ IR. Important here is not only the theoretical descriptions of a ‘decolonial science of IR’ (Sabaratnam, 2017), but also the ethical, epistemological and ontological imperatives towards recovery and rediscovery. In outlining these, I argue for the importance of centring non-Western

knowledges and working to support those communities already pushing back against global coloniality – in this case, manifested locally as Canadian settler colonialism.

### *(A)partnership and Settler Coloniality*

To ground the understanding of settler colonialism from which I work, I begin with Mignolo's (2011) concept of 'coloniality' which he refers to as the 'darker side' of European (Western) modernity and its extension across the globe. For Mignolo, coloniality describes the processes of dispossession and colonization of the non-European Other that established the condition of possibility for European modernity itself. Indeed, modernity was enabled through "direct, political, social and cultural domination" of Europeans over the colonized population(s) and territories of peoples Indigenous to the land (Quijano 2007: 168). However, as I discuss in greater detail below, even while we can find similar logics operating across colonial encounters, their manifestations differ across time and space. In recognizing this difference, I seek to focus on the particular form of settler colonialism relevant to Anglophone settler modernity. This, I argue is characterized by a 'relationship of (a)partnership' wherein Indigenous peoples are both made a part of, and forced apart from, the settler state.

While engaging with the concept of coloniality, I want to suggest that the term can serve to universalize and homogenize the particular experiences of colonialism.<sup>13</sup> Of course, while a common past experience of colonization has been noted by Indigenous peoples themselves, this commonality does not necessarily require a uniformity of present effects. Specifically, within discussions of coloniality, there is an argument that the time of Western colonization has passed,

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<sup>13</sup> This can in part be seen in the way that Quijano (2007: 168) writes that "The exploited and the dominated of Latin America and Africa are the main victims" of coloniality. While I agree that these communities have experienced colonization, there remain important differences in the way that this colonization has been brought forward into the present day in settler states.

and that we should now look to Western imperialism instead. However, this marks the important distinction I seek to make between historic coloniality of Western imperialism, and a particular *settler* coloniality most visible in the Anglosphere states of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and in my case here, Canada. This distinction follows Mignolo (2011) and Quijano (2007) in identifying coloniality as enabling the construction of our contemporary international state system—the ‘liberal international order’ of much mainstream IR literature. In this respect, I identify coloniality as historic not because it does not have continuing effects, nor because it has ceased to structure our international state system, but because the colonial practices which constructed the assemblage have been largely abandoned in favour of more indirect ways of structuring relations. While coloniality’s attendant relations of power may still exist then, formal colonialism as we typically think of it has largely ended.

To be sure, I understand settler coloniality as feeding into the construction of a broader coloniality: an international system is constructed from constituent parts, and our contemporary international state system remains organized around former (and contemporary) colonial powers. This includes the Anglosphere states, as well as their European counterparts in the French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Each has a colonial history. However, the logics enacted by each—and the scale of the projects—give me reason to make the distinction. Within settler contexts such as those in the Anglosphere, coloniality continues to involve direct colonial governance wherein Indigenous nations are thought of as an internal minority *within* the (modern) state. Because of this, I want to focus here on a settler coloniality premised upon—and continually enacting—dispossession and elimination through what Crosby and Monaghan (2012 & 2016) call ‘settler governmentality’. In the case of the Anglosphere this involves the dispossession of Indigenous nations from their territories, languages, traditions, philosophies, and ultimately their legitimacy

as legitimate authorities.<sup>14</sup> This dispossession is produced through the enactment of settler sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, deliberately limiting the possibilities for decolonial action taken up within the confines of settler coloniality, and which focuses on the assimilation and the elimination of Indigenous peoples through what has been labeled ‘advanced colonialism’ (Beier, 2005) or the ‘colonial present’ (Gregory, 2004).

This shift into advanced or settler colonialism has been marked by an emphasis on the elimination of Indigenous nations “as *peoples* through the erasure of the histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self” (Alfred and Corntassel 2005: 598)—while also still producing the conditions for the physical elimination of Indigenous bodies. Erasure is to be achieved through a settler governmentality driven by a ‘logic of elimination’ (Wolfe, 2006; see also: Crosby & Monaghan, 2012). As I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3, one of the key strategies employed in accomplishing this elimination of Indigenous peoples is the undermining of *indigeneity* and Indigenous nationhood and identity. Alfred and Corntassel (2005) identify this logic at work in Canada’s homogenization of the multiple Indigenous nations which continue to exist on the territory it claims as its own into a singular mass of individuals. They label the phenomenon ‘Aboriginalism’ for the way in which all Indigenous peoples regardless of national identity become ‘Aboriginal peoples’ in the eyes of the settler state. This undermines the existing relationships that Indigenous nations themselves held with the Crown and the federal government, which now instead treat each of the nations and Indigenous individuals as indistinguishable from each other (Bruyneel, 2007; Rifkin, 2009 & 2014). By eliminating national identities in favour of a legalistic civic identity framed by their belonging to the settler

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<sup>14</sup> See: Coulthard (2014), Shaw (2002), Simpson, A. (2014), Simpson, L. (2011), and Wolfe (1999).

state, this move serves to dispossess Indigenous peoples not only of their distinct cultures but also of their nationhood.<sup>15</sup> This is important as Indigenous nationhood has historically been, and remains, at the core of traditional knowledges, ceremony, relationships to territory and the rest of Creation, as well as legal orders, and modes of governance; however, within settler coloniality Indigenous peoples are no longer engaged as Mohawk, Sioux, Wet’suwet’en, or even on the basis of Treaty relationships. Instead, their legitimacy as Indigenous peoples is defined for them by the settler state as being Indian, or Aboriginal, or Native American according to the particular laws of the state within which they find themselves. Through this process the settler state affirms itself as the legitimate source of governing authority and political subjecthood, building a “settler society on top of the prior social organization and distinctive cultures of peoples on that land” (Crosby & Monghan 2012: 426).

Producing settler coloniality also requires the removal of literal territory from Indigenous nations. This is connected to the erasure of Indigenous nationhood and governance, as it breaks what Coulthard (2014) calls the ‘web of relationships’ that connect humans to the rest of creation—relationships on which Indigenous modes of governance typically rely. This erasure is concretized not only through the theft and the occupation of the land itself, but also the direct imposition of settler sovereignty over Indigenous territory. As an example, it was this assumption of underlying sovereignty over the entirety of Turtle Island that allowed for the formation of North America through the (gradual) construction of Canada and the United States of America. Particularly important was the establishment of settler legal codes which enabled the

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<sup>15</sup> The Canadian Governor General’s comment regarding “our [Canada’s] indigenous peoples” (Terry Pedwell, ‘Gov. Gen. David Johnston apologizes for referring to Indigenous people as immigrants’, *The Toronto Star*, 2017.) puts into words the legal relations of power wherein Indigenous peoples and communities remain under the direct control of the Canadian federal government. While the Governor General apologized after Indigenous individuals and organizations spoke out, such logic remains prevalent, and the real and assumed hierarchies it speaks to remain firmly rooted within settler society.

process of ‘lawfare’ (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2007), or the way in which legal codes and instruments are used by settler states to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands. The process was begun through the type of treaty-making that accompanied European colonization throughout the Anglo world, and then proceeded through the transformation of land into property, all of which has final authority vested in the settler sovereign. In the context of Canada, all lands are under the authority of the Queen, and if not owned privately, the land has been re-imagined into ‘Crown Land’ (Blomley, 2015). Even the reserve lands allotted to Indigenous communities are legally under the sovereignty of the Canadian state, which holds them “for the use and benefit of” the community.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, this underlying settler authority remains even when Indigenous communities are offered nominal rights over their lands in the form of self-government. This is all done through the logic of *terra nullius*, which underpins the *Doctrine of Discovery* (Borrows, 1999). As with so much of the rest of the former British Empire, upon arrival in an ‘empty’ territory, Europeans claimed the territory for themselves. While they understood that physical beings were there, legal doctrine was written such that unless they were ‘civilized’ (read: effectively Christian European subjects), they could not exert authority or claim territory. The complex trading networks, diplomatic relations, and modes of self-governance—that is, all the elements of sovereign authority—constructed by Indigenous nations were (conveniently) marginalized and effectively erased by new European arrivals. Instead, through genocidal practices Indigenous sovereignty has been replaced through a legal framework that

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<sup>16</sup> This was enshrined in section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act 1867* and remains the case still today, even for self-governing First Nations who have reached agreements with the Crown.

privileges settler sovereignty and imposes settler authority over the existing relations on the land which governed Indigenous existence in Turtle Island.<sup>17</sup>

As I noted, this dispossession of Indigenous peoples' sovereignty not only limits Indigenous authority, but it is also especially disruptive to Indigenous relationships to their territories. Within Indigenous cosmologies, the relationship Indigenous peoples hold with their territories is not the same Western conception of ownership; rather, Indigenous nations understand themselves to be *of the land*, and responsible for maintaining what Stark (2017) calls a 'good' relationship. This invokes stewardship responsibilities such that the needs of each element of Creation are tended to, and the relationship is maintained for future generations.<sup>18</sup> This relationship between co-equal subjects is not captured by systems that view land as property, that is, something to be extracted from, such as those in place in settler societies. Even the transferal of land to Indigenous peoples in the form of 'Native title' is still premised upon this fundamentally different understanding of relation to land, despite the discourse from settlers of reconciling past dispossession.

This move to imagining land as property serves to further dispossess Indigenous peoples of their own cosmologies, since we see the imposition and legitimation of the settler imaginary over not only Indigenous lands, but the attendant relationships as well. In doing so, Indigenous territories are interpolated into the state itself. They, along with the individuals who live on them become a part of the state,<sup>19</sup> and subject to settler sovereignty (Rifkin, 2009). Indeed, settler

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<sup>17</sup> Turtle Island refers to the land that today comprises contemporary North America—especially Canada and the United States of America. The name itself comes from Anishinabek and Haudenosaunee Creation narratives in which after a great flood destroyed Earth and most of its inhabitants, the world was made anew on the back of a turtle. As with the territory that now makes up contemporary BC, many nations had different names for the same territory; however Turtle Island has come to be used most prominently to refer to the entirety of the continent. I use Turtle Island here deliberately to refer to the territory as it existed prior to settlement.

<sup>18</sup> See also: Borrows (1999), Simpson (2011), and Watson (2001).

<sup>19</sup> Here I am drawing on Agnew's (1994) concept of territoriality, through which the state exists in part as a function of the territory over which it governs.

sovereignty is only achieved through this interpolation, as Indigenous peoples and their lands must be a part of the state in order for the sovereignty to exist. Settler colonialism continues to be premised upon Indigenous dispossession then, as what was lost is then re-imagined into the settler state (Shaw, 2002). However, the relationships that existed on and through that territory are not incorporated into settler sovereignty—not even where they are referred to explicitly in the treaties on which settler claims to sovereignty rest. There is instead the erasure of these relationships through the imposition and reification of settler imaginaries. In the relations of power which underpin settler sovereignty, Indigenous understandings of land and governance remain subordinate to those of the settler.

Understood this way, settler coloniality is distinct from other forms of coloniality because of the extractive relationship that drives the settler acquisition of colonial lands (Crosby & Monaghan, 2016; Gregory, 2004; Veracini, 2010). However, this extractive relationship is not only present on a material level, but also on a cosmological and ontological level of erasure. Because of this, I describe this as a relationship of ‘(a)partness’. On the one hand, the ‘targets’ of settler colonialism (territory and colonial subjects in the form of Indigenous individuals) are made a part of more dominant or ‘mainstream’ society; at the same time, indigeneity and Indigenous nationhood and the relationships between humans and the rest of Creation are erased, or made apart from and dominated by it. Consequently, Indigenous peoples within contemporary Canada reside in a peculiar position in that they have political rights to membership within the settler state, but remain in a colonial relationship vis-à-vis that very state. Indeed, they reside in what Bruyneel (2007) calls a ‘third space of sovereignty’ in that they are neither entirely inside – nor entirely outside – the sovereign settler state, but rather exist and work within both settler and Indigenous spaces simultaneously. Instead of replicating the objective/subjective divide as



described by Fanon (1991) and Coulthard (2014) in reference to the way colonialism operates on the levels of both material reality and imaginaries, with the concept of (a)partness I am suggesting that both levels are present and operate together in the way Indigenous nationhood is understood in relation to territory. Both by invisibilizing Indigenous presence and relationships to territory through the construction of settler spaces and sovereignty then, Indigenous peoples are made ‘out-of-place’ within their own territories.

This (a)partness becomes in the context of the politics of recognition that drives liberal settler societies. In Canada, we see racialized ‘Others’ and their cultures recognized, and the legitimacy of their existence within Canada affirmed, through such a universalizing politics.<sup>20</sup> However, while all these Others may be recognized as political subjects with inherent rights, a relationship of subalternity also exists in which they are subordinate to whiteness (Razack, 2004; Razack et al., 2010; Spivak, 1988). Because of this, racialized communities must frame their claims in such a way as to be understood by the settler legal systems, because it is only in doing so that their claims may be recognized at all. This is problematic because “where ‘recognition’ is conceived as something that is ultimately ‘granted’ or ‘accorded’ a subaltern group or entity by a dominant group or entity—prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships” (Coulthard 2014: 30-31). This is because there is the need by Indigenous peoples for recognition by the state, but no reciprocal recognition necessary due to the relations of domination. Given this, “in actual contexts of domination (such as colonialism) ... the terms of recognition usually determined by and in the interests of the master (the colonizer)” (Coulthard, 2007: 439). Put plainly then, “the best the colonized can hope for is ‘white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by [their] masters’”

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<sup>20</sup> For more, see Kymlicka (1995 & 2001), and Taylor (1994).

(Coulthard 2014: 39), eliminating the possibility for a self-determination which falls outside of those frameworks constructed and defined by whiteness.

While this is the case for all racialized communities within relations of coloniality, remember that the relationship for Indigenous peoples in the context of *settler* coloniality remains different. Despite that, when understood through the framing of a relations of power, all racialized communities remain in a subordinate position, settler sovereignty seeks the erasure of Indigenous peoples' as *peoples*, with their own existing nationhood and sets of relationships on the territory incorporated into settler coloniality (Beier, 2005; Byrd, 2014; Byrd & Rothberg, 2011). This creates a fundamentally different relationship to whiteness and settler sovereignty for Indigenous nations within settler coloniality, even if it remains incumbent upon all racialized communities to seek recognition through settler framings.

Because of this, such a framework appears to lack a pathway to freedom or emancipation from the present colonial governance for Indigenous peoples. Indeed, Coulthard (2014: 40; emphasis mine) argues that:

rather than leading to a condition of reciprocity the dialectic either breaks down with the explicit nonrecognition of the equal status of the colonized population, or *with the strategic "domestication" of the terms of recognition leaving the foundation of the colonial relationship relatively undisturbed.*

In the case of Canada then, a politics of recognition framework can be seen to maintain relationships of domination and hierarchical relations of power between settlers and Indigenous peoples. In these cases, instead of emancipation, the framework serves to reinforce the positionalities of both settlers and Indigenous peoples. This is enabled by the construction of settler sovereignty and its erasure of indigeneity and Indigenous authority. That is, by the reification of a settler imaginary in which recognition is domesticated *within* the settler state.

### *Critical Security Studies: Reproducing Sovereignty through Settler Governmentality*

If settler coloniality rests on a relationship of (a)partness between Indigenous nations and settler imaginaries, there must be a mechanism through which it is rendered concrete. Here, I turn to critical security studies and its focus on questions of sovereignty and the continual reproduction of settler authority and legitimacy over Indigenous territory. From an initial view, the connection between Indigenous-settler relations and security may seem an odd one: notable exceptions such as Oka or the Unist'ot'en Action Camp aside, the relationships between Indigenous nations and settler authorities do not appear to operate through violence. However, surface-level analyses of security as a question of military defense and intervention miss the way in which indigeneity and Indigenous nationhood as alternative sources of political legitimacy and legal authority pose an existential threat to the settler state itself. This traditional view of international relations as occurring between recognized states also misses the way in which Indigenous assertions of existence have been met with militarized responses (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018; de Larrinaga & Salter, 2014; Midzain-Gobin, 2019; Shaw & Magnusson, 2003). Further, it ignores the way in which the development of policing and logics of security have been driven by a need to secure the state against Indigenous claims (Bell & Schreiner, 2018; Simpson, 2014), and to affirm settler authority and jurisdiction (Pasternak, 2017).

Turning first to the question of existential threat to the state, here we see IR's attention to sovereignty—and critical security studies' attention to the continual remaking of sovereignty—as particularly useful. As I described above, the literature on settler colonialism and law has shown that settler sovereignty rests on the legitimacy of the *doctrine of discovery*, and an initial assertion of settler authority over the territory governed by Indigenous nations and their relations between each other. This initial assertion of authority of *terra nullius* as 'empty space' has since

been continually maintained to the point where it has become assumed, and continues to be a foundational assumption of Canadian courts in identifying the origin point of settler sovereignty (Borrows, 1999). It is on this point that the legitimacy of settler sovereignty, and indeed the legitimacy of the entire settler colonial project, rests. Understood this way, the erasure of indigeneity and Indigenous nationhood is a sort of prerequisite for settler authority. Without this erasure, their authority remains an existential threat to that of settler sovereignty.

Indeed, when paired with the national concern over the stability of claims to sovereignty, Indigenous challenges to “the assumption of territorial integrity of Canada, sovereignty, and self-governance” (Borrows 1999: 5) become a clear threat to the very existence of the Canadian settler state. Any challenge to the boundaries and assumptions of Canadian sovereignty must be acted upon. Because indigeneity both reflects and asserts an oppositional authority, interventions aimed at its erasure ultimately become understood through the framing of national security (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018). Moreover, because of the strength and resilience of Indigenous communities and nations to continually assert their existence, authority, and jurisdiction, this intervention is not a singular event. Rather, it remains a structural feature of settler governance in Canada, and is necessary to providing a sense of ontological security<sup>21</sup> to Canada—and as I describe in the following chapters, a cosmological security as well.

In this way, a politics of (mis)recognition is at the heart of the construction of the settler state. While Indigenous peoples are recognized as existing, their authority and *indigeneity* is not. As I described above, this move of not recognizing Indigenous governance and authority is crucial to the ongoing legitimacy of the settler project. Indigenous individuals and communities may be recognized, however the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the settler state

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<sup>21</sup> For a more fulsome discussion of ontological security, see: Mitzen (2006), Mustapha (2013), Steele (2008), and especially interesting given the genocidal relations inherent to settler coloniality, Subotic (2019).

make them comprehensible firmly within the boundaries of the settler imaginary and legal systems. Rooted in Political Theory, this form of misrecognition is both separate, but related to IR's recent engagement with misrecognition. Identified as a 'key social dynamic' of relations between states (Epstein et al., 2018), reading international politics through the framing of misrecognition reveals the way in which states remain frustrated or 'unsatisfied' in their realization of sovereignty (*Ibid*). That is, in the words of Epstein et al. (2018: 788), states are always seeking, but never quite achieve a fulsome "sovereign agency" they hold as an ideal.

Insofar as Indigenous nations are 'unsatisfied' with the lack of recognition of their authority within settler coloniality, there are parallels between IR's engagement with misrecognition. However, each of the papers in the 2018 Special Issue of *Review of International Studies* focused on misrecognition in IR assumes a sovereign equality at the heart of international politics. As we can see in the relationship of (a)partnership above, there is no pretense to equality within settler coloniality: it is settler law and legal systems which remain authoritative, with Indigenous nations (and their legal orders and cosmologies) erased from settler coloniality while Indigenous peoples and their territories are domesticated *within* the settler state. However, because the assumption of the authority and legitimacy of these boundaries rests on so thin a pretense, it produces what I am calling here a form of 'settler insecurity'. This insecurity is especially prevalent in the context of what is today Canada, as de Larrinaga and Salter (2014: 4) note that "a central part of the national debate has been what is sovereignty and who is included in Canada".

What we see out of this drive to security as a way to continually reaffirm this sovereignty, whether national, ontological, or cosmological, is the need for continual and ongoing intervention against *indigeneity* and Indigenous claims to authority and jurisdiction outside of the

boundaries of the settler imaginary. The rationale for these interventions—both historical and contemporary aimed at the continued domestication of Indigenous peoples—is the need to continually produce and reproduce the conditions within which settler sovereignty is made.<sup>22</sup> As I pointed to above, this settler insecurity clearly manifests in the form of overt and militarized violence against Indigenous assertions of existence and authority; however, what is especially valuable in critical security studies is its engagement with the ‘everyday’ ways in which security operates as well (Mutimer, Grayson & Beier, 2013). In looking to the everyday as a site in which security practices are enacted—and resisted—critical security studies offers a lens through which the operations of power can be seen outside of those instances where it is most obvious. My own engagement with statistical data collection and land management practices and policies as sites worthy of analysis through the lens of security follows directly from this sensibility. As this dissertation argues, knowledge production and the erasure of Indigenous knowledges in settler colonial policymaking is a key component in the reification of settler imaginaries, and thus the ongoing (re)production of settler coloniality. At the same time, there is little sense that either standardized data collection (outside of intelligence-gathering), or land use planning and organization are considered routine responses to security threats. Instead, they exist in the realm of everyday state activities that occur in the background, and without much attention being paid to the way in which they work to reaffirm the legitimacy of the project of settler colonialism, and especially the way they concretize settler sovereignty. Indeed, as Smith (2015: 38) argues, the unseen nature of these processes is important, as it “prevent[s] us from seeing the state as the settler colonial, white supremacist, and heteropatriarchal formation that it is.”

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<sup>22</sup> Here I am drawing on Salter and Mutlu’s (2012) emphasis on ‘emergent causality’.

In this sense, while I would agree with Crosby and Monaghan’s (2018: 10) point that “policing institutions have served as the ground-level enforcement of settler colonialism’s project of eliminating Indigenous sovereignties”, the threat response of the settler colonial state has been written into many areas outside of the overt security apparatus as well. In this text I am most interested in the ways in which the eliminatory logic of settler colonialism manifests itself through knowledge practices. The cases of statistical data collection and land use policy I discuss over the empirical chapters clearly illustrate the erasure of indigeneity as a separate and opposing source of legitimacy and authority to the settler state, and I argue constitute examples of the state’s response to an existential threat.

*Knowledge Production and Policymaking: the ‘Universe of Policy Possibility’*

To bring the previous two sections together, what we see in the context of contemporary settler colonialism is that indigeneity represents an existential threat to the settler state. As a result, the state creates the conditions within which Indigenous peoples are placed in a relationship I define as (a)partness—that is, both forcibly made a part of settler coloniality, while simultaneously being erased from settler sovereignty. What I seek to do in this text is to offer one illustration of *how* this erasure occurs. This has already been discussed in a variety of ways ranging from the delegitimization of self-governance (Coulthard, 2014; Lightfoot, 2016; Simpson, 2011) and Indigenous claims to territory (Mackey, 2016), to the sidelining of Indigenous health outcomes (Gabel et al., 2016; Wiebe, 2016), and physical violence (Crosby & Monaghan, 2018; Pasternak, 2017; Simpson, 2014). All of which come together in the form of a genocidal structure that not only enables Indigenous erasure, but seeks to ensure it both materially and subjectively (MacDonald, 2019; MMIWG, 2019; TRC, 2015). As I outlined in the Introduction, my own contribution fits into this existing literature by illuminating the way in which the reproduction of

settler colonialism occurs through knowledge production and mobilization. That is, I am seeking to illuminate the epistemic and ontological violences<sup>23</sup> that underpin settler policy formation that makes this reproduction possible.

My focus on knowledge in the policymaking process is in some respects an abstraction. However, while much of the work I pointed to above centres the practices and norms of settler colonialism, Foucault's (1977) work on knowledge and power (*savoir* and *pouvoir*) identifies the link between knowledge and normative orders, and the way in which these subsequently make possible certain interventions (practices). Indeed, Epstein (2017: 3) writes of the way that norms and practices are both "enabled and sustained by particular forms of knowledge". Taking this observation seriously then requires that we better understand the ways in which the settler state seeks to overcome its own precarity through the erasure of Indigenous knowledges as a means for dis-abling, or 'making impossible', the implementation of Indigenous governance practices. In doing so I not only draw on the literature around Indigenous knowledge, but also the literature in IR that engages with questions of epistemology and ontology, seeking to understand the 'techno-specific' ways in which we produce knowledge, and how this structures not only how we see the world, but also how what we know makes possible certain kinds of interventions (Allan, 2018; Shah, 2017).

Engaging with this question requires some pushback against the commonly held understanding of knowledge and truth as objective and immutable. Instead, I am following Foucault's (1977) understanding of the way that knowledge and truth are produced through a relations of power. Understood this way, there is not some separate truth 'out there' waiting to be

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<sup>23</sup> With regards to the epistemic nature of violence against Indigenous peoples, scholars such as Marker (2003), Moreton-Robinson (2011), Rigney (1999), and Smith (2012) have all written about the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are erased in the academy and more broadly.



discovered. Rather, knowledge production is bound up in relations of power which work to organize what we understand about what is true and correct. Foucault (2002: 201) also connects knowledge to discourse, writing that “there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms.” Because of the way in which discourses are produced through power for Foucault (2002; 2003), this framing requires that we understand knowledge not as a neutral, or ‘objective’ fact existing out there to be discovered or observed, but rather as being constituted and constructed. And indeed, Foucault (2002: 204) identifies direct connections between knowledge (and especially scientific knowledge) and ideology.

The connection between scientific knowledge and ideology is an important one, as the rest of my text centres the ‘scientific’ knowledge produced in and for policymaking processes. While doing so, my analysis is framed by Shah’s (2017: 561) statement that “how objects are portrayed actually produces what they are.” That is, that the seeming stability of knowledge produced through observation—such as that of territorial surveys, censuses, or ‘cultural heritage’—is a result of the observer’s ‘snapshot’ of a point in time, with the resulting comprehension and sense-making informed by the understandings, framings, and common senses maintained by them. We do not have a ‘complete’ picture then, and indeed I argue that the erasure of Indigenous knowledge from the settler’s snapshot serves to reproduce precisely the interventions which serve to reproduce settler colonialism.

This reflects Foucault’s (2003) genealogical approach, which he opposes to a historical approach more frequently undertaken both then and today. Doing genealogy, Foucault emphasizes, allows the author to highlight the discontinuities of knowledge and the choices made in its production, rather than the understanding of linear progress characteristic of history.

Moving away from a narrative of linear progress helps us better understand its contingent nature, which in turn enables us not only to see that this specific narrative or understanding has been produced, but also illustrates the alternative paths not taken, or in the case of my project, the alternative knowledges excluded. In this sense, I am following Shah's (2010: 632) description of knowledge and the stories we tell ourselves as 'histories'. My own read of this places an emphasis on the plural: there are multiple histories, and being attentive to this allows us to better understand the ways in which power operates to marginalize and exclude. Indeed, while my own analysis is not an example of doing genealogy, I am drawing from it the connections between power and knowledge.

Crucially, my project is not only attentive to the way in which power constitutes knowledge, but also the way in which that knowledge organizes possibilities. Drawing from critical security studies' attention to the remaking of security through the production of the particular conditions, I want to focus on the way in which what we know structures our view of the possible policy interventions—and thus policymaker's imaginaries of the potential futures. Put in the framing of settler colonialism, I am interested in the practices by which it is maintained and reproduced. In order to do this, I am drawing on what has been called a 'universe of policy discourse' (Taylor, 2018). I understand this universe as not only a sort of 'container' for policymakers' visions of potential futures, but also as a form of organizing logic that structures the ultimate policies in place.

Taylor's understanding of a universe of policy discourse is itself inspired by Jenson's (1986; 2015) work on universes of political discourse, but given my attention to the ways in which settler knowledges are embedded in policymaking processes, Taylor's attention to the policy-centric universes is more appropriate. Both concepts describe a system of ideas which

give the outlines of what is possible with regards to policy production and interventions. That is, within the universe exists the range of possible responses in a given policy area. Different possibilities for policy exist within this universe, but it is only from within the universe that actors may work.

It is here that we can see the *productive* work of knowledge. Indeed, the universe of possibilities must be based on something, and underlying my argument regarding the reproductive role knowledge plays in the existence of settler coloniality is an understanding that cosmologies play a structuring role in this universe. This is because cosmologies help organize the knowledge on which we then construct this universe of possibilities. What we know shapes our understanding of what is possible. On a concrete level, this can be seen through the understanding of emergent causality from above. In particular, in the way that the conditions within which we act make possible certain actions, and makes others seem not possible. In the context of policymaking in contemporary states, what we know is the only thing that makes it possible for us to claim the legitimacy necessary to implement our ideas through policy. This is precisely why I focus on knowledge in the policymaking process as it relates to the continual reconstruction of settler coloniality: it is this knowledge and information on which policy is founded. What we know both creates the imperative for the reproduction of settler colonial authority—such as the ‘empty’ or ‘unimproved’ nature of the territory I discuss later—as well as providing the justification and legitimation for the enactment of that specific policy intervention. Through the lens of critical security studies theory (Shah, 2017), knowledge *has effects*.

The key here, I contend, is a process of legitimation. Recall, from above, the connections between knowledge and discourse. Related to this is van Leeuwen’s (2007) argument that discourse can have a legitimating effect. Discourse legitimates certain positions through

knowledge claims, with both being ultimately shaped by power. These discourses are then reified through the policymaking process as interventions are undertaken only insofar as they can be imagined through the universe of possibilities—itsself structured by the very knowledge resulting from the erasure of Indigenous cosmologies. This further legitimates them as this knowledge becomes the ‘facts on the ground’ or the ‘common senses’ that are assumed to hold.

Though I have focused on settler knowledge here, and largely continue to in my analysis, this is not to say that Indigenous knowledge is not also organized and shaped. As many theorists have made clear, and as I discuss further in the subsequent chapters, Indigenous knowledge is informed directly by Indigenous cosmologies. That is, it flows from the relationships which Indigenous nations have built and maintained with the rest of Creation (McGregor, 2004; Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2012). As a result, it also can be analyzed according to the same kinds of framings of discontinuities, relationalities and relations of power. Indeed, I am not suggesting there is a vacuum in which power does not operate in Indigenous nations and communities. However, there are important distinctions at the level of governance practices and relationships that would have to be taken into account in such an analysis. While a genealogical tracing of the operations of power in shaping Indigenous knowledges is outside of the scope of this project, insofar as they flow from Indigenous cosmologies and imaginaries, we can begin to see some of the ways in which these knowledges are organized. Overall though, my text focuses on the ‘universe of policy discourse’ to focus on the reproduction of settler coloniality. Importantly, I am not seeking to argue for an ethically-ambiguous understanding of knowledge and its production. I do not believe there is a non-normative stance on the question of colonialism. Instead, I want to deconstruct the seemingly objective way in which we engage with knowledge, pointing instead to the ways what we know is not only produced through who is exercising

power, but also how it then works to reproduce the ability to exercise that power in the first place.

### *Decolonization and Emancipation*

Finally, this project brings together critical security studies and decolonial IR theory through an attention to the ways in which coloniality reproduces itself by closing off emancipatory possibilities. Identified by Booth (1991) in his outlining of the field of critical security, emancipation lies at the heart of what (and how) security means in the world. Drawn primarily from Marxist approaches and Critical Theory, early understandings of emancipation largely revolved around freedom from insecurity, such that security only came through a realization of the emancipatory push (Booth, 1991). Since its initial identification, emancipation has remained at the heart of the critical security studies project (Hynek & Chandler, 2013; Mutimer et al., 2013). At least this is the case in theory. However, critiques of the depth and breadth in critical security studies' engagement with emancipation have also been a consistent feature of scholarship around the field (Basu, 2013; Hynek & Chandler, 2013; Wibben, 2016a&b; Wibben in Salter, 2019), and critical IR more broadly (Persaud & Sajed, 2018; Rutazibwa, 2016). Especially prominent in recent years have been critiques regarding the whiteness of the field (Howell & Montpetit, 2019 a & b), and the ways in which this in effect reproduces the sorts of racial and colonial barriers a scholarly attention to emancipation should instead be pushed back against.

It is here, where critical security studies falls short in relation to race and colonialism, that I turn to decolonial IR theory. Importantly, this approach is related to, but distinct from, the kind of postcolonial theory that has come before it (Shilliam, 2015), and which has had a sustained and productive impact on IR as a discipline. Similarly to postcolonial IR, decolonial IR seeks to

understand the field of international relations ‘otherwise’. For postcolonial IR, this means looking to what has become known as ‘the subaltern’, perhaps made most famous in Spivak’s (1988) discussion of whether or not the subaltern could truly self-articulate outside of those conceptions of it organized through dominant (ie. white and Western) framings and knowledges. Postcolonial analyses seek to break down the assumed statuses of the agentic (Western) subject and the subaltern (non-Western or ‘Third World’) subject, who is understood as being acted upon in most traditional scholarship. Instead of a sole focus on Western agency then, postcolonial analyses understand non-Western agency as having shaped the international system as well, even while world order has largely been constructed by Western states and agents (Persaud & Sajed 2018: 2). Decolonial IR builds on postcolonial pushback against what Sabaratnam (2017) calls an ‘Eurocentric historiography’. More than just ignorance, on a structural level the writing out of the agency of the non-West produces an understanding of non-Western states and societies as ‘blank slates’ or ‘empty spaces’ in need of Western governance (Sabaratnam, 2017; Wai, 2018).

The two traditions of IR looking to questions of colonialism and colonality then are bound up in each other. Indeed, decolonial IR explicitly builds on insights already developed by postcolonial theorists. Despite their interconnectedness, however, they are not the same. While I would not ascribe anything so jarring as a ‘break’ between them, decolonial IR has deliberately sought a new and different project, that of recovery and retrieval (Shilliam, 2015). These are explicitly productive tasks, not just on the level of scholarship, but also with an intent to transform life beyond the written page. That is, decolonial IR focuses on recovering and rebuilding those relationships which exist apart from a Eurocentric historiography. While postcolonial IR continues to engage with the hierarchical relations of power inherent in global

coloniality, decolonial IR seeks rather to uncover, highlight and support the kinds of horizontal relations of power we see in engagements between those subject to (in this case, settler) coloniality. Indeed, in the words of Shilliam (2015: 3), decolonial IR's project is to make intelligible "a deep, global infrastructure of anti-colonial connectivity." As I further describe below, this connectivity is inclusive of both relations in the material and immaterial (spiritual) realms (Shilliam, 2017)—those which encompass the more-than-human relationships at the heart of Wet'suwet'en and other Indigenous cosmologies. This is a fundamentally different approach to scholarship from that of traditional, 'objective' analysis, which places value on the material and observable. This has been a deliberately choice of decolonial theorists themselves in response to their reparative ethic. Indeed, as Sabaratnam (2017: 131-2) makes clear, a decolonizing approach to research necessitates "fundamentally refram[ing the] political stakes along the lines of responsibility, justice and reparation".

Decolonial IR's reframing of the stakes of research connects not only with the emancipatory imperative of critical security studies, but also with the imperative towards decolonization in the work of Indigenous theorists working within the broadly conceived area of Indigenous Studies. Here there are two areas that are important to highlight, even as each is connected to the other. The first is the understanding of the importance and role of relationships in shaping the relations of power. While decolonial IR theorists look to the relationships which are held between peoples and the spiritual world, those seeking to advance decolonization in the context of settler colonialism also centre the relationships Indigenous peoples hold with their territories, and the rest of Creation which exists on and through those territories.<sup>24</sup> Both approaches understand the agency embodied by both the human, and the more-than-human

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<sup>24</sup> Simpson's (2011 & 2017) work is especially pertinent here.

parties to these relationships. Without losing sight of the importance of speaking to specific national cosmologies and imaginaries—as indeed I do later in my empirical analysis—Indigenous cosmologies incorporate what can be understood as *other than human* parties by understanding the way in which humans relate to, and with, the spiritual and non-human material actors such as animals and the land itself. Because of its different project, decolonial IR is focused much more on the importance of relationships between non-Western actors, which oftentimes exist outside of the gaze of the Western academy. This is not to say that spiritual and non-human actors are not important in decolonial analyses; rather, it is one of degree, with much of the academic work of decolonial IR purposefully aimed at uncovering the relationships that exist underneath Western coloniality—those which encompass the relating with each other of Black and Brown peoples and nations, and in which whiteness is neither central, nor necessarily a player. In both then, we can see a focus on relations of power as expressed through *relationships*.

The second area relates to the attention on reparation, and most importantly, *reclamation* in the decolonial project. In Indigenous Studies this relates most directly to the importance of land and the transfer of land back to Indigenous nations. Indeed, it is this reclamation of traditional territories that is central to decolonization moving from metaphor to material reality (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Not only does the reclamation and transfer of land make possible the kind of economic and material life Indigenous peoples are reclaiming, but crucial for this project, also through which Indigenous knowledge is generated (McGregor, 2004; Smith, 2012). For many Indigenous nations, reclamation also enables the renewal of relationships to territory and the practicing of responsibilities to the non-human world. It here that national governance lies, with Indigenous authority realized most fully through the enactment of this ‘relationship of rightness’



(Coyle, 2017; Stark, 2017). In reclaiming territory then, we can see a sort of reclamation of *indigeneity*, nationhood, and authority itself. Crucially, however, this is only possible because of the understanding of non-human agency, and the interactive relationships at the heart of Indigenous cosmologies. Decolonial IR's reclamation project sits very much alongside Indigenous projects in this respect. While not precisely focused on the reclamation of territory, and the resulting relationships and imaginaries, the existing work in the field of decolonial IR reclaims the (primarily) Black and Brown subjectivity and materiality within the international. Like with the decolonization inherent to Indigenous resurgence, the purpose is not to revive past glory, but rather to bring into the contemporary international system modes of governance informed by other ways of knowing and being. Specifically, those which centre the agency and knowledge of non-Western subjects, and which work to undo contemporary coloniality in its myriad expressions. This is done both by investing authority in Indigenous, Black and Brown knowledges and modes of governance, but also by supporting those communities to build the tools that will allow them to construct self-determining futures.

This is not all to say that my project does this constructive work; instead the work exists largely in the deconstructive lens of critical security studies where I seek to understand the ways in which coloniality is continually remade. However, in the writing of this text I am engaging with decolonial theory in a number of ways, even if not explicitly having crafted a decolonial project in the mold of those highlighting the 'sideways' relationships between those existing underneath coloniality. Rather, my project is deeply informed by a decolonial sensibility. I am not only conscious of those ethical imperatives at the heart of research broadly, but especially so in the case of research regarding Indigenous nations and the relations of power present in my engagement with Indigenous knowledges, and Indigenous-settler relationships. Crucially, I have

attempted to be aware of my own responsibility within this relations of power throughout the research and writing of this text.

### *Conclusion*

What I have outlined above is a conceptual framework which I will use to understand the way in which the settler state works to resolve the insecurity at the heart of its colonial project. Drawing from critical security studies, I am particularly interested in the way in which the settler state seeks to reproduce its own sovereignty in the face of existing Indigenous nationhood and claims to authority. In doing so, it not only seeks to continue reifying its own authority, but it also reinforces a certain settler coloniality that in turn upholds the existing relations of power within the international system. I argue that this is to be realized through incorporating Indigenous peoples into a relationship of (a)partnership on their own territories through the engagement of a settler governmentality on the part of the state. This is further enabled and exacerbated through the politics of misrecognition, which this text argues is embedded in policy frameworks that continually recreate the conditions through which settler imaginaries and cosmologies are to be reified, and settler sovereignty reproduced.

Knowledge is central to this process. Rather than the ‘objective’ understanding of knowledge as ‘fact’ or ‘history’ as non-normative, this text follows Foucault’s (1977) understanding of the connection between knowledge and power. I also follow in the critical tradition of IR to understand knowledge as having a productive power itself. That is, not only is it produced through a relations of power, but it also “constitutes the discursive landscape of international politics” (Allan 2018: 12). This understanding of knowledge as constitutive offers a view into the way in which we know things in the policy arena structures what kinds of interventions are considered possible. As I show throughout the text, what we ‘know’ is

structured in such a way as to delegitimize and marginalize Indigenous knowledges, and in turn this ensures that settler knowledge is central to the policymaking work, and that colonial hierarchies are reproduced. In this way, my framework evinces a decolonial sensibility, rather than it necessarily being an emancipatory project: I do not necessarily do the work of reclamation of Indigenous knowledges so much as illustrate the consequences of their erasure. However, I draw heavily on decolonial IR's attention to relationships, and its understanding of the political and normative stakes of research.

## Chapter Two: Constructing Meaning Through Unlearning

As I outlined in my Introduction, this dissertation has changed considerably since its inception. While these changes have affected the scope, focus, and ultimately, the content of the text, they stem from my decision to move from a community-engaged project to a community-inspired one. In this chapter I outline not only the way I completed my research and analysis, but also the ethnographic approach I have taken throughout the time I have worked on the project. As I further detail below, it is in following through on this approach that I locate my decision to shift the project in the way that I have.

Before beginning that discussion of *how* this dissertation was put together however, it is important to outline *what* this text does—and what it does not do. Following from my conceptual framework, I approach research and knowledge production as a fundamentally situated and political enterprise (Haraway, 1988), one in which my own positionality as a settler of colour plays an important part. In part because of this, my project rests in the critical tradition which “distinguishes itself from a more *problem-solving* oriented research design by its emphasis on a continuous reflexive wandering between the different moments and dimensions of the research rather than on a form of checks and balances procedure to produce an answer via the use of specific methods” (Guillaume 2012: 31; emphasis in the original). As a result, I begin my study from an understanding that the purpose of my research is neither the construction of generalizable theory, nor the description of neat causal structures; rather, it is embracing a questioning attitude with a view towards appreciating my own need to ‘unlearn’ (Smith, 2017). While opening space for ‘messiness’ in research, this is not to be read in a negative light since opening this space “reduces the risk of a researcher inappropriately imbuing coherence to the

research object under investigation” (Squire 2012: 39). This is particularly important in the context of working with Indigenous nations and knowledges (Smith, 2012).

If not a neat, linear causal story then, how does my work make sense of the inter-national politics between Indigenous nations and settler governments in what is today Canada? Here I draw on the concept of ‘emergent causality’ (Connolly, 2004; Race, 2014; Salter & Mutlu, 2012). Understanding the purpose of scholarship as being to “set out the conditions of possibility for” the realization of (in this case, social) phenomena (Salter & Mutlu 2012: 2), emergent causality takes account of the contingency of phenomena by appreciating that causal mechanisms are not always rigid, but react and interact in potentially unanticipated ways as they operate alongside each other. Rather than ‘establishing’ a certain causal mechanism for the reproduction of settler colonial authority then, my text outlines the way in which policy knowledge serves to organize its very possibility. I do this using critical discourse analysis and a sort of mixed-methods research design rooted in an ethnographic approach. This was put into practice through two fieldwork trips to BC, the first of which helped me develop the focus of the research itself.

### *Approaching Research Through an ‘Ethnographic Sensibility’*

This first section expands on the story I opened my Introduction with, offering the theoretical and methodological grounding for my ethnographic approach to research. While I speak to the way in which I undertake my documentary analysis below, here I want to focus on how I came to my focus—that is, generally speaking, how my ‘research process’ reflected an ethnographically-motivated approach which is rooted in centring the impacts of policy on *communities* rather than ‘populations’.

As I touched on in the Introduction, my research has indeed shifted considerably from its inception as a community-engaged project. In that initial form, I had intended to spend 9-12

months in northern BC, developing and executing a project alongside the Wet'suwet'en nation following the Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model offered by Fletcher (2003) and framed through an ethnographic approach or 'sensitivity' (Yanow, 2009).

Recognizing the lack of cohesiveness of ethnography as a singular method (Kubik, 2009), what was most important to me was the "being there" aspect of ethnographic research (Yanow 2009: 34), as "Ethnography takes the position that human behavior and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their worlds and their lives are highly variable and locally specific" (Corbin & Strauss 2015: np). I felt this was particularly important in the context of my own research with the Wet'suwet'en, as Indigenous knowledge especially is born of the relationships that Indigenous nations hold with their territories (McGregor, 2004; Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2012). In spending a considerable amount of time in northern BC then, not only was I intending to align myself more completely with these notions of the importance of locality for both ethnographic and Indigenous research methodologies, but I was also seeking to become an 'insider' through the building of relationships and trust within the nation (Bayard de Volo & Schatz 2004: 267). Together, these would seemingly open more doors for my research, offering greater access to more robust data and—at least the possibility of—greater analytical insights.

It was with this ethnographic approach in mind that I left on my initial field trip to northern BC in Fall 2017. The trip itself was planned for approximately two months, and incorporated time with some of the scholars I knew at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) in Prince George, in addition to my time on Wet'suwet'en territory (yintah). This time on Wet'suwet'en territory was split primarily between being in the Camp and outside of it in the city of Smithers—the closest city to the nation's 'village' of Witset (formerly Moricetown), where one of the Indian Act Bands that makes up the Wet'suwet'en nation is centred. Through

the trip, I was intending on making progress on the first three steps in the CBPR model (from Fletcher 2003: 39-45):

1. Establish contact, develop a working relationship;
2. Explore the operation of a research relationship;
3. Develop a working proposal for community participation around the research issue.

Rather than a research-specific trip in a traditional mould then, this was an exploratory fieldwork trip, focused as much on making connections and building relationships with the community as it was on nailing down a specific series of research questions. Indeed, in being attentive to the intersubjective nature of knowledge production (Agar, 1986; Smith, 2012), it was important for me to follow the best practices of the CBPR and Indigenous research methods traditions and develop the specifics of the research with the community themselves (Fletcher, 2003; Lightfoot, 2009; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012).

I arrived into Wet'suwet'en territory in possession primarily of a series of research interests around data collection and biopolitical governance within the context of settler coloniality. These were informed by the puzzles I was struck by while working at AANDC, and my research has followed the form of Yanow's (2009) 'abductive' logic. As I described in positioning myself in the Introduction, these were met with interest by many of those I met and talked to about my interests, both in the scholarly community I connected with at UNBC as well as those in the nation itself. Through these discussions, I refined my broad interests into much more specific focuses.

My initial project design had three parts. First, at the broadest level I was interested in the question 'What are the effects of data collection on and within Indigenous communities?' Second, within that over-arching question came two others: 'Do the data collection tools used in Indigenous communities reflect Indigenous conceptions of self and community?' and 'What are the effects of the engagement of these data collection tools on the community?' On a

fundamental level then, this initial research project was intended to focus on questions of knowledge and policy, but specifically relating to the community itself. Moreover, it revolved around the question of subjectivity. Notably, despite understanding on a surface level that Indigenous nations understood their connection to their territories through the intersubjective framing of relationships, I was pointedly attempting to not focus on the ‘Indian land question’ in my own project. However, despite having sought to immerse myself in the existing literature around ‘Indigenous resurgence’ and Indigenous subjectivities, my exploratory fieldwork trip enabled my own process of ‘unlearning’ (Smith, 2017). Indeed, it was only through this process that I came to understand that in seeking to keep the question of lands and territory out of my own project, I was in effect reproducing the dichotomization of materiality and subjectivity in relation to territory which is fundamental to settler imaginaries.

My recognition of the interconnection between materiality and subjectivity was a result of learning from those community members who I met while in the region—both within the Unist’ot’en Action Camp (UAC, or Camp hereafter), or during my visits to Witset, one of the Wet’suwet’en villages. Especially crucial to my own unlearning was the time I spent in the Camp, supporting the work they are doing there to halt the development of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) pipelines across their territory.<sup>25</sup> Through this organizing, and in discussions with some of the Camp leadership present, I came to understand the untenability of my initial plan to look outside of the question of land and territory. While oft-repeated in the literature, Tuck and Yang’s (2012) statement that “Decolonization is not a metaphor” came to have meaning outside of my own surface-level recognition of the need to transfer land and territory back to Indigenous nations. Especially helpful in this regard was reading Mackey’s (2016) engagement with

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<sup>25</sup> I discuss this further in the Conclusion, as the Royal Canadian Mounted Policy (RCMP) has waged colonial violence against those in the Camp both soon after I left, and again at the time of my writing of this text.



‘uncertainty’ and the reification of ‘imaginaries’ while I was in Wet’suwet’en territory. This was put into context as I learned from those in the Camp what decolonization means to them, and the way in which the relationships between peoples and their territories plays out intersubjectively.

Framed through the steps of the CBPR model from above, undertaking the first two steps of connecting with and discussing the potential of a research relationship with members of the nation shaped my own understanding of the issues. Because of this, the trip was invaluable to the text I have written here. It forced me to re-imagine my conception of not only Indigenous cosmologies, but as I speak to more directly when describing my final project below, my understanding of the work and impacts of erasure through settler colonialism. Indeed, in doing away with the pretense to ‘objectivity’ (Sabaratnam, 2017) and embracing a relationally-produced approach to knowledge (Agar, 1986), a community-based and ethnographic approach allowed me to better understand decolonization, and gave me access to meaning that I would not have otherwise had. Without this approach, both my analysis, and the project itself, would have looked quite different.

### *Centring Land*

As I described above, my method of building and realizing my project centred an ethnographic approach that included time spent on Wet’suwet’en yintah prior to beginning my research. This helped me better understand not only the context for the research I was seeking to undertake, but also refine my own broad research interests into more specific foci. In doing so I moved from (incorrectly) attempting to focus only on questions that would traditionally be seen to centre subjectivity and a sense of self, to better understanding the way the Wet’suwet’en understand subjectivity and materiality are intertwined—especially as it relates to territory and decolonization. As a result, the aim of my research shifted towards better understanding the way

in which land-use policies (particularly those agricultural and forestry policies central to economic life in the Bulkley-Nechako region) and the knowledge that underpins them create the conditions within which settler coloniality is continually reproduced. This shift represented not only a change in what I centred in my research, but also the level of government treated as a central actor in the reproduction of settler colonialism.

I trace the shift in my project back to the drive discussed in the opening of the Introduction. It was during my first trip into the Camp, and I was driving with one of the hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en. We were running errands for the Camp that took us across the yintah over the course of the day—all the while they were describing the ways in which the land was still being actively settled (despite the *Delgamuukw* decision recognizing the hereditary chiefs' collective authority over the territory). What they continually reiterated was that the territory was being given to white settlers by the provincial government to enable protein production and logging activities; at the same time, non-industrial logging, hunting, fishing, and trapping on the yintah was already a feature of life for the nation, organized and governed in accordance with Wet'suwet'en law and the distribution of territory amongst the houses and clans.<sup>26</sup> In dividing Wet'suwet'en territory into new parcels for the purposes of economic activity then, the provincial government was not introducing new practices to the land. Instead, in reifying its own imaginary of an 'empty' land with abundant resources, it was creating an imperative for settlement and exploitation by knowing the land as 'unused' or 'unimproved'.

Learning this, alongside my developing understanding of the meaning of decolonization for the Wet'suwet'en, shifted how I approached my project: it became clear that this aspect of settler colonialism—the work of the provinces and policy, rather than federal government and its

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<sup>26</sup> This is described and analyzed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

own legislation—was not only under-explored, but central to the remaking of settler coloniality today. To engage with this aspect of settler coloniality, I shifted my project to study the knowledge that underpins and makes policymaking possible—ie. that which is used by policymakers in decision-making processes. Re-framed in terms of my methodological approach, the insight and understanding that enabled the shift in my project would not have been accessible from a distance. That is, this text and its focus relies on my having *been there* (Yanow, 2009) and learning through unlearning. This is represented not only in the focus of the dissertation on knowledge and policymaking, but specifically on land management policy as it relates to agriculture and forestry in the Bulkley-Nechako region of BC. An ethnographic approach was fundamental to my own exploration and unlearning. Being there allowed me to understand the central role that provincial policies play in the ongoing and structural threat to the Wet’suwet’en in the form of further dispossession of territory.<sup>27</sup>

Crucially, the ultimate framing of my project was not mine alone. Rather, my decision to study the way knowledge establishes the conditions enabling the reproduction of settler coloniality was developed over the course of my fieldwork trip through my discussions with members of the nation. Indeed, while many members of the nation—and the academic contacts I connected with through UNBC—referred to the importance of land management policy, one of the individuals I discussed my research interests with stated outright that ranching and forestry policy should be what I focus on in my research. Others repeated this with some frequency and this left a lasting impression on me. As I reflected on the role of policy, I began to see the way in which my academic training in critical IR and security studies opened the possibility of

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<sup>27</sup> It might even have been possible to identify these structural threats to Wet’suwet’en relationships to their yintah as the most immediate threat up until the most recent series of RCMP raids on the Camp. However, the emergent and overt manifestations of colonial authority through violence have since eclipsed more structural modes of dispossession.

understanding the reproduction of settler colonialism through knowledge practices. That is, instead of looking to the direct mechanisms of land theft, I became increasingly interested in the way policymaking reified settler knowledges about land in ways that made further theft understandable as the best policy choice. Arriving at this as my research project reflects the intersubjective process of knowledge production in ethnographic studies (Agar, 1986; Davids & Willemse, 2014; Yanow, 2009), with my learning and unlearning process centering my attention on those concerns seemingly most relevant to the community. Further, this reflects methods that emphasize the need for researchers to work with nations and communities in developing research projects useful to them (Fletcher, 2003; Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012).

This is not to say that my approach is, or has been unproblematic—especially given my positionality (Alcoff, 1988) as a settler academic and the privileges that come along with this status. I do not identify my work as illegitimate, or deny the possibility for settlers to work alongside, and in support of, Indigenous communities. However, I note this to recognize the relations of power into which I entered and have since been navigating. In doing so, I have been guided by Davids and Willemse's (2014: 2) remark that "Central to these encounters [between researcher and the research participants] is the question of how we relate to 'others' and how this relationship colors our understanding and knowledge production". Indeed, in reflecting on this while putting together this text I have been particularly aware of three ways in which my own positionality has influenced my project.

The first is my own implication in the 'dominant discourses' of (colonial) academic thought (van Stapele 2014: 15-16). Despite my own attempts to reject the sorts of discriminatory and extractive relationships which have characterized academia's encounters with Indigenous nations (Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2012), my own engagement with the Wet'suwet'en was informed

by the particular forms of knowledge that come out of the university as an institution. This is reflected not only in the way in which I engaged with members of the nation, or my ability to travel and build these relationships as a part of my research in the first place, but also in the meaning that I have made out of these encounters. This is particularly acute in my own process of unlearning and building my project, as the framings and knowledges I brought to the intersubjective process are informed by those racial and colonial disciplines (Howell & Richter-Montpetit, 2019; Vitalis, 2015). While acknowledging and seeking to be self-reflexive about the manner in which this underlying knowledge fits with my learning (Davids & Willemse, 2014; van Stapele, 2014; Yanow, 2009), my project is ultimately a situated one, reflecting what Yanow (2009: 35) calls ‘underlife’.<sup>28</sup>

Second, and connected to the first, is that my own ‘underlife’ is informed by my personal commitments to decolonial organizing work. In the context of the present project, this is reflected in the connections I made through that first fieldwork trip. Part of my purpose on the trip was to visit and support the work of the Camp, and my time there gave me access to much in terms of knowledge, practical experience of decolonization, and further connections for people to speak with among the Wet’suwet’en. However, it was also limiting in that the Camp itself remains somewhat controversial within the nation, and my own involvement in it meant I was understood as coming from a particular perspective by others against the Camp. While I still deliberately sought to meet with those not supportive of the Camp, my own complicity in relation to the Camp shaped my encounters with them in ways that would further shape the understandings with which I left the territory. Moreover, it meant that those within the Camp

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<sup>28</sup> Yanow uses this term to refer to “human acts, language (including written, oral, and nonverbal), and objects—their situationally common-sensical, unwritten, unspoken, everyday, tacitly known textures” (2009: 35). These cohere into what could be referred to as ‘background knowledges’ that serve as the base for our own meaning-making and comprehension of the world—my own project is of course a result of this process as well.

treated me as ‘one of us’, as one individual in the Camp relayed to me.<sup>29</sup> I cannot be certain of the way this opened or closed off particular individuals in their engagement with me—and thus the knowledge or framings I might have engaged with—but it did offer me a privileged access to certain perspectives over others both while I was present on the Wet’suwet’en yintah, but also during my time at UNBC and in the relationships I have built there. Notably, this included those who I shared decolonial commitments with rather than those opposed to the Camp and supportive of industrial and economic ‘development’—though of course, the lines between these two groups are never as clear as when juxtaposed on paper or in media. Ultimately, this shaped what I brought back with me in terms of the ‘underlife’ of my project. In particular, it shaped my own centring of what is considered ‘traditional’ on the level of Wet’suwet’en knowledge or systems of governance and ways of life, because these were the themes and framings mobilized with those from whom I spent the most time learning. This is not to say that my project seeks a return to an idyllic and imagined past, but rather that the future imagined by those from whom I learned the most is one which rests on a rejection of the primacy of settler modernity, and the manifestation of settler imaginaries, as the only way forward. While self-determination remains the goal of all members of the nation, how this is to be realized remains an object of contention, and because of my commitments certain perspectives on that discussion influence this project more than others.

Finally, third, my own positionality as a settler from outside of the territory meant that I could leave, and that despite building a network and contacts in the region, events there do not impact my material life in Ottawa. This is in some respects inevitable with research undertaken

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<sup>29</sup> This was in reference not only to me being a supporter of the Camp, but also to an extent in reference to my own non-whiteness. Indeed, on another occasion the same individual referred to me as ‘not really’ a settler in the form that the term is typically used.

in an area that is not one's own. However, it is the sort of relationship I have sought to deconstruct where possible by continuing to remain supportive of the Camp's efforts where possible, returning to the region on a follow-up trip even after my initial research project shifted, and, as I discuss more fully in the Conclusion, building a postdoctoral project that more closely mirrors my initial research plan than the text produced here. In doing this, while I have indeed 'left' and built a life in Ottawa, I have sought to remain connected to—and supportive of—those in northern BC to the best of my own ability.

### *Analyzing Policy as a 'Research Field'*

As I described above, my exploratory fieldwork trip to Wet'suwet'en yintah was clarifying in that it ultimately shifted my project. My process of unlearning caused me to move away from my prior plan to look past questions of the materiality of land and territory for the simple reason that it was land use and management policies that kept being relayed to me as a central way in which Wet'suwet'en land was being transformed into private (settler) property. While I did not necessarily come to recognize the need to shift my project quickly, it did not take long for me to be confronted by the gaps between those assumptions and understandings I held when I arrived to the region, and those I was confronted with as I spoke with members of the nation and others throughout the region. As a result, the conclusion of my exploratory trip offered me an opportunity for reflection, and ultimately, a shift from a community-engaged project to one that is community-inspired. That is, while my project is rooted in the relationships and understandings I developed while on Wet'suwet'en territory, it is one that centres settler governments and knowledges in order to deconstruct them and illustrate their contributions to remaking settler coloniality.

Moving away from a community-based project did not mean abandoning my focus on the connections between data collection and settler coloniality, but rather focused them onto questions of provincial policy, as chapters 4 through 6 illustrate. Instead of developing a research question that seeks to uncover the effects of data collection on a specific community, my final set of research questions looks at the way the production of statistics and policy knowledge themselves can impact Indigenous communities, and relatedly, the way that statistics are mobilized by governments in the policy-making process. By focusing my research on those issues that affect communities directly, and of which I learned directly from the Wet'suwet'en, my project remains inspired by community—hence my discussion of it as ‘community-inspired’. It was not, however, co-developed, and the bulk of the research and writing was done without direct community involvement or direction, and as such is not a community-based project, but rather a documentary analysis that relies heavily on government documents and archival materials.

Shifting the project towards a documentary analysis did not come without its own set of ethical and personal considerations, however. Indeed, as L. Smith (2012) notes, there is a long history of settlers undertaking work *on* Indigenous communities, rather than *with* them. Oftentimes the results end up reproducing the same colonial relationships that the research claimed to undo. This is a history I have sought to maintain at the forefront of my mind, as this sort of extractive research is not what I sought to undertake. However, as I discuss in positioning myself in the Introduction, I can neither escape I did indeed leave, nor that in part as a result, my project is not ultimately community-based. Both of these choices open the possibility of a more extractive project, in which I took what I learned while on the Wet'suwet'en yintah and used it to my own advantage.



I have sought to close off this possibility in two key ways. The first is by not completing the project in a void. This has meant seeking to remain aware of the responsibilities I continue to hold to those who taught me during my time on the Wet'suwet'en yintah. Indeed, I have continued to discuss the project's focus with those interested and able—a practice made more difficult over the past year as the RCMP have taken increasingly violent action against those in the Camp (Hosgood, 2020a&b). Second, my analysis is primarily focused on the work of the settler state, rather than on Indigenous peoples, and the Wet'suwet'en nation in particular. While remaining attentive to Indigenous knowledges, this dissertation is fundamentally about the processes of erasure at the centre of the reproduction of settler sovereignty.

In following through on the responsibilities of my work, I am most interested in the way in which statistics and policy knowledge reflect cosmologies and ontologies, and the way in which this knowledge structures what potential interventions are imagined and enabled by policymakers. To study this, I have centred the Aboriginal Peoples' Survey (APS) and land management policies in BC (both historic and contemporary). This dual focus offers a window into both the federal (through the APS) and provincial (through land management policies) levels of government in Canada. Attention to both is crucial, despite the existing literature in Canada largely focusing on federal policy, legislation, and court decisions (Bird et. al, 2017), given that section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act 1867* places responsibility for 'Indians and Lands Reserved for Indians' with the federal government. Indeed, this focus obscures the way in which provincial policies regarding land use and management enable further theft of land in BC. This is in part because the minimal negotiation of treaties between settler governments and Indigenous nations across BC has created a situation wherein the relationships between government and

nations are more closely held between provincial authorities than in much of the rest of what is today Canada.

Because of this, looking to provincial policy in BC offers a way to more directly study the structural dispossession of Indigenous nations as it relates to the ongoing transformation of Indigenous territory into private (settler) property. Further, it offers a view into the construction of the international state system through the actions of sub-state actors by way of their work in reifying and reproducing state sovereignty. It is here that I am locating a central mechanism enabling the reproduction of settler coloniality in the contemporary moment. I described in the previous chapter how this remaking of settler authority is a structure and process, rather than an event. At the time I am completing the writing of this text there is widespread coverage of the RCMP's forcible manifestation of colonial power and authority at the Camp (Hosgood, 2020a; 2020b). Work such as that of Crosby and Monaghan (2018), or Shaw and Magnusson (2003) has been attentive to events such as these, and offers a rigorous accounting of the way in which colonial power is exerted through them. However, while I agree that they are important and necessary to study, the focus on events allows less spectacular policy processes—such as those routine processes which do not capture the public imagination—to proceed with less attention paid to them. These too are crucial to understand if we are to understand the ways in which settler sovereignty continues to work and reproduce itself. As a result, my project is attentive to the 'normalized' and 'everyday' ways in which this process unfolds (Salter & Mutlu, 2012; Wiebe, 2016; Yanow, 2009).

In making this shift I not only remained attentive to the lessons I learned while in northern BC, but also to the ethnographic approach I initially brought to my own research. Especially important here is Yanow's (2009: 34) description of policy ethnography, which takes the

research topic, and the policies related to it, itself as “the research field”, rather than this being constituted by a “geographic border” as might normally be associated with ethnographic studies. However, while I have approached my project through an ethnographic and community-centric lens, a project centred on policy, such as the one I have outlined above this requires the operationalization of a different set of research tools than my initial plan of putting into action a purely ethnographic, CBPR-based model. Specifically, to better understand the way in which policy knowledge helps to establish the conditions within which settler coloniality is reproduced, I employ a critical form of documentary, textual and discourse analysis.

The texts I analyze are primarily government documents, and interviews with policymakers. The documents are drawn from the federal and provincial governments, and include both contemporary (in the case of those concerning the APS and BC land management programs) and historic (in the case of those concerning the Royal Commission and other land organizational) documents. Contemporary documents were largely collected through websites for the various programs, and were hosted by the federal department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC)<sup>30</sup> and Statistics Canada, the provincial ministries of Agriculture, Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations & Rural Development and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. During my second fieldwork trip in Fall 2018, I also connected with policymakers directly, and despite being told by the BC Premier’s office and each of the provincial ministries that no one would be made available, I was able to

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<sup>30</sup> This is still the legal name of a department which, over the course of my research, has also held the names of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and which was split into what are now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) and the Department of Indigenous Services Canada (DISC). The nomenclature has evolved considerably over the years, reflecting the naming conventions of the day for how to refer to Indigenous peoples, as well as government decisions regarding which lives would be managed by the officials in the department(s) at any given time.

complete five interviews with a total of seven participants between Vancouver and Victoria, BC.<sup>31</sup>

This second fieldwork trip also involved time spent back in northern BC (primarily at UNBC in Prince George, but also reconnecting with some of my contacts living on the Wet'suwet'en yintah). While in Vancouver and Victoria I was able to access two archives: the Union of BC Indian Chiefs in Vancouver and the Royal BC Museum and Archives in Victoria. In each of these archives I was able to access many of the historical documents that are used in my analysis in Chapters Four to Six. These include those prepared for the BC government, regional governments and associations, and especially, the documents of the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs (the McKenna-McBride Commission, or Commission). The record of evidence produced by, and available from, the Commission is voluminous, with the first Progress Report of the Commission, dated November 26 of 1913, reporting five volumes of evidence collected, not including the hundreds of pieces of correspondence. Indeed, the commissioners conducted themselves as able administrators, ensuring that their decision-making could be easily reviewed. Put simply, the records of the Commission constitute a truly incredible amount of data. Not only this, but the data illustrates precisely the framings brought by the commissioners, and the evidence they relied upon when organizing the territory of BC. Through working with the help of librarians and archivists between three different sites, I have pieced together the core documents of the Commission, and draw upon this archival data here. These documents include:

- numerous surveys, maps, and censuses containing information used by the commissioners in their decision-making;
- 104 Interim Reports<sup>32</sup> which outline decisions taken by the Commission;

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<sup>31</sup> I was able to connect with public servants in BC through the names which were posted on the program websites maintained by the Government of BC.

<sup>32</sup> The record shows 98 Interim Reports; however, 6 have either been amended, or had additions made to them such that they have been presented as multiple reports. For example, Interim Report No. 25 is comprised of three documents, the original Interim Report, as well as Interim Report No. 25A and Interim Report No. 25B.

- 5 Progress Reports which outline the activities of the Commission;
- individual Summary Reports which summarize the decisions taken and additional information regarding each of the 15 agencies in the province<sup>33</sup>; and finally,
- the General Report of the Commission which presents all the previous material to the cabinets of the province and Dominion.

These documents, among others, were all transmitted to the provincial and Dominion governments at the conclusion of the Commission in order to provide evidence for each government to confirm the decisions made by the commissioners. In addition, there also exist transcripts of the testimony given at each site visit of the Commission. These are extensive, and include the testimony of Indian Agents, representatives of Indigenous nations, clergy and other missionaries, and other citizens who appeared before the Commission.

Finally, I also spent time accessing documents from Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa over the course of Spring/Summer and early Fall 2019.<sup>34</sup> There I was able to gain access to a number of documents held by the federal government, which were otherwise unavailable in either archives in BC. One set of documents that I do not draw on extensively here are those which I received through the federal government's Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) system. The system offers researchers the opportunity to request access to specific types of government documents—notably in the context of my project, briefing material, presentations, summaries, and notes from public servants—and it is increasingly being used quite effectively in studies that analyze Indigenous-government relations (see: Crosby & Monaghan, 2018; Jobin & Riddle, 2019; King & Pasternak, 2018). Despite having submitted requests throughout the Winter 2019 semester however, responses from departments such as INAC and Statistics Canada stretched into the Spring/Summer 2019 period. This, in addition to numerous redactions

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<sup>33</sup> These agencies are those established by the Department of Indian Affairs of the Dominion government. Each was represented in the territory by their own Indian Agent, who are those agents identified above as having given information and testimony to the Commission.

<sup>34</sup> These trips were less frequent, but carried out over a longer period of time as I lived in Ottawa full-time during this period.

throughout the documents, meant that a rigorous analysis could not be performed on them. Further follow-up with the departments, as well as additional access to policymakers and ATIP documents from the provincial government is planned as a next stage in my research agenda. While drawing on the work I have done in this dissertation, this next stage will pick up on the community-engaged research project I had initially planned, and will take place through UNBC beginning in Fall 2020.

In total, the number of documents collected and sorted through for this project numbers in the hundreds. Included in the documents collected are reports from both the provincial and federal governments, policy documents, technical notes, data tables, transcripts of oral evidence, government memos, maps, and instructions given to those carrying out the organization of territory in BC, among other categories of documents. In addition to this, I recorded approximately 12 hours of interview audio, and have field notes from my two months of exploratory research on Wet'suwet'en territory which also inform my analysis. Despite the volume of information collected, not all of it is analyzed directly here. Instead, while sorting through the documents I collected I focused my attention on those documents most relevant to my analysis. In terms of geographic scope, this meant limiting the reports largely to those speaking to Wet'suwet'en territory (ie. the Bulkley-Nechako region and surrounding areas), and regarding policy documents, I focused on those documents which offered a view into the knowledge underpinning policy and decision-making. While this meant many of the documents that I collected were ultimately not used, it also resulted in a text that does not run to multiple volumes.

In performing my analysis, I primarily employed methods from critical security studies scholars (Salter & Mutlu, 2012; Shepherd, 2008; 2013), in particular critical discourse analysis

(Gavriely-Nuri, 2012; Wodak, 2013). By employing these methods I align myself with Mutlu and Salter (2012: 113) in understanding “discourse [a]s a social practice that constitutes the social world, and is also constituted by other social practices”. That is, we interpret the world through discourse, producing meaning that then shapes our own actions. Such an understanding fits neatly with my project and the concept of a ‘universe of policy possibilities’ outlined in the previous chapter. This universe is made up of discourse in that it is both structured by what we know, as well as structuring what we imagine to be possible. Similar to my discussion of knowledge in the previous chapter, my analysis treats discourse as productive, with critical discourse analysis especially being attentive to ways in which social and political inequality is reproduced through discourse (Gavriely-Nuri, 2012). The Foucauldian tradition in critical IR does this by employing a deconstructive, genealogical approach to inquiry in understanding the (productive) operations and circulations of power (Mutlu & Salter, 2012; Shepherd, 2013), with my own analysis focusing on what Mutlu and Salter (2012: 114) describe as ‘plastic discourse’, or one that seeks ‘continuity’—mirroring my own use of the term ‘reproduction’ throughout my text.

To understand the way in which settler colonialism is reproduced in policy knowledge, I analyzed the texts I collected to identify places where this knowledge relied upon settler framings, cosmologies and ontologies. For example, the reification of settler categories of identity in the APS from Chapter 3, or the scientific knowledge that the Forest and Range Evaluation Program relies upon from Chapter 6. In each of these cases the texts reflect the ways discourse (and the knowledge embedded within it) organizes our understandings of what is possible, thus producing a set of interventions within that universe of possibility. However, as I highlight throughout, the universe of possibilities created by the settler knowledges that inform

policymaking are not the only ones, and I also use the experiences and knowledge that I developed through my research and time with the Wet’suwet’en to concretely show the ways in which our reliance on them continues to marginalize Indigenous knowledges.

### *Decolonial Insights*

Finally, to close this methods chapter I want to return to the role of decolonial IR I outlined in my previous chapter. As I wrote there, decolonial IR works from an imperative to move away from the sort of global coloniality from which academic work has worked, and instead move towards meaningful redress. Notably, not reconciliation to existing structures of power, but rather a promotion of healing for the ‘colonial wound’ (Mignolo 2009: 3) opened by (primarily) European imperial ‘adventures’.

Decolonial orientations within research have important implications on a methodological level. As Sabaratnam practices in her work on state-building, there needs to be a shift towards combating Eurocentrism by rooting scholarship “in the historical presence, political consciousness and material realities of the targets of intervention” (2017: 131). On a concrete level this means looking to the experiences and understandings of those understood as ‘disposable’ or without agency—those non-Western, colonized subjects themselves. It means a reorientation away from a scholarly interest in the work of the colonizer, to the understandings of the impacts of that work held by the colonized. Indeed, I am deeply committed to the argument that “We cannot adequately study *any* kind of politics by only thinking with or about the powerful parties” (*Ibid*).

The question that stands out from my approach to this project as outlined above remains: how committed can I truly be if I spoke to ‘the powerful’ rather than the ‘subordinate’? That is, how can I claim to have undertaken a decolonial project if it relies primarily upon the analysis of



government texts and actions, and interviews with public servants? Is this approach not precisely of the kind (rightfully) critiqued by decolonial IR? Here I offer not as much a justification of my project as a discussion of my own positionality, and the choices I have made within the project as a result. In the Conclusion I outline further the follow-on project I will be undertaking, which develops on the work here for my broader agenda. This next project will be community-engaged and focus directly on those naturalized as ‘subordinate’ or ‘sub-altern’.

With regards to my own project then, I have tried to take seriously my own status as a settler within what is today Canada. Given this status, I am implicated in the everyday of settler coloniality in a way that is somewhat distinct from the way researchers are oftentimes in an authoritative relationship to the subjects of their subject matter. Indeed, researchers and academics are typically ‘outsiders’ to communities, and have been involved in the reproduction of colonial knowledge about the communities they research (Smith, 2012). This can have the effect of further enabling colonial governance, and indeed, sometimes is directly the purpose.<sup>35</sup> This is done by offering a deeper understanding of the communities themselves, which, drawing on my earlier discussion of the ‘universe of possibility’ from the last chapter, only makes more possible increased (colonial) interventions into the communities themselves. Further, those texts that do not seek to enable a more effective colonialism are not without issues either. Indeed, even when seeking to undo the further entrenchment of settler colonialism, research on Indigenous communities has come to feature the pain and suffering of communities in forms that verge on fetishizing it.

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<sup>35</sup> On this point it is worth reminding ourselves of IR’s own disciplinary complicity, with Vitalis (2015) pointing out the interconnections between *Foreign Affairs* and *The Journal of Race Development*, which focused explicitly on how to better colonize the non-West.

Texts which are intended to focus on the work of communities has the seeming benefit of highlighting Indigenous agency – and it is important to stress that this is indeed oftentimes what the authors of these texts aim to do. However, oftentimes the broader effect of these texts is to provoke questions of the authors which, rather than serving their end of supporting communities, end with the authors being asked to opine on the normative value of the Indigenous-led projects themselves. I speak here from experience, where as a settler presenting at multiple conferences, I have more often than not been asked whether or not the particular approach a community was taking was ‘the right one’ or whether ‘they might be better served’ by following a different course of action. It is, in part, for this reason that my own text centres settler colonialism and its reproduction through the marginalization of Indigenous knowledge. In doing so, by illustrating the operations of settler power my academic work can support the reclamation of Indigenous governance and authority by aiding in the deconstruction of settler sovereignty rather than championing one nation’s approach over another.<sup>36</sup>

In building my project then, I have sought to be attentive to my own complicity and positionality within settler coloniality. Similar to my engagement with ethnography, though I would not describe my project as wholly decolonial I have drawn from the insights and imperatives of decolonial research agendas in my design. Core to this was undertaking my first exploratory fieldwork trip, which offered me an opportunity to develop a project that speaks to the issues faced by the Wet’suwet’en themselves. I have taken what I learned and designed a project that uses critical discourse analysis to interpret government documents and interviews with policymakers. This analysis is then aimed at better understanding the conditions within

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<sup>36</sup> While this can be an effective avenue for academic analysis, my organizing work has brought me to align with specific actors, including those who have built and continue to maintain the Camp. This is not unproblematic, as I discuss above, however, in taking the position of an activist scholar, it is perhaps to an extent unavoidable.

which the reproduction of settler sovereignty is possible. As I learned during my time in northern BC, the erasure of Indigenous knowledges in policymaking processes plays an important part in this, and it is to this that I turn for Chapters Three to Six.

### Chapter Three: Counting Through Colonial Eyes

In the first chapter I outlined the ways in which settler colonialism operates, that is, through the relationship of (a)partness through which Indigenous individuals are a part of the Canadian imaginary, while Indigeneity and Indigenous nationhood are eliminated (apart) from this imaginary through a politics of (mis)recognition. The second chapter presented the way in which I went about studying two of the specific ways in which settler colonialism (re)produces itself, and how I came to the focus of my work. This third chapter begins my empirical analysis of the way in which contemporary settler colonialism<sup>37</sup> is continually remade through exclusionary knowledge practices, which then inform policymakers' work for both Indigenous and settler communities and nations. Specifically, I look to the ways in which Indigenous peoples and territories are known through statistical data. In doing so I use the Aboriginal People's Survey (APS) to illustrate the ways data collection tools frame subjectivities through settler frameworks, with the knowledge produced through these tools then supporting the materialization of settler imaginaries—and thus, the remaking of their legitimacy—within the context of settler colonialism in Canada.

I argue that the collection of data engages an existing colonial politics of (mis)recognition, allowing the state to make Indigenous peoples and communities legible to itself so as to make them more effectively governable. I illustrate how this *making legible* is done through the creation of statistical knowledge about Indigenous communities. Through this process however, Indigenous peoples themselves are not only made known to states, but states reorganize

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<sup>37</sup> Here I am following Veracini (2010) in distinguishing a specific settler colonialism that is distinct from colonialism or imperialism broadly, with the distinction coming in the act of settling a new land and—in the political imaginary of the day—founding a new village or political community (see also Beier, 2005, and Edmonds, 2010).

Indigenous peoples along the lines of Lockean, individualistic and liberal subjectivities, and in lines with the ‘nuclear family’ of European modernity (Goeman, 2013).<sup>38</sup> Further, such moves serve to extend the settler colonial project of bringing Indigenous communities into ‘settler modernity’ by assessing them through settler knowledge systems. In turn this then makes possible policy interventions which align with this set of knowledge, rather than those which centre Indigenous logics and cosmologies.

This analysis unfolds over three parts. First, I draw on Coulthard’s critique of colonial politics of recognition framework and connect this to questions of legibility with regards to the settler state through the framing of contemporary liberal settler governmentality. Second, I describe Indigenous calls for increased data collection at the international level. I not only highlight the expectations Indigenous nations outlined for what knowledge would be produced, but also the way that Indigenous peoples are seeking to use statistical information to realize their own aspirations of self-determination and decolonization. Third, from this global look I bring the focus to settler colonialism’s manifestation in Canadian federal data collection tools, specifically the APS. I outline both the Survey’s purpose (ie. to better ‘know’ Canada’s off-reserve population), and also the way in which it was put together. I then analyze the APS itself, highlighting the way it reifies settler imaginaries and frameworks through a discussion of questions of identity and subjectivity, culture, and the representation of land in the questions. I use this analysis to illustrate my argument that the survey reproduces settler subjectivities, which in turn serve to build a base for the (re)production of settler sovereignty as I describe in my conclusion.

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<sup>38</sup> I also discuss this further in relation to land organization in Chapter Five.

*(Mis)Recognition and the Production of Indigenous Subjects*

My first chapter took a broader view of the relationship of (a)partness that underpins settler coloniality in contemporary Canada, focusing on the way settler sovereignty is produced and reproduced through Indigenous possession. This section builds on that, speaking directly to the way in which data collection and knowledge production support these processes through the framing of Coulthard's (2014) critique of contemporary liberal politics of (mis)recognition. I move from the elimination of *indigeneity* as an oppositional source of authority from Chapter 1 to settler governmentality as an illustration of how data collection can serve to reify settler imaginaries. In doing so I connect Coulthard's analysis with Scott's (1998) argument connecting legibility and governmentality. I begin from the understanding that liberal democratic governance within Canada relies upon frameworks which require subjects to be recognized as having rights in order for themselves and their claims to be understood as legitimate; however, that in making their claims comprehensible within a settler framework organized around assimilation and elimination, Indigenous subjectivity becomes "*significantly deformed*" (Coulthard 2014: 29).

For Coulthard, the problem with the existing debate around recognition and rights as the best way to find justice through difference<sup>39</sup> is "its failure to adequately confront the dual structure of colonialism itself" (Coulthard 2014: 33). In making this argument Coulthard is following Fanon's understanding of colonialism as inclusive of both objective and subjective levels. For Fanon, not only were there "*objective* historical [material] conditions but also [subjective] human *attitudes*" at play in colonial contexts (Fanon in Coulthard 2014: 31;

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<sup>39</sup> In this formulation, the 'Others' and (parts of) their cultures are recognized as legitimate by the dominant society so that they may be accommodated within the state without there needing to be a shift away from liberal legal frameworks and rights regimes. For more on a politics of recognition within Canadian liberal politics, see: Kymlicka (1995 & 2001) and Taylor (1994).

emphasis added). These two aspects of colonialism work together to continually reinforce not only the structures of colonialism, but also the mindset of those colonized. In Coulthard’s reading, the objective structural aspect that is the apparatus of the settler colonial state is ignored. While groups can be recognized as legitimate rights-bearing citizens then, the material facts of contemporary settler colonialism remain unchanged, leaving the relations of domination between settler and settled intact. Circumstances with more explicit colonial relations—such as in Canada—are especially acute, as the state maintains authority over the very definition of indigeneity itself. This is precisely the problem that Coulthard comes to in reading Fanon:

where ‘recognition’ is conceived as something that is ultimately ‘granted’ or ‘accorded’ a subaltern group or entity by a dominant group or entity—prefigures its failure to significantly modify, let alone transcend, the breadth of power at play in colonial relationships (Fanon in Coulthard 2014: 30-31).

This is due to there being the need for recognition by the state for Indigenous peoples, but no reciprocal recognition necessary due to the relation of domination. Given this, “in actual contexts of domination (such as colonialism) ... the terms of recognition [are] usually determined by and in the interests of the master (the colonizer)” (Coulthard 2007: 439).

This politics of recognition produces relationships that centre unequal relations of power between the colonized (Indigenous nations) and colonizer (settler governments). What a politics of recognition enables then, is the building of a stable settler colonial system through “the ‘internalization’ of the forms of racist recognition imposed or bestowed on the Indigenous population by the colonial state and society” as much as through direct violence (Fanon in Coulthard 2014: 31). This internalization takes the form of the structures of colonial rule becoming the structures that Indigenous subjects define themselves in accordance with—as I discuss below –and means “the best the colonized can hope for is ‘white liberty and white

justice; that is, values secreted by [their] masters” (Coulthard 2014: 39).<sup>40</sup> As I outline below, settler ‘technologies’ (*dispositifs* from Chapter One) of governance make this possible through processes of (settler) governmentality and making ‘legible’ Indigenous populations to the Canadian state.

Scott locates this impulse in European modes of governance, writing that “much of early modern European statecraft seem[s]...devoted to rationalizing and standardizing what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format” (1998: 3). This was done explicitly so that the state would be able to build a society that it could effectively manage and govern, as governing would not be possible if a population remained heterogeneous and without a unified subjectivity. To counter the natural heterogeneity of populations, states organized their population(s) using *dispositifs* to construct a more knowable society.<sup>41</sup> One of the central technologies taken up by the state is the collection of vast amounts of data to enable the use of statistics to more accurately predict the behavior of the population being governed (Foucault, 2003).

Importantly, this data collection is not a neutral, technical exercise. Rather, in its quest to create a legible and manageable population the state alters that which it seeks to describe. Indeed, Scott likens the knowledge created by these *dispositifs* to “abridged maps” in that “They did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer” (1998: 3).

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<sup>40</sup> Of course, this is not to say that the internalization of a colonized subjectivity is total, nor even *necessarily* occurring at all. As Mbembe (1992) speaks to, there is not one single colonized subjectivity, but multiple, each being performed at various times and in various venues. This is done in part based on who is present, and what kind of a ‘face’ the colonized wishes to present.

<sup>41</sup> For an example of this, see the discussion of France’s construction of a ‘hierarchy of cultures’ through ‘domestic colonization’ in order to organize the French population according to Paris’ logics and understanding (Scott, 1998: 72-3).



This creates the problem that in knowing a population by making it legible to the state, there is also the actual construction of that very population. Speaking in the context of Métis identity and the standardization required to make the census useful to policymakers in the context of Canada, Andersen (2014: 84) notes the ‘constitutive’ role that data plays:

Standardization requires the creation of administrative equivalencies between Canadian citizens: thus, an “Indian” in British Columbia must be (or, at least, must be treated as) administratively equivalent to an “Indian” in Nova Scotia; likewise, a “Métis” in Alberta must be treated in the same manner as a “Métis” in New Brunswick.<sup>42</sup>

While Andersen highlights this creation of administrative categories by the federal government in relation to Métis nationhood, Alfred and Corntassel (2005) have done this more broadly for Indigenous nations through their concept of ‘Aboriginalism’. Named after the more polite term used to describe all Indigenous people, whether First Nation, Inuit, or Métis, they use the concept to describe the way the diversity of Indigenous nationhood is collapsed into a single catch-all category by settlers. I pick up on its use here in two ways. First, to illustrate how Indigenous nations are understood in the settler imaginary as all being one. Second, to underscore Andersen’s argument against the contemporary view of this data as ‘fact’; rather, that we are to understand these categories and the data which is produced using them as “fundamentally socio-political *processes*” aggressively “arranging social relations” in a particular way (Andersen 2014: 77). While I further discuss the mobilization of the Government of Canada’s administrative categories below, here I want to highlight that this ‘cementing’ of identity and social relations (Kukutai & Walter, 2015) is especially problematic in light of the way in which settler colonial governance is organized towards the elimination of indigeneity. In making this connection, Fletcher’s (2003: 35) warning that “science can be seen as a tool of

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<sup>42</sup> Thompson (2013 & 2016) also points to this phenomenon in the context of race and data collection in the censuses of Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

manipulation and marginalization" seems especially relevant because, as we saw above, Indigenous identity is continually (re)produced through a colonial politics of recognition in which indigenous peoples are only 'seen' by the state when they are legible to it, and for that they must have abandoned traditional identities in order to become 'Aboriginal.' This would be a triumph for settler governmentality, as Coulthard (2014: 31) identifies within Fanon's work:

the long-term stability of a colonial system of governance relies as much on the 'internalization' of the forms of racist recognition imposed or bestowed on the Indigenous population by the colonial state and society as it does on brute force.

What I am suggesting here is that the problem lies not in whether the data collected by the state is incomplete, or inaccurate. Instead, it lies in the way that collecting data itself serves to (re)produce the legitimacy of the very subjectivities that inhabit settler imaginaries. When connected to the colonial relations of power and colonial politics of recognition put forward by Coulthard, we can see the way in which his 'colonial subjects of empire' are constructed within Indigenous communities. Even if the intention is not to create a particular 'Aboriginal' identity supportive of the settler state, this homogenized Aboriginal subject is still created through a politics of recognition written into to the data collection tools used. In the eyes of the Canadian state then, Indigenous peoples exist in situations where they are legible through processes and mechanisms which accord with the settler imaginary. Rather than self-determining on the level of identity, Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations are read by the state as legitimate political actors and units through the state itself. It is for this reason that Coulthard (2014) and Simpson (2011 & 2017) among others advocate for an Indigenous resurgence based on traditional practices, as it is only in turning away from the 'white liberty and white justice' which allows for disruption of settler colonialism. By reinforcing these traditions and understandings within Indigenous nations themselves there becomes the possibility of breaking the process of

legitimation which forms the ‘colonial subjects of empire’ which serve to reify settler imaginaries and (re)produce settler coloniality.

### *Global Context*

I now turn to the empirical question of data collection, and open with a discussion of the global context within which data collection on Indigenous peoples exists. Indeed, in settler states such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, governments “have long used population statistics as the evidentiary base for how Indigenous peoples are known and ‘managed’ through state policy approaches” (Kukutai & Walter 2015: 317). Despite the global phenomenon of settler coloniality, the mobilization of population statistics has followed the path of domestication, with the intention of enabling more effective colonization through categorization within individual settler states themselves (Andersen, 2014). This continues in the present day, with contemporary settler governments continually creating the conditions for the continual (re)production of settler sovereignty and colonialism. Expanding the reach and scope of data collection tools can thus be seen to further draw Indigenous nations into a relationship of settler governance.

However, despite being studied, organized and classified since contact (Smith 1999: 60-61), Indigenous peoples still remain relatively unknown to official statistics and other forms of government data. This creates all kinds of knowledge gaps, and issues of ineffectiveness of governance due to a lack of understanding. To try to remedy this we see calls at both the domestic and international levels for increased and improved data collection on Indigenous communities.<sup>43</sup> This creates a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, we have the calls for

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<sup>43</sup> For examples, see: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and KAIROS, “Honouring the Children,” Submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2011; Royal Commission on Aboriginal

increased data collection and knowledge; on the other, these calls—and associated efforts to undertake the collection using new tools such as surveys—exist in the context of a settler colonialism that has consistently sought to use data to more effectively colonize. While perhaps not resolvable, the paradox begins to make more sense in understanding that the calls rest on calls for greater involvement of Indigenous nations in the production and ownership of this data. Indeed, these calls have begun to materialize into an international agenda to improve efforts regarding the collection of data on, and for, Indigenous communities.

Much of this work has been undertaken through United Nations (UN) mechanisms, especially those associated with international Indigenous organizing such as the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII or Permanent Forum) and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP or Expert Mechanism). Both are authorized through other UN bodies, the Economic and Social Council (UNPFII) and the Human Rights Commission (EMRIP), and have been developed into organizing platforms for Indigenous communities from much of the globe to cooperate on ways and means of pursuing their own self-determination through greater knowledge, coordination, and policymaking and analysis. While a fulsome description of the UN's processes and institutions relating to Indigenous peoples is not possible here, the work undertaken by these bodies is both substantial and thoughtful.

In the last decades, part of this work has focused on questions of data collection. Framed through the need to improve 'data' and 'indicators' for Indigenous peoples, the program of work has been organized primarily through the auspices of the Convention of Biological Diversity

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Peoples, "Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples" (Ottawa, ON, October 1996); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.*, 2015; UNICEF Canada, "Canadian Supplement to the State of the World's Children 2009 – Aboriginal Children's Health: Leaving No Child Behind," *State of the World's Children*, 2009; Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, "The Perspective of Information Received and Collected within the Context of ILO Conventions Nos. 107 and 169, and Other Relevant ILO Conventions" (May 2004).

(CBD) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Through these, Indigenous representatives have organized discussions which touch on much broader issues than may have been imagined by states when they agree to maintain ecosystem diversity or seek to alleviate poverty in non-Western nations. Indeed, the broadness of the program of work seems illustrative of the interconnectedness of Indigenous knowledge systems, with each aspect revolving around a central unity which is at the heart of Creation (Atleo, 2003).

Turning to the work itself, much has been realized through a series of workshops held throughout the regions of Africa, the Americas, and Asia-Pacific in 2006 and 2007. The work undertaken in these workshops was summarized by UNPFII Member Victoria Tauli-Corpuz in a report presented at the Seventh session of the Permanent Forum in 2008 (Tauli-Corpuz, 2008). There was also a workshop held in Ottawa in 2006 with the explicit purpose of “reflect[ing] the views of indigenous peoples living in developed countries” (Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 3). The reason for the split is not discussed directly within the archival documents of the mechanisms, and indeed does seem somewhat strange given the ‘fourth world’ framing of a lot of Indigenous organizing at the international level—a framing which is intended to reflect and promote a coherency between all Indigenous nations (Manuel & Posluns, 2018; Ouellette, 2002). However, the regional distinctions likely reflect the broader global division between those states targeted by international development programs such as the MDGs, and those in the ‘developed’ countries which are not targeted by such programs. In this case, Indigenous communities again are effectively domesticated, with the effect being to reinforce the state-centric model of the global system which carries out of the work.

This state-centric model aside, the recommendations which came from the workshops offer an interesting window into the expectations of Indigenous communities as it relates to data

collection in the areas of subjectivity and land use. To pick up on one of the aspects I touched on above, one of the themes that arises from the list of core and sub-themes in the reports<sup>44</sup> is the *interconnectedness* of Indigenous peoples, territories, knowledge, and governance. One of the clearest ways this can be seen is in the theme of ‘Identity, land and ways of living’, which brings together each of these aspects (Secretariat of the PFII 2006: 12-16; Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 3-4). Under the theme, the sub-themes further reflect this, with “Maintenance and development of traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and practices” as the first entry, “Ownership, access, use of and permanent sovereignty over lands, territories, natural resources and waters” below it on the list, and health of both communities and ecosystems identified together immediately below ownership (Secretariat of the PFII 2006: 12-16; Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 3-4). “Indigenous governance and management systems” also appears on the list of sub-themes as a part of the overall theme of “Indigenous rights to, and perspectives on, development” (Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 4). Read together, I understand this grouping as reflecting the way in which Indigenous identity and modes of governance are intimately connected to lands and water. This reinforces the central claims of the Indigenous resurgence literature, and especially those which centre the sort of ‘good relationship’ between Indigenous peoples and their territories around which Indigenous modes of governance have oftentimes been built (Coulthard, 2014; Stark, 2017).

This is further made clear is the way that both sets of discussions highlighted Indigenous peoples outlining the need for greater attention to governance and cultural issues. They even highlight these themes together,<sup>45</sup> offering a view of the two as co-constitutive with references to

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<sup>44</sup> Indeed, there is much overlap in each of the reports on the workshops—ie. those for both the ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ worlds—including to the extent that the tables of themes discussed here are effectively the same, highlighting and grouping the same Core and Sub- Themes together.

<sup>45</sup> See: Tauli-Corpuz (2008 7-9) and Secretariat of the PFII (2006: 7).

“customary laws” (Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 13). Through these references, the reports make clear that Indigenous communities need to be more involved in governance more broadly. This was particularly important in discussions around the CBD, as Indigenous representatives spoke to the links between their own knowledges and sustainability, with the effective creation of sustainable systems for ecosystem management requiring the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges (Ibid, 18). Moreover, sustainability and health are reflected as interrelated in the documents, with Indigenous representatives identifying healthy Indigenous communities to exist in situations where the ecosystem is also healthy and sustainable (Secretariat of the PFII 2006: 8; Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 15). Finally, and especially relevant for this text, Indigenous representatives identified the need for the indicators to be developed out of the Working Groups to be both “scientifically sound” as well as “culturally appropriate”.<sup>46</sup> I discuss the connections—or lack thereof—between scientific and culturally-appropriate approaches as seen in policymaking by the government of BC in Chapter Six. However, here it is important to note that my own reading of the deliberate connection between these two reflects an understanding on the part of Indigenous representatives that Indigenous knowledge as one aspect of, and co-existent with, scientifically-rigorous knowledge.

While there were many similar themes and organization to the discussions between the two sets of workshops, differences between were also apparent. This reflects that though colonialism remains a reality for Indigenous peoples worldwide, the mode of colonialism does in fact differ between states. Notable in this respect was the emphasis on the need for a gendered perspective in data collection in the Ottawa workshop (Secretariat of the PFII 2006: 5), as well as the need for a move away from a ‘deficit model’ of understanding Indigenous governance

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<sup>46</sup> See para 29 of Tauli-Corpuz (2008).

capacity identified there as well (Ibid, 8-9). This latter especially is further reflected in the expectations for future work, with Indigenous representatives in the ‘developed’ world calling for greater involvement for themselves and their nations in this future work (Ibid, 7), while the other workshops identified much work for the mechanisms of the UN, and especially the UNPFII, to follow-up on.

My discussion of the themes and points raised at the workshops is not intended as setting out a definitive list of Indigenous ‘demands’ to states regarding their reporting on progress towards the CBD and MDGs, and data collection more broadly. However, they remain valuable in two ways. First, they highlight the ways in which Indigenous communities understand the relationships between each of the themes discussed. Second, given the consensus model that the UNPFII and its members attempt to conduct their business—a model which includes ongoing engagement in the production of reports such as these—we can understand these reports as reflecting the priorities that Indigenous communities themselves have established in terms of what information is important, and how that is to be organized in data collection mechanisms and reporting structures. That is, the reports serve as illustrations of Indigenous understandings of what they feel is important to know. Further, the reports highlight what Indigenous peoples are seeking to hold states accountable to. This is a conscious choice by Indigenous communities in much of their international organizing: as Lightfoot (2012) describes in relation to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous representatives use international fora and agreements as accountability mechanisms for states in their treatment of Indigenous communities within their borders. This is particularly useful in situations where there are concrete rights which are to be upheld by states, but is also effective in areas such as data collection here, where we can take the expectations outlined by Indigenous communities at the



international level and compare them to the practices of states themselves. I do this below in relation to the APS and data collection on Indigenous communities in Canada.

### *Recognition within The Aboriginal Peoples Survey*

I now move from the global level of international Indigenous organizing to the level of what is today Canada. Here I do so by analyzing the Aboriginal Peoples' Survey through the lens of settler governmentality and with the international context that I outlined above in mind. The Survey was first put into the field in 1991 and has been operated approximately every five years since then after the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended it be operated again in 1996 (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey - Summary of Changes, 2017). While it may not be focused on the CBD or MDGs, the APS does reflect similar intentions, especially with regards to the 2012 survey's focus on questions of employment and education in relation to 'development' and 'economic wellness' of communities. Indeed, it was established to—and remains focused on—filling the gaps identified about the Government of Canada with regards to statistics and data focused on its Indigenous population (Ibid). In this respect, Statistics Canada (StatsCan) (the survey's administrator) works to ensure that “Question wording adheres as closely as possibly [sic] to questions established by the Harmonized Content Committee at Statistics Canada” (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012). This is done to provide comparability between StatsCan surveys (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 2012; Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey - Summary of Changes, 2017).

At the same time, the information from the APS is intended to be used to write policy for Indigenous communities by government officials, and for other interventions by non-government agents as well. Because of this, consultation with Indigenous organizations has been undertaken, with the stated goal to be more reflective of the needs of Indigenous communities. One big

change that has come of this is on the level of sampling methodology, and changes to each of the iterations of the survey. This has meant that the ages of those targeted has changed (with populations on and off-reserve differing greatly), as well as representation of other demographic markers across surveys. Even more clearly, as of 2006, the APS focuses only on Indigenous peoples not living on-reserve, with the First Nations Information Governance Centre being given the mandate to study those First Nations members living on reserve (AANDC, 2016). As a result, the APS is intended to capture the broadest picture of Indigenous peoples off-reserve, and seeks to collect “unique and detailed data on employment, education, and health which are not available from any other source” (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2017: web). In 2012 there was a further shift to look at specific issue areas deemed by the Government of Canada to be the most important. These issue areas are subject to change with each iteration of the Survey, and the first topics chosen were Education and Employment.

Reading through the APS it is possible to see StatsCan’s “adjustments” over the years based on consultations with Indigenous organizations across the country; however, changes have almost exclusively made to the ‘wording’ and ‘flow’ of questions (Statistics Canada, Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2017: web), with that cross-comparability remaining untouched, offering continued consistency across StatsCan’s portfolio of survey tools. From a statistical perspective, this comparability certainly has benefits for the sake of compilation and analysis of data across survey populations. Problematic though, as I discuss in greater detail below, is the way that this reinforces settler systems of knowledge—even in a situation that is at least on the surface centred on building a better understanding of the Indigenous population. What I suggest here, and what I illustrate in greater detail below, is that this reifies and continues to centre settler imaginaries and knowledge systems, serving to reproduce the hierarchical settler colonial relationship I identified

between Indigenous nations and settler states in my Introduction and Chapter 1. While I delve into the erasure of Indigenous knowledges from policymaking tools in a more focused way as it relates to contemporary land management policy in British Columbia in Chapter 6, the APS offers an ideal entry point into the empirical discussion. This is in particular because of the focused attention on particular issue areas,<sup>47</sup> and especially the survey's combination of a broad focus—both demographically as well as with regards to subjects covered—and that it is a data collection tool written by the Government of Canada in order to get information to be used in the writing of policy. Indeed, the APS perhaps offers the best combination of breadth and depth, both being attentive to a broad swathe of life, while also remaining focused on the Indigenous population across contemporary Canada. In this way, it is an ideal choice through which to illustrate the way in which data collection can continue to serve the purposes of the settler state. I now turn to three issue areas (identity and subjectivity, culture, and land) to build my argument.

### Indigenous Subjectivity

Importantly, the APS opens with a section which focuses on the issue of identity. Throughout each of the iterations of the IPS, there is a core focus on two identities in particular. First the Survey asks if a respondent identifies as 'Aboriginal,' with further specification of whether the individual is 'North American Indian' (2001 & 2006 APS) or 'First Nation' (2012 & 2017 APS), Métis, or Inuk (Inuit). Second, the Survey confirms whether or not that person is a Status Indian, either by Treaty or by Registration. At no point is the possibility of an identity outside of any of those raised, and notably, there is no mention of specific Indigenous nations in any of the

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<sup>47</sup> Indeed, even the focus on particular issue areas tells us something, as those that are picked are considered to be top priority, and those which are considered to have the most legitimacy from the government.

iterations of the APS. Indeed, even when there are questions about an individuals' 'sense of belonging' as in the 2017 APS, there is no discussion of (Indigenous) national identity outside of the prompt for the interviewer to use "First Nations/Métis/Inuit/Aboriginal" in the questions (2017 APS: SB\_Q05-Q20). This is despite questions about whether respondents "have a deep sense of belonging" to (SB\_Q20), or "feel good about" (SB\_Q15) their Indigenous identity. There is a prompted identification with Canada though, when respondents are asked directly how deeply held their sense of belonging within Canada is (SB\_Q25).

In reading through the APS then, we can clearly see the manifestation of Alfred and Corntassel's (2005) concept of 'Aboriginalism' by the way Indigenous national identities are erased in favour of a singular 'Aboriginal' identity. While the APS contains some more specific identifiers—such as categorizing respondents as First Nation, Métis, and Inuit, and through legalistic framings of status—the homogenizing work of Aboriginalism is engaged directly. For Indigenous peoples to be recognized and 'seen' through the APS, they must organize themselves into categories which Andersen identifies as being "heavily embedded in Canada's colonial and taxonomical classification systems" (Andersen 2014: 72). The colonial nature of this 'self' identification process becomes even more acute if we refer back to Comaroff and Comaroff's (2007) concept of 'lawfare'. These categories of identification all maintain a specific relationship to the Canadian settler state, wherein they have been defined by the settler state, with that of 'Status Indian' being legally constructed by the settler state. While this is quite literally the case for First Nations, the recent *Daniels* decision by the Supreme Court (Gaudry & Andersen, 2016)—which effectively gave 'status' to Métis by making the government of Canada responsible to them as Indians—does this same work for Métis. By requiring self-identification through settler-defined structures then, the APS continues to do the work of regulating and

homogenizing or flattening Indigenous identity. This sets reaffirms hierarchical relationships of authority between Indigenous nations and settler governments, and especially a relationship of government responsibility *over* Indigenous communities. In enabling the mobilization of Indigenous self-identification in survey tools, legitimacy comes only with those categories legible to the state itself, a situation within which we can see the recreation of the conditions which reaffirm settler sovereign authority and legitimacy of that authority in the first place.

This focus on settler knowledge in relation to identity is also seen in the APS's treatment of Indigenous subjectivity more broadly. Here, questions on community involvement and Indigenous languages offer particularly clear examples. Looking first to community involvement, outside of two questions regarding the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of Inuit influence on decision-making over natural resource management in the 2006 APS (K13 & K14), the focus is on the availability of, and participation in, activities such as church services, recreational facilities, educational facilities and opportunities and employment. The other questions are interested in whether or not individuals volunteer within organizations, or help out on an individual basis. While questions regarding community support can be read positively insofar as they include options of seeking out elders or "Community/friendship centres" (2012 APS: CS\_Q01), there is little to no follow-up on what 'community' might mean, or about the way in which community relations are organized. This means that data collection is neither able to capture the relationships within communities, nor does it seek to understand them at all, let alone understand or promote them as legitimate—instead we are left with a vague set of questions which notably do not ask about traditional relations or governance within communities. When framed in such a way, relationality and relationships in community involvement exist on a surface level, one in which being present is counted, but being connected

is not. That is, by not including questions prompting respondents to describe their experiences, or the depth of relationships or affinities within these community spaces, the Survey reflects an understanding of community in which circulation and the taking up of space is counted, but in which meaningful engagement is not.

Turning to Indigenous languages, the questions asked in the APS concern only whether individuals speak an Indigenous language, the level of comprehension, and where they learned (see 2017 APS: LAN for an example). I want to be clear that such questions are important, and can provide the basis for language programming into the future. What is not captured, however, is the importance or role of Indigenous languages in the lives of the respondents, or a linking of language with everyday life, governance, economic opportunity, etc. Because of this it is difficult to see how a respondent to the APS would seek to involve Indigenous languages in their life, despite the value placed on languages by many scholars.<sup>48</sup> While it is likely that those seeking out their own languages will turn to their own community, insofar as settler society sets out the expectations for what it seeks to build within Indigenous communities, the ‘silences’ and ‘omissions’ contained within the tools of data collection built by the settler state are telling.

### Recognition of Culture

Much of the framing of indigeneity within the context of Canadian multiculturalism comes through a recognition, and indeed in some respects a celebration, of Indigenous ‘tradition’ and culture. The APS follows in this move, with the 2012 edition specifically including a section on ‘Traditional Activities’ in which data is collected on interest in and engagement with traditional practices, as well as how often this occurred, and if not, why. The practices asked about include

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<sup>48</sup> For examples, see: Coulthard (2014), Goeman (2013), Lyon (2010), and Simpson (2011 & 2017).

making clothing and footwear (2012 APS: TA\_Q01A), doing “arts or crafts” (TA\_Q02A), hunting, fishing or trapping (TA\_Q03A), and foraging and gathering wild country foods (TA\_Q04A). These types of questions are not unique to the 2012 APS either, though previous iterations of the APS included these questions in the context of ‘Labour Activity’ and prompted responses to the questions with a view towards commercial activity (for example the 2006 APS: Section C, see C10-13 for specific questions). Indeed, even in the 2012 APS, there were links between traditional activities and economic activity, though it was less overt, as the economic aspects of traditional activities were incorporated within questions focusing on the activities themselves, rather than having separate questions framed around the economic angle to the activities.<sup>49</sup> As I discuss later in Chapters 4 and 5, it is important to understand Indigenous economies as a fundamental part of Indigenous existence. In that framing, opening space in the APS for recognition of the role traditional activities play in Indigenous economies is potentially an important move. Indeed, it helps to develop a more fulsome understanding of life in Indigenous communities. However, there remain issues with this framing. In particular, by framing these activities as ‘traditional’ rather than economic, the APS reinforces a sense of stasis to Indigenous nationhood, which cuts directly against the calls from Indigenous communities themselves to be recognized as dynamic (Tauli-Corpuz 2008: 14). Further, this does not engage with the way that framing ‘tradition’ in a static way, and through the activities listed above undermines the sort of cultural regeneration or ‘resurgence’ discussed by Indigenous academics. While a purely cultural framing also brings up issues I discuss in greater depth in Chapters 5 and

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<sup>49</sup> The 2012 edition of the APS was also focused directly on ‘Education and Employment,’ which makes the stand-alone nature of the questions regarding traditional practices all the more noteworthy.

6, culture and ceremony—both implicated in the traditional activities identified—remain important for the renewal of Indigenous nationhood and especially, modes of governing.

Notably, it is the state determining what is included within ‘traditional practices,’ as there is no space for respondents themselves to declare additional cultural practices with which they’ve engaged. Further, these traditional practices pointedly exclude activities related to governance, or land tenure/stewardship, both of which are considered to be core aspects of Indigenous identity. Through this omission we can see a privileging of traditional activities that do not comprise a challenge to settler norms of governance or ownership of the land. Instead, it is those activities outlined within the APS which are given legitimacy as “traditional” or authentically ‘Aboriginal’. In doing so, the state is able to ensure that it is these activities which are shaping the creation of Indigenous subjectivity through signaling that it is particular identities (Aboriginal, First Nations, etc.) and certain activities (foraging, hunting, weaving, etc.) which are legitimate. In this case it is not that these activities are not traditional, or have not existed within Indigenous nationhood for generations; rather, on a structural level the problem lies in it being the settler government identifying those practices and activities to be recognized as traditional. This reinforces that colonial relations of power operating within contexts of politics of recognition that puts the emphasis on colonial recognition from above. If these framings are what Indigenous peoples need to fit in order to have their views counted as legitimate, having traditional activities be already defined by the settler government creates a situation whereby Indigenous communities aren’t offered the space for their own self-definition. Instead settler imaginaries of Indigenous tradition are reified through the resulting data. Indeed, there is not even space for respondents to write in themselves what they see as engaging in traditional



activities. This not only deepens the potential for misrecognition, but also limits the usefulness of the resulting data itself.

### Lands & Territories

One of the core areas of attention in the discussions regarding Indigenous knowledge in statistical indicators and data collection in international fora revolve around Indigenous relationships to land, and land management and biodiversity. This attention to land and territory mirrors not only Indigenous cosmologies, and especially nation's own sense of their relationship with the rest of Creation, but also their dispossession of it that rests at the heart of the settler colonial project. Perhaps as a reflection of the importance of land and territory in both Indigenous and settler imaginaries, the APS includes questions relating to land. While these questions vary between the different iterations of the Survey, I read them as fitting into two framings. The first frames land through the lens of absence, in the second land is understood as a resource.

Looking to the first framing, my analysis is based questions which ask for reasons respondents gave for being absent from work, home, school, or other duties/responsibilities. The 2001 iteration of the APS gets to this directly, asking respondents whether they have spent time away from home, and if so, why (2001 APS: Section G, Q6). Among the possible answers is “To be out on the land” (see also 2006 APS: Section G, Q5). Similarly, the 2012 APS asked respondents why they might have dropped out of school, offering “To help with traditional activities (such as harvesting, hunting, fishing, gathering wood) / Out on the land” as a possible response (2012 APS: ED2F\_Q43A-C & ED3F\_Q38A-C). The second frame of land as a resource is organized less around land itself being used in the way we might understanding the extractive sector as using up the resources in the ground. Instead, I understand the framing as

positioning land as a resource to be drawn upon in relation to economic and skills development. The ‘Skill-Relevant Experiences’ (NSKL) section of the 2017 APS provides a good example in asking that respondents identify “experiences you have gained at work and outside of work. One of the relevant experiences listed is ‘going out on the land’ (2017 APS: NSKL\_Q05S), which can refer to either drawing resources from the land itself, or developing skills through engaging with territory—skills which may then be drawn on in the labour market later.

Similarly to the inclusion of ‘traditional activities’ above, it strikes me as potentially positive that activities such as going out on the land are now viewed as valuable where once they were to be forcibly removed from Indigenous lifeways. Also, that questions regarding land are included from 2001 seems to be a positive step forward in reflecting the importance of land to Indigenous nationhood in the Survey. However, while land’s importance may be reflected, the substance and an understanding of relationships and relationality are not. This is not just at the level of a decolonial shift to engaging with Indigenous cosmologies, as even those expert discussions outlined above do not appear to have been incorporated into the APS. Instead, as can be seen from the various iterations of the APS, land is framed in terms of the development of employment skills, or as an excuse for absence either from school or from home. Even if these references are not done in a normative manner, what follows from these framings is an understanding of territory only in terms of its *usefulness*. This framing appears to be a contemporary manifestation of the ‘logic of improvement’ that has been an animating feature of settler colonial governance in Canada throughout history. While I discuss it in greater depth in the following chapter, it is important to note here that the logic connects to settler understandings of Indigenous peoples’ ‘advancement’ into settler modernity through skills development, particularly around agriculture and land-based trades. In this way, the framings continue to

mirror settler imaginaries in which land is there to be extracted from in support of the realization of human advancement.

What this misses is a sense of relationality. Neither Atleo's (2003) unity of Creation, nor Coulthard's (2014) grounded normativity from Chapter 1 are taken into account. While we cannot expect direct references, there is not even attention to the role land plays in traditional economies which persist today. I understand that each tool is designed to collect information deemed useful for the particular purpose at hand, and that the APS is not necessarily focused on understanding Indigenous cosmologies or lifeways but rather is intended to be useful for policymaking. However, because the APS is intended to offer the most comprehensive view of Indigenous peoples within Canada, the way in which land is framed in the Survey is noteworthy. In deciding that relational conceptions of land are made absent in the Survey—itsself an extension of the absence of particular forms of indigeneity from above—StatsCan is putting forward its own, settler understandings of land as universal, especially as there is no opportunity for non-settler understandings of land to be included. Indeed, these framings position land as an economic source, or in a negative light as a reason for absence from everyday life. This second framing in particular undermines Indigenous relational understandings of land by ignoring the importance of being on the land for Indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, the first framing as an economic resource reinforces the settler conception of land as property as this also is tied to economic productivity.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter has analyzed the APS through the lens of colonial politics of recognition, which operates in the context of settler colonialism's pursuit of the elimination of indigeneity as an alternative authority to settler sovereignty. In doing so I have outlined the way that this

recognition functions as (mis)recognition through which settler relations of power are established and maintained. Through maintaining these relations of power, the Canadian settler state continually (re)produce its own sovereign authority by producing Indigenous subjectivities which accord with settler frameworks, legitimizing its own modes and traditions of governance. This is done on a personal, human level, but also through the transformation of land into property, and the ignoring of Indigenous relations with the land. This is apparent in the APS, and through my analysis I have illustrated how the Government of Canada represents only some aspects of Indigenous life, notably those that fit within settler frameworks of liberal governance. To further expand on the way in which the (re)production of settler colonialism is made possible, I want to suggest that the framings contained in the APS also work to produce a colonial policymaking process, and do not just impact the sociopolitical relations of (mis)recognition outlined above.

Looking to the policymaking process in Canada, great emphasis has been placed on ‘evidence-based policy’ by the Trudeau government following the 2015 federal election.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the stated goal of the APS is to provide information for policymakers to access and use in writing policy for Indigenous peoples in Canada, thus making it a source of such ‘evidence’ or ‘policy knowledge’. Connecting this to the usefulness of demographic and statistical information to policymaking in this arena,<sup>51</sup> the knowledge produced through the APS has direct influence on the types of policy interventions which can be realized precisely because it builds the evidence for some policies over others. Further, the knowledge it produces frames the ways in which policymakers understand the existing reality of Indigenous communities, opening space – or indeed, creating an imperative – for some interventions, while closing off

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<sup>50</sup> For sources see: McCarthy (2015), and Smith (2015).

<sup>51</sup> For discussions on this see: Andersen (2014), Thompson (2016), and Wiebe (2016).

others. In this sense, in addition to the ways Andersen describes data as constitutive of identities, also allows for some stories to be told while obscuring others and thus also builds the types of imaginaries of possibility which drive policymaking.

Looking to the example of traditional activities above, if it is government that is relied upon to make policy around programming for traditional activities—or language renewal, among other areas identified by Indigenous communities as needing attention—the information used in this policymaking process can skew what is deemed necessary, or how the government should approach the question of cultural renewal. In this way those silences and omissions discussed above are carried over from the data itself to what is possible and necessary in policymaking, and ultimately what is funded and promoted through that policy.

Returning to the discussion of the role of governance from above, the question of omissions and the role they play in structuring continued settler colonial governance comes into sharp relief. As was outlined above, there is very little engagement with the question of traditional forms of governance within the APS. Understood through the frame of elimination and dispossession from Chapter 1, this is not simply an oversight. Rather, the omission speaks to the way in which Indigenous governance is made allowable only through the settler colonial imaginary – that is, primarily through the Band Council system for First Nations. By excluding participation in alternative forms of governance from being represented, the APS continues to reinforce the omission of Indigenous national forms of governance. This effectively ‘hides’ these systems from the knowledge of the colonial state. Importantly, it doesn’t entail an ignorance of them, as Canadian governments have moved to forcibly displace Indigenous governments with settler alternatives even into the twenty first century (Pasternak, 2017). However, by rendering Indigenous governance invisible in the most comprehensive view of Indigenous life in Canada,

policymakers cannot build the sorts of knowledges which inform policymaking on the issue. While not necessarily negative – indeed, ‘traditional,’ community-based and hereditary governance systems continue to be put into practice today, perhaps in part because they have been shielded from settler policymakers – it does limit the potential for engagement with these governments. If we are to move towards a decolonized future, it is imperative that settler policymakers have the skills and knowledges to engage with such community and nation-level governance, a possibility which does not appear to be envisaged by the current form of the APS.

In this sense then, the colonial framings within the APS are both *reflective* of colonial policymaking, but also *productive* of it. Indeed, if we take seriously government rhetoric around the importance of evidence in policymaking, the colonial understandings and knowledge produced through the APS restrict the possibility of policy being responsive to the actual needs and desires of communities. Rather, policy will continue to be written without a full picture, leading to continued colonial policy which responds to the settler imaginaries of Indigenous communities, not the communities themselves, as Andersen’s (2014: 30) discussion of Métis population as “administratively invisible” for over a century, makes clear. Such policy may result in ‘good governance’ from within settler frameworks—though even that has been sorely lacking from the Government of Canada. However, it also works to continually (re)produce settler colonialism by recreating the twin conditions of colonial assumptions of knowledge, and a wielding of settler authority, within which settler sovereignty has been created and has thrived.

## Chapter Four: ‘Armed with such knowledge’

The previous chapter used the Aboriginal People’s Survey to understand the ways in which (mis)recognition manifests in data collection tools. Using this case, I argued that policymakers’ reliance on the knowledge produced by these tools limits the ‘universe of policy possibilities’ to those actions comprehensible through settler frameworks. This chapter follows from the previous by picking up on the question of knowledge production, and the way in which the production and engagement of knowledge is entangled with the creation of colonialism. However, I shift the focus from the production of subjectivities to my case of what is today British Columbia (BC), centring world-making and Indigenous-settler relationships in an attempt to contextualize a deeper analysis of the organization and allocation of land in the next chapter. I begin by placing BC in the historical context of the British empire and what I describe below as an ‘imperial imaginary.’<sup>52</sup> The chapter then offers a view into the history of the territory that is today’s BC. I describe the territory as one in which a large number of nations lived, cultivated, governed and traded together, before discussing the arrival of Europeans into an existing web of relationships. My work in the chapter is twofold. First, the chapter outlines the ‘scientific’ ontology used to organize and enable ‘improvements’ (in the Lockean sense from the Introduction) of the territory. This ontology is in part a product of empire, and served to extend and deepen empire at the same time. Second, I argue against a static and binary view of settler colonialism, illustrating the changing nature of the relations of power on the territory through the lens of relationships.

As I discuss in greater detail below, late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century European existence in BC was primarily organized around the fur trade. This entailed deep engagements with

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<sup>52</sup> This refers back to the discussion in my Introduction. For more, see pages 13-17.

Indigenous nations—especially through the formation of trading networks—but not a strong imperative towards settlement in a way that would reify this imperial imaginary. The mid-19<sup>th</sup> century gold rush changed this. Instead of understanding the region as an area to extract trade goods from, it shifted to an area available to be settled. This process reified settler coloniality, including through the literal creation of two colonies on Vancouver Island and the mainland. From this point forward, there was a marked change in relationships with Indigenous nations to centre domination and dispossession, and marking the territory as empty through the imposition of the concept of *terra nullius*, and subsequently in need of improvement. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which this improvement was to be effected through settlement, and especially the way that allocation of land relied upon this ethic when settling what was known as the ‘Indian land question.’

Contextualizing the organization of land in BC this way offers a way to centre the question of land and relationships and the ways in which they are reified through land policy. In doing this, I am following Estes’ (2019: 147) words that settler colonialism manifests itself through “the centralization of the power of the federal government to imagine and enact theories of space through land policy.” Despite the constitutional differences between BC and Estes’ discussion of Ojibwe in the contemporary United States, a similar logic prevails in both. That is, the differences between the constitutional arrangements in authority over land use planning between Canada and the US are less impactful than that in both the authority of Indigenous nations is unrecognized and eroded by settler governments who then centralize that authority and jurisdiction within their own hands. Put differently, my analysis flows from an understanding that it is important to understand the impulses that motivate those responsible for this centralization. Prior to discussing land policy and allotment, I discuss the technologies employed



to make this centralization and extension of power possible—namely, cartography and the importance of science and categorization. I argue these technologies frame the way knowledge is understood and organized, and ultimately are used to reify settler colonialism by helping to make material the settler imaginary with its attendant relationships and relations of power.

### *Cartography and Legibility*

Crucial to this analysis is the contextualization of the time period in which these twin moves of centralization and extension of power took place. As I outlined in the opening of this chapter, the period under examination in this chapter runs from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> through to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This timing is important, as this period represents the height of European modernist framings of categorization, objectivity, science and territoriality—sets of assumptions that are central to the projects of knowledge production and governance discussed here. This means that they manifested themselves in the process of settler colonization much more concretely than they had in earlier waves of the formation of North America, where the imposition of scientific systematization of knowledge through settler framings remained quite contingent and less effectively organized (Greer, 2018).

Perhaps most central to the work of centralizing and extending authority is the importance of map-making and cartography to the process of settlement. Indeed, these were central to the allotment of reserves within BC as we will see below, and were also technologies used in other British processes of colonization such as in Aotearoa (New Zealand), Australia, India, and elsewhere (Denoon, 1983; Goettlich, 2019). In earlier periods of colonization, such as those during which contemporary North America would begin to be settled by European empires, cartography and navigation were just beginning to be understood as scientific practices (Greer 2018: 275-278). During this time of early settlement to the east, “the new spatial technologies of

cartography and navigation play[ed] an important part in enabling Europeans to travel to America and to begin laying claim to territory there” (Ibid, 283). As described by Greer (2018), the rise of scientific technologies such as navigation and cartography were central to the ‘early modern’ period of European intellectualism and helped establish the conditions within which colonial and imperial exploration was possible. However, at the same time, the promise of such a scientific moment was not to be fully realized, in part because of the lack of ‘sophistication,’ including on the part of the explorers and colonizers who were responsible for the implementation of these new sciences in everyday life (Ibid, 283-291). Indeed, while “the impulse to assert toponymic control was strong, the ability to enforce conformity was somewhat less impressive” (Ibid, 290).

Thus, while important to the story of colonization, in the early periods of the settlement of what is today North America, these new scientific practices and framings were not enough to enable colonization of their own accord. Indeed, Greer goes on to note the contingency of their implementation, and the way in which the production of ‘space’ in colonial landscapes in the early modern era remained incomplete (2018: 291-294). Put differently, in early periods of colonization we can see the privileging of the concrete over the abstract (cf: Goettlich, 2019), even while the understandings of the way in which territory is organized remain infused by Lockean understandings of human (ie. settler) centrality and transformation of landscape (cf. Thistle, 2015 & Wood, 1998, 2002). That is, from the early beginnings in areas east of the Rocky Mountains, settlement was understood as a process of ‘improving’ the land through human intervention to remake it in the image of agriculturally productive European territory, and useful for the building of European societies.

This was to be in sharp contrast to the way the new arrivals (mistakenly) understood Indigenous nations as ‘wasting’ their territory (Morrissey, 1997; Thistle, 2015) because they did not cultivate it in ways understandable through European framings. In the context of the time prior to the ‘colonial’ era in BC<sup>53</sup> this was slightly different. There, an extractive economy was favoured, with little imperative towards ongoing settlement outside of the creation of networked trade forts for collecting and exporting furs, fish, and other trade goods from Indigenous nations. This changed beginning in the late 1850s with the arrival of settlers seeking gold along the Fraser River. With their arrival came a shift in concentration towards settlement. Important to this shift was a change in the imaginary of the territory of what was finally British Columbia—an imaginary which was made possible by new scientific rationalities.

In making this argument I am extending the discussion of legibility from Chapter 3 to territory, in a manner similar to that which I did with regards to subjectivity in the previous chapter. Both fit within my broader argument that settler colonial relations of power fail to understand the ways in which all of creation is interconnected, choosing to set humanity in a relationship of authority over nature instead of the harmony oftentimes aimed at in the practicing of Indigenous relationships (Coulthard, 2015; Coyle, 2017; Simpson, 2011). Colonial British Columbia as a constituent part of the larger project of empire fits squarely within this argument. The very making of what would become the Canadian province of BC occurs contemporaneously with the rise of both new scientific practices and forms of knowledge—which I refer to as ‘technologies’—and territoriality establishes itself as central to the question of sovereignty and governance in the imperial (Goettlich, 2019; Greer, 2018). Settler colonies—inclusive here of both BC in the ‘colonial period’ as well as the Dominion of Canada—drew

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<sup>53</sup> This era is said to run from the creation of the two colonies by the Hudson’s Bay Company in the mid-1800s to BC’s incorporation into Confederation in 1871.

extensively on these technologies and understandings in establishing their jurisdiction and authority. Indeed, these two phenomena should be read as co-constitutive. The extension of settler authority was only possible because of the imposition of new forms of knowledge, and especially ‘scientific’ understandings of territorial organization framed through the political economic lens of a form of Pacific, agricultural settler capitalism (see: Denoon, 1983; Estes, 2019). At the same time, these new scientific practices of statecraft were refined and (seemingly) made more effective through their implementation in the colonies.

These new technologies enabled the settlers to render their imaginary of BC concrete. Indeed, with regards to settler imaginaries, BC occupied a special place within the British empire: Thistle (2015: 111-113) describes the way in which the ‘open’ rangeland in BC was imagined as a corollary to British parkland ranges. This gave early settlers (as well as colonial administrators within the HBC and government in London) the distinct impression that British agricultural practices were ideally suited for application to the ‘natural’ conditions in BC (Thistle 2015: 111).<sup>54</sup> While Wood (1998 & 2002) clearly describes the way in which British economies globally were centred on agricultural production and conceptions of Lockean improvement,<sup>55</sup> conditions in BC were viewed as enabling settlement in the direct image of the imperial power. To most effectively achieve this vision for BC, new technologies in the realm of colonization and agricultural sciences were put into practice. The application of new technologies developed within the empire had important impacts on the way in which settler colonialization proceeded in BC.

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<sup>54</sup> Of course, these conditions were anything but natural, and the open grassland that British settlers recognized as the same as their own built environments back in Britain were indeed also built and maintained by Indigenous nations in the region, especially through the use of periodic burning (Thistle 2015: 113).

<sup>55</sup> These were also identified by Wood as one of the origin points of the global capitalism.

The way in which sovereignty was being reimagined within the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century British Empire also played an important role in this shift. Namely, the imposition of a territorial view of sovereignty throughout the period (Greer, 2018). What I discuss in greater detail over the remainder of this chapter and the next is the way in which sovereignty shifted from being centred on individual ‘subjects’ to the acquisition, division and management of territory as illustrated by the case of BC. This focus on acquisition, division, and management of territory, as seen in BC, reflects the work of what Agnew (2017) describes as the ‘territorial state,’ that is, the way in which the legitimacy of sovereign authority is associated (in part) with control over a defined territory. This move towards territoriality was partly enabled by the rise of cartographic technologies making it more possible to govern and organize territory in part through what Goettlich (2019: 213) identifies as ‘rationalization’ or the process “by which forms of knowledge and order perceived as traditional, mystical, arbitrary or unclear were delegitimized in favour of those that seem rational...”. This is connected to the rise of a scientific mindset in the West of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, which built on categorization as the central impulse of knowledge production to render phenomena legible to society and the state as ‘objective’ data (Scott, 1998; see also Foucault, 2003; Shah, 2017). In the context of settler colonialism at the time this included organizing and calculating the ‘empty’ territory using cartography (Goeman, 2013), and then using this knowledge to provide specific, settler-organized, spaces on which Indigenous nations and communities were to live (Biolsi, 1995; Estes, 2019). These technologies were also applied widely in BC (Thistle, 2015), and the Pacific Northwest more broadly (Morrissey, 1997). In other words, identifying, categorizing, and quantifying phenomena became the key way of knowing the world, particularly territory. For territory, cartography was a way to make sense of space.

In the context of territory, this rationalization entailed ‘knowing’ the territory itself through techniques such as surveying, or in the case of BC, direct interrogation of those on the land. Upon interrogating those who inhabited the land, this knowledge was then transcribed into maps and data tables through a process of categorization. Those colonizing did this to make it possible for a centralized, colonial government to extend its ability to govern the new territory over which it was sovereign. Indeed, understood through settler understandings of waste and improvement, more than just making the land governable. In some respects, it made the land itself as this process of producing knowledge made it possible for the land to be interpolated into settler sovereignty. No longer was there to be the sort of ‘religious negotiation’ or accommodation between Indigenous nations and the rest of creation (Thistle, 2015). Instead, the manifestation of the settler imaginary on the territory that would become BC created a sort of Other out of the (allegedly wasted) natural world. Once this was done, processes of rationalization—central to which was the production of maps and other settler knowledge—enabled settlers to begin the remaking of the natural world in their own, idealized, image.

### *Indigenous Existence Pre-arrival*

Social imaginaries, and the governance systems that bring them into material existence, were not limited to Europeans at the time though. Prior to analyzing the way in which a settler imaginary was reified, it is important to identify the pre-existing imaginaries practiced on the territory that would become BC. Thus, I turn to the ways in which Indigenous nations not only related to their territories, but built and maintained complex relationships and governance practices. It is important to understand these so that the colonial imaginary and British territoriality can be put in context and understood as a particular juxtaposition.

Striking to those not acquainted with Indigenous existence (a statement which would seemingly cover both early and contemporary settlers, as both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Inquiry have pointed to in the 21<sup>st</sup> century) is the extent to which Indigenous life, prior to the arrival of Europeans, was based on the complex building and maintaining of relationships. This can be seen in a variety of ways. In particular, I would highlight the diplomatic and familial relations that were established between various nations. Such relationships, and Indigenous relationship-building more generally, have only been engaged with in a limited way as a form of international politics in the context of IR literature.<sup>56</sup> While this is in some ways an academic issue – and certainly one that highlights the continued colonial nature of academia more broadly – it also points to a broader effacement of Indigenous politics as political in the settler imaginary. As this text discusses in various ways, this ongoing effacement is not a new phenomenon; rather, my contribution lies in part by showing it has roots in the initial imagining of what is today British Columbia, and Canada more broadly.

This effacement ultimately provides the grounding for the eliminatory logic of settler colonialism. In the next two chapters I illustrate the way in which this effacement occurs in the context of territorial organization through a focus on the knowledge produced about the territory. Through these chapters, I show that, ironically, despite early settler reliance on Indigenous nations for shelter, food and other provisions (Barman, 2014; Mackie, 1997; Morrissey, 1997), early settler views of Indigenous peoples can be viewed as one of absence. That is, an absence of civilization, and thus political authority. Indeed, this assumption of absence is perhaps the core motivation of the Indian Residential School system (TRC, 2015), and is one of the central

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<sup>56</sup> Though, for examples see Beier (2009) and MacDonald (2019).

tenants of the *Doctrine of Discovery* on which settler claims to authority rest (Borrows, 1999; Macdonald, 2019). However, this assumption ignores the relationships that Indigenous nations hold with their territories, around which governance systems have been built. Further, I argue this focus on absence makes possible the formation of what has become today's BC by offering policymakers a justification for their decisions to dispossess Indigenous nations of their territory.

Central to the discussion is an understanding of the ways in which Indigenous nations existed on their yintah (territory) prior to European arrival. Developing this enables an understanding of the “foundational concepts and categories of political discourses” (Allan 2018: 4) which make up their cosmological ‘framings’ and understandings. Indeed, crucial to highlight first here is the building and maintaining of Indigenous relationships to territory and the non-human world. While these relationships are much-referred to in mystical terms, if we are to take seriously the existence of Indigenous systems of knowledge, we must begin from the place of Indigenous cosmology, and the relationships which underpin it. Whereas European cosmologies imagine Man as existing apart from, and authoritative over, the non-human world, broadly speaking, the Indigenous nations living in what became BC understood themselves as one aspect of Creation.<sup>57</sup> To them, Creation was at the apex of any hierarchy, not any of the individual groups that make it up. In this respect, the relationships and relations of power between Indigenous nations, land, and other elements of Creation<sup>58</sup> must allow each element to nourish and support the others. Framed slightly differently, Indigenous nations held relationships *with* the rest of Creation, rather than maintaining dominion *over* the rest of Creation. Not only did the land, water, animals, wind and weather enable the nations to live and survive, but it was also the nations’ own responsibility to support the survival of these other elements. Indeed, as we see

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<sup>57</sup> For a further discussion with respect to those communities in the region, see: Mills, 1994 & 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Including animals, plants, the wind, etc.



elsewhere in what has become North America (see: Estes, 2019; Simpson, 2017), Indigenous cosmologies do not build a separation between lands, waters and identity. In doing so, each element of Creation maintains its own subjectivity, and a place within the broader social imaginary.

Related to these relationships Indigenous nations held with their territories are relationships that nations hold with each other. When Europeans arrived both in Canada, and specifically for my purposes, within the Pacific Northwest, they arrived into a complex web of social and diplomatic relationships between families, clans and nations (Beier, 2009; King, 2017). Especially important for the development of the region, they also arrived into complex trade networks that spanned the continent.<sup>59</sup> The one I highlight here is what has become known as the ‘Grease Trail(s),’ a network of trade routes that connected coastal nations with the interior of the region and ultimately as far out as the Prairies (Personal observation, October 7, 2017); see also: Kwusen Research and Media, web; Mackinnon, 2015; Royal BC Museum, web; SFU Museum, web). The name comes from the trade of oolichan<sup>60</sup> fish and their oil, which was, and to an extent remains, highly prized for its nutritional value. One of the largest examples was the *Genim Sgeenix* which connected the Tsimshian with neighbouring nations such as the Gitksan and beyond, offering the Wet’suwet’en in the north and Tsilhqot’in through the interior access to crucial sources of food at the end of winter (Personal observation, October 7, 2017; Morin et al., 2011; Royal BC Museum, web).

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<sup>59</sup> A history of these trading networks is (far) beyond the scope of this project, however, for a more broad and accessible read on this, see Dunbar-Ortiz (2015).

<sup>60</sup> Also commonly written as ‘eulachon,’ depending on the spelling in local languages, the fish was a staple of diets in the region, especially the oil which was crucial to survival for many. See Chapter 5 for an illustration of its importance. My own use of oolichan reflects that spelling being used most widely in the region I visited.

In the story of settler colonialism, the grease trails are important not only because of their role in enabling Indigenous life in this region by bringing much-needed food annually. They also represent one of the first points of contact for white settler arrivals into the region, and serve as a point of departure for engagements and relationships between Indigenous and white peoples which helped to make possible the extension of settler coloniality. Indeed, it was one of the grease trails which brought Alexander Mackenzie to the Pacific Ocean around what is today Bella Coola in 1793, marking the completion of an overland route across the territory that would go on to become Canada (Mackinnon, 2015). Looking ahead, Mackinnon (2015: web) writes, “Many of the pathways went on to become pioneer roads and modern highways”, meaning ironically that white expansion and exploitation in the area literally followed the routes established by Indigenous nations over the course of generations before. Further, if we look outside of questions of white arrival and settlement, the grease trails highlight for us the sophistication of that life prior to the arrival of Europeans. That they were so long, and connected so many nations together through continual trade relations—relationships which persist up to the present day (Personal observation, October 7, 2017; Kwusen Research and Media, web)—illustrates both the depth and the breadth of governance on this territory. Much more than simple ‘savages’ living in a ‘state of nature’ who necessitated improvement by white arrivals, nations on this territory had built ongoing and complex economic relationships to ensure that they would have access to the goods and products they required at various times of the year.

While I have spoken directly to economic relations above, this complexity is further found in political relationships—both *of* and *between* nations—relationships which span a variety of issues, and continue to this day. Indeed, the question of relationships is also central to the way in which politics is practiced within the Pacific Northwest. As I further describe in the next chapter,

feast ceremonies are essential to Indigenous national governance in the area (see also: Grumet, 1975; Larsen, 2003; Mills, 1994; Mackie, 1997). It is through these ceremonies that the business of the nations was completed. In the case of the Wet'suwet'en from whom I learned on my first field trip for this project, this included the taking of names—and hence political positions within houses, clans and the nation—the division and re-organization of access to the nation's territory, the settling of disputes, and many more practices.<sup>61</sup> The feasts themselves were highly organized events, with individuals seated in accordance with their positions held within houses and clans, specific protocols for inviting and welcoming guests from other nations in a form of diplomatic practice, and a specific order of events during the ceremony. Indeed, feasts were such a central part of Indigenous life in the Pacific Northwest that they were deliberately banned by settlers seeking to undermine and destroy Indigenous modes of governance and lifeways. While the ban is widely known, I refer to it here as a way of highlighting its centrality: that it was important enough to be targeted as a part of the targeting of Indigenous lifeways is illustrative of its importance, as settler colonialism as a system is intentional in its elimination of indigeneity (Wolfe, 2006; Veracini, 2015).

Moreover, in addition to ceremony such as the feast, Indigenous governance was formalized through the construction of legal orders. To take the case of the Wet'suwet'en again, one of the central aspects of their legal order was a matrilineal system of territorial management, whereby access to territory was granted through a wife's or mother's family and clan, rather than being passed down patrilineal lines through one's father (Personal observation, October 8, 2017; Mills, 1994 & 2005). Despite access being given through matrilineal lines however, those given the responsibility of maintaining the territory, and ensuring the rightness of those relationships

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<sup>61</sup> For a much more in-depth discussion than is possible here, see Mills (1994 & 2005).

discussed above, were oftentimes men. As this brief description shows, even when looking at questions of access to territory, the ways in which this was to be realized and adjudicated are complex, with territory being the responsibility of (primarily) male heads of houses and clans, titles which were also primarily organized along matrilineal lines within these political units, but with access granted through a female line rather than passed down from man to son (Personal observation, October 8, 2017; Mills, 1994 & 2005). Of course, these rights to access and use territory were not always followed, at which point disputes would be taken to those to whom the territory belonged. Such disputes were settled according to the long-standing legal orders of the clan, with eagle down laid or distributed at the end of a decision to mark the finality of the judgement (Mills, 1994).<sup>62</sup>

One of the aspects that this section highlights is that whites seeking the famed Northwest Passage arrived in a world which was already international. Indigenous nations had organized themselves and their territories through building relationships both with other nations as well as with the non-human world. While I have focused on economic and political relationships above, Indigenous nations also came together for sporting events and recreation: for example, one of the grease trails (the Nuxalk-Carrier, regarding which nations still collaborate with each other on a knowledge-keeping initiative) had along it an area identified as being for horse racing amongst the nations (Kwusen Research and Media, web; for more on wild horses in the area see: Thistle, 2015). Taken together, both the imaginary and the lived world of Indigenous nations in the Pacific Northwest prior to the arrival of whites was a complex network of relationships which put in place sophisticated modes of governance and trade. These sustained the nations for

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<sup>62</sup> Eagle down is perhaps *the* central part of Wet'suwet'en legal tradition, with the laying of eagle down marking the resolution of a dispute or the end of any legal process, such as the taking on of a new name and position within the nation (Mills, 1994).

generations; without them, the whites who arrived in the region would not have survived their initial years on the territory either. This is to say that Indigenous national life at the time of engagement with white empire *was as complex* as that of the British, French and Americans who arrived and stayed on the territory. Rather than this being an attempt to place Indigenous nations on the same level of civilization as European empires, an understanding of the complexity illustrates the ways in which Indigenous imaginaries were already being practiced on the territory that would become British Columbia through the building of relationships and legal orders.

### *Fur Trade*

Into this complex set of interconnected Indigenous governments and relationships came the arrival of Europeans. Importantly, in setting the context for the construction of settler coloniality and the formation of BC, I am seeking to articulate here that the initial arrival of Europeans did not constitute *settlement*. By this I mean not only the initial ‘exploration’ of the western coast of what became Canada, but specifically I am referring to the first moves towards European existence on this territory which resulted from the extension of the fur trade beyond the Rocky Mountains. Instead, European existence in relation to the territory has been described as primarily ‘seaborne’ with only two forts established up until the time of the arrival of the major fur trading corporations of the British empire (Grumet, 1975). Even once the trading companies established themselves in the region, much of their imprint was contained in their own forts throughout the territory. Instead of establishing the many settlements which have now grown into the towns of today, early European existence relied upon entering existing trade networks among Indigenous nations, and fuelling the formation of new ones organized around meeting settler demand for furs and other materials.

In some respects then, the creation of white trading networks through BC both mirrored that of the rest of contemporary Canada, but also should be understood as separate from it in important ways. In terms of similarities, the trade was organized through the same companies that operated the trade out in eastern territories, notably both the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the Northwest Company (NWC).<sup>63</sup> This corporate extension ensured that the focus in the early days of white arrival on the shores of the Pacific Northwest region remained a fur economy, with beaver and sea otter being primary among the fur staples in early days (Barman, 2014; Grumet, 1975). This would later include red fox, squirrel, and others as the white traders' networks opened up past the coastal areas (Mackie, 1997). Moreover, with the arrival of eastern corporations came the arrival of individuals from the eastern territories. These settlers were among the first to establish an ongoing white presence as traders, administrators of the trading forts, and missionaries. This westward movement was especially important as it was French Canadiens (along with their English and Scottish administrators) who undertook the overland missions to the region, securing Anglo hegemony in the area in the face of earlier exploration by the Spanish and Russians (Barman 2014: 6).

Hegemony is a particularly important concept here, because it marks a crucial break between the way white arrival occurred in the Pacific Northwest and that of the eastern reaches of the continent. The eastern portion of the continent saw a division between those areas in which the United States was sovereign and those of the British Empire. While an imperfect division in the East—and one that would continue to be contested—the early 1800s in the Pacific

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<sup>63</sup> The HBC originally did not have a foothold on the Pacific, despite the desires by some of its officers (Mackie, 1997). However, when the two companies merged in 1821, the HBC took over operation of all of the NWC's forts and networks in the Pacific Northwest, expanding them beyond the point possible by the NWC.

Northwest saw joint control of the territory<sup>64</sup> by the two empires, American and British, “with a view to determining its permanent status at some future date” (Barman 2014: 53). This political situation known by two names, the Columbia District (British) or the Oregon Territory (US), meant that both American and British trading companies established ties to the region: the Pacific Fur Company (PFC) of John Jacob Astor competed with the NWC for furs in the region. While the PFC did not last long, effectively operating in the area for only two years from 1811-1813, its main trading centre, Fort Astoria found at the mouth of the Columbia River in present-day Oregon, was bought by the NWC and became the centre of its Pacific operations under the name Fort George. Indeed, the Fort would remain the centre of the European, corporate economy until the HBC constructed Fort Vancouver in 1825 (see: Barman, 2014; Mackie, 1997; Morrissey, 1997). Not just a matter of international corporate competition, the fur trade economy illustrates the degree to which the question of authority was unsettled between the two empires deep into a time in which the separation had effectively occurred in other parts of what was in the process of becoming North America.

Two other features of the Pacific Northwest experience stand out starkly from that of the eastern portion of the continent. First, while each coast’s economies were international by virtue of being embedded within empire, trade from the Pacific Northwest was explicitly oriented westward towards what is today Asia (Mackie, 1997)—an orientation which built a different international for the Pacific Northwest than the one which existed to the East. While these aspirations would not be fully realized, they began under the NWC as a way to undercut Russian commerce and establish networks with the East India Company (Mackie 1997: 8) and were

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<sup>64</sup> The two did indeed divide the day-to-day governance of the territory between them, with Britain taking the more northern section, and the United States taking the more southern territory. However, this sovereign distinction was not formalized until 1846 with the signing of the Oregon Treaty establishing the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as the official division between empires. For additional background see: Barman, 2007 & 2014; Morrissey, 1997.

continued with the companies' amalgamation as a part of what was seen as 'an ambitious geopolitical strategy' in the international policy of the British (Mackie 1997: xxi). A focus on different markets is mirrored by different products being produced in each. Separated into two districts by the NWC, the Pacific Northwest would produce not only the furs traditional of the trading networks in what would become Canada in the more northern, New Caledonia district, but also the salmon industry of the more southern and coastal Columbia district.

Enabled by the long and vast system of rivers and lakes that connected the province, settler economies were reliant upon the existing networks built by Indigenous nations described above to produce the furs, salmon, and other trade goods. Indeed, white fur traders spent much of their time in and around their trading forts (Barman, 2007; Mackie, 1997), with white settlement outside of these forts mostly concentrated in areas not far from them (see: Barman, 2014). This meant that the primary manifestation of white presence on the territory would remain intensive—that is, concentrated into the network of fur trading forts—rather than the extensive vision of Estes' settler colonialism (2019). Understanding white existence in the Pacific Northwest this way further highlights the different ways in which settler coloniality exists, and further pushes back against a static and all-encompassing view of the phenomenon. While this concentrated form of settler colonialism maintained a similar sort of legal fiction of authority and jurisdiction to those east of the Rockies through the granting of the territory to the HBC, widespread settlement itself was lacking. The encounter no doubt falls within the context of British empire, though the relations which underpin it are quite different than those which would come later.

What we do see is that despite the relationships brought into existence during the time of the fur trade differing from those enacted and practiced in 'colonial' British Columbia, some of the logics of settlement were being developed. Indeed, while much of the territory was looked



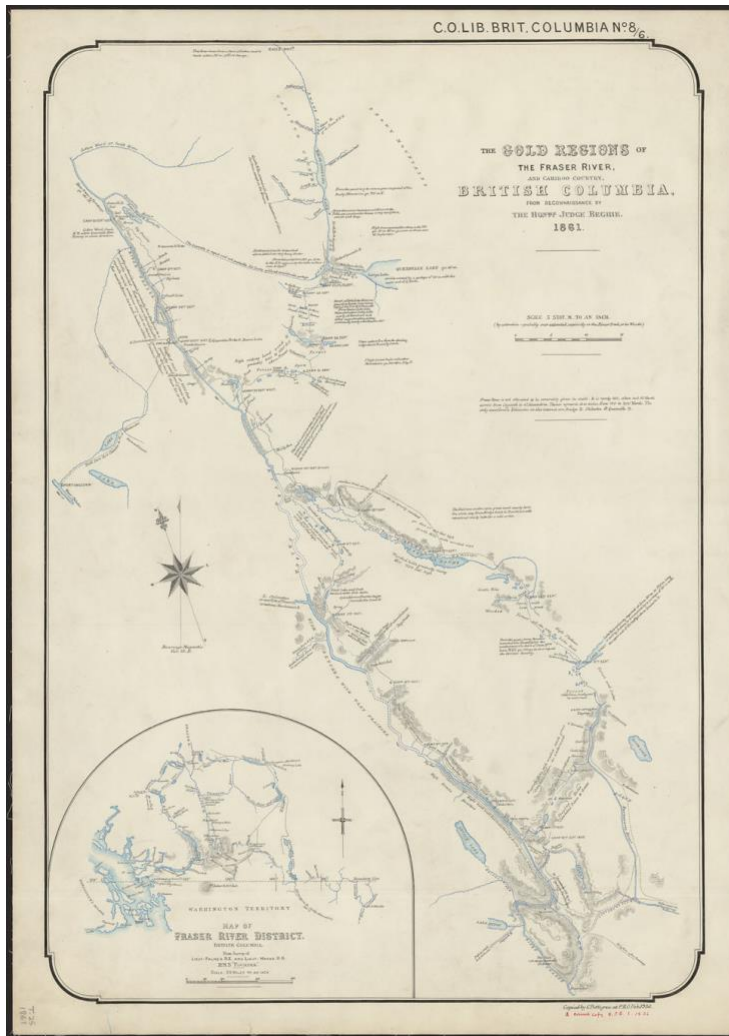
upon with a lens favouring an approach which put a premium not on the sustainability of settlements, but rather ability to extract trade resources, the network of forts which enabled this extraction continued to need to exist. While a cliché, it is true that in many areas this existence was based on access to Indigenous resources and provisions; however, while necessary, HBC policy was that forts be as self-sustaining as possible so as to make their operations less reliant on external forces<sup>65</sup> (Mackie 1997: 152) – in this case both Indigenous as well as ‘Foreign’ from elsewhere within the British trading world (Mackie 1997: 151-2). This being the case, in addition to sustaining the fur trade on the Western coast of what is today Canada, Fort Vancouver in the Columbia region was built with a logic of settlement and agricultural sustainability at its core. Indeed, the site itself was deliberately selected based on where would be beneficial for agriculture (Mackie 1997: 153). In this respect, the Columbia region can lay claim to being one of the most successful, as it has been described as "the finest farm anywhere in British fur trade territory" (Mackie 1997: 152), a truth which would help lead this to be the region in which many of those who built homesteads outside of the trading forts themselves would also call home (Barman, 2014; Morrissey, 1997).

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<sup>65</sup> This disavowal of external governance is a feature highlighted often by those who write about the region on either side of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel (see: Barman, 2007 & 2014; Morrissey, 1997). Indeed, the inward-looking impulse of many of the region’s long-time inhabitants (Morrissey, 1997) continues to this day in a way that shapes the region’s engagement with the two countries it is divided between.

## *Moving Towards Settlement*

Continuing my historical analysis, we see that this manifestation of settler coloniality would largely hold in the early half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: trading networks continued to sustain white existence on the territory, with (relatively) limited settlement outside of the trading forts. Indeed, the seeming stasis is reflected in the political status, where the Pacific Northwest remained under the authority of the HBC, with effectively ‘shared’ sovereignty between Britain and the US. On



*Map 1: Gold Rush regions of BC, 1961*

the ground, this was reflected in the region effectively operating as one unit, with new arrivals moving back and forth across the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel that would become the official border through the Oregon Treaty in 1849. The division of sovereignty did little to change the situation on the ground, however. Even after the agreement between the two empires, many would move back and forth across the border to build homes and lives, most notably in the area called the ‘Inland Empire’ which encompasses parts of present-day BC, Washington State, Oregon, Montana and Idaho (Morrissey 1997:

123-126). As Morrissey (1997: 124) quotes from a resident of the area around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

You could walk back and forwards across the line just as often as you wanted to... They did have an Immigration Officer there but he was just the kind of fellow that he never said anything to anybody when you went back and forwards just pretty much as you liked but the Immigration Officer knew who you was, where you were going and just about what you was going to do and if he wanted you, he knew just about where he could get you.

Clearly, the situation was tolerated by officials on either side of the border; however, it is in some ways this ease of passage within the Pacific Northwest that spurred the creation of British Columbia itself.

With the understanding that each ‘single moment’ marking a shift in historical events is contingent upon a series of previous moments and their interaction(s), I want to highlight the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush as a notable moment in building of what would become BC. Beginning in 1858 along the Fraser and Thompson rivers, the Gold Rush brought tens of thousands of new (primarily white) arrivals to the region of New Caledonia and spurred the founding of the Colony of British Columbia by the British in the same year (see Map 1 for an illustration of the areas sought by prospectors). It would amalgamate with the Colony of Vancouver Island (founded in 1849) in 1866 to create the united colony which would enter Canadian Confederation in 1871. It is this period, referred to as the ‘colonial period,’<sup>66</sup> that set the stage for conflict with the Dominion government over the ‘Indian land question.’ First though, it is important to understand the Gold Rush. Two of the defining features of the Gold Rush will be discussed briefly here: the number of new arrivals the event brought, and the shift

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<sup>66</sup> The irony in this naming is not lost, as the colonial period is identified in more traditional historical scholarship as ending with BC’s entry into Confederation in 1871 (Harris, 2002). The title is given in recognition of BC’s status as a colonial possession of London until it establishes its own self-government in the form of union with Canada; read through an Indigenous framing understanding colonialism to have ended in Canada does not fit the empirical reality.

in focus of an economic system premised on trade with existing Indigenous nations and networks to one requiring the dispossession of Indigenous nations from their territories.

The Fraser Canyon Gold Rush fits into a historical pattern of multiple other gold rushes along the West Coast of what is now North America. The most important for the discussion here is that of California, which was seen as responsible for establishing San Francisco, and California more broadly as a political jurisdiction (The Knickerbocker, 1858). The gold that built San Francisco would eventually begin to be depleted however, with many miners beginning to look elsewhere just at the time of gold being found in the area of Yale, encompassed today to the south by Hope and Boston Bar, and to the north around Quesnel and the historical reproduction of Barkerville. Given the conditions, many of those miners who no longer saw the opportunity to make their fortunes in California traveled north to new opportunities along the Fraser and Thompson (Gough, 1972). What this meant is not only the influx of thousands upon thousands of new white pioneers into New Caledonia (largely via Victoria), but that many of those who arrived were American (Mather, 2006).

In response, James Douglas, Governor of the colony of Vancouver Island, made the decision to extend his authority to the mainland. This was realized through the creation of the Colony of British Columbia out of what was New Caledonia in 1858, with Douglas as the Governor, and Richard Clement Moody as Lieutenant-Governor (see: Map 2). The move was aimed at maintaining Canadian (British) sovereignty over an area described as having become a ‘turbulent frontier’ through the arrival of large numbers of Americans (Edmonds, 2010; Gough, 1972). While the creation of the new colony gave greater authority over the territory to Douglas, Americans continued to arrive in an area that previously had only been inhabited by HBC traders and Indigenous nations (Mather, 2006).

Alongside the prospective miners arrived another group of people from south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel who would play a large role in changing the trajectory of settler coloniality in the (at this time) two colonies: cattle ranchers. Aware of the rush of miners in search of gold along the Fraser and Thompson rivers, the ranchers moved north from the Oregon Territory, motivated in part by the sense of ‘manifest destiny’ which drove their parents across the Oregon trail decades prior (Mather 2006: 17). More concretely than the American imaginary of manifest destiny however, the ranchers were also motivated by what they saw as open land and a new market for their beef in the arriving miners (Mather 2006: 18-19). Several successful first trips north from the Oregon Territory<sup>67</sup> combined with the already-existing small number of cattle at HBC forts in the region of New Caledonia<sup>68</sup> combined to show others that not only were the trips able to be completed, and that land was available in a region, but further that the endeavours would be successful. Ultimately, as Mather (2006: 24) writes, “the next 10 years [from 1858] would see a constant flow of cattle northward into British Columbia”, with ranchers moving to settle lands that they saw as open rangeland in need of improvement (Thistle, 2015).

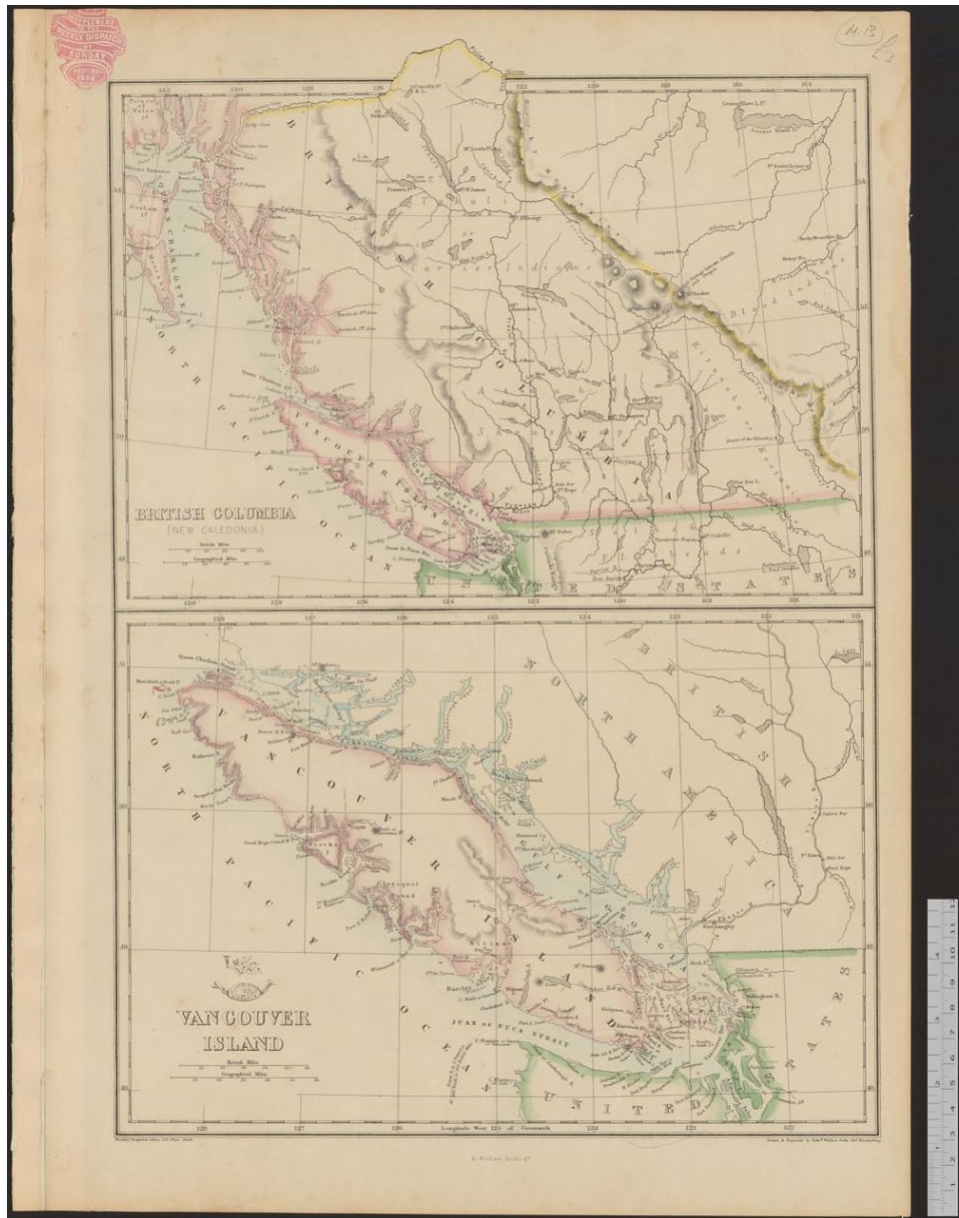
If we step back, the situation faced by the newly established region was thus: in the space of just a decade, New Caledonia went from an area inhabited nearly exclusively by Indigenous nations with only a few white fur traders, to one where tens of thousands of new (primarily white) arrivals had begun to establish themselves. On an economic and relational level, the situation went from one in which fur traders engaged with existing Indigenous economies and networks in a sort of logic of extraction, to one where Indigenous nations were beginning to be

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<sup>67</sup> Over the course of the trips, those traveling would come into constant contact with Indigenous nations. These encounters would oftentimes include resistance on the part of Indigenous nations to white movement into their lands (Morrissey, 1997). In order to get across, white settlers would oftentimes end up agreeing to some level of payment for the nations over whose territory they were crossing, after which they would be granted safe passage (Mather, 2006).

<sup>68</sup> Recall, from earlier, that HBC forts were to seek self-sufficiency (Mackie 1997: 150-152); those forts in the Fraser Canyon area of New Caledonia did so in part through the raising of cattle (Mather, 2006).

displaced by those new arrivals who were establishing themselves on their territories—some for the purposes of literal extractive economies, others as establishing ranches and homesteads. On a political level, the region went from being a largely ignored territory nominally under the authority of the British empire, to



Map 2: Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1858

one in which the British had begun to build out their colonial jurisdiction as a result of a large influx of Americans who were understood as threatening British authority.

This inter-connected series of events all came together when they did as a result of the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush. Not only does it make it a crucial moment in the history of BC, but I am also arguing that it marks a shift in the way in which settler coloniality was made manifest on

the territory. That is, the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush is important because it paved the way for settlement, and marked the most substantial incursion of whites into Indigenous territories to date. Territories which they would not leave, but rather would quickly build into grazing lands for cattle and other livestock, among all kinds of other agricultural production (Barman, 2007 & 2014; Mackie, 1997; Thistle, 2015). In doing so I want to suggest that the ‘colonial period’ in BC saw the mode of white existence on the territory shifted from one of extraction to one of settlement. With this shift came the arrival of ever-increasing numbers of *settlers* to Indigenous lands. This caused significant conflict, a situation which then prompted the colonial government to undertake a large-scale re-organization of territory in order to ‘open’ it for white settlement. It is the beginning of this process—one which would unfold over nearly 80 years, and which would never truly end with court decisions continuing to shape the distribution of jurisdiction today—that the rest of this chapter outlines.

### *Territorial Re-Organization: Trials and Tribulations*

In order to effectively settle BC, those in power recognized the need to answer the question that at the time was referred to as ‘the Indian land question’ (Harris, 2002). That is, despite colonial authorities having extended their legal authority over the territory, Indigenous nations continued to exist on their lands throughout much of soon-to-be province and colonial authorities felt a need to manage this. Much of this territory throughout the Interior (New Caledonia), and the Fraser Valley, was considered prime territory that needed to be made open to settlement for ranching and other agricultural activity. To provide safety, security, and to make legal moves to opening land for British settlement, Governor James Douglas initially sought to establish treaty relations with some of the nations in the model of those entered into across other parts of British

North America.<sup>69</sup> He began with the area that now makes up Victoria (now the provincial capital). However, despite early successes, treaty-making efforts were not sustained, and much of the rest of provincial territory was left without agreement between the nations who lived on the territory, and those settlers who sought to establish themselves on it. Consequently, ambiguity regarding the status of Indigenous rights to the territory of what would become the Province of British Columbia remained (Harris, 2002).

What is certain is that the land still needed to be made available for white settlement, which entailed removing Indigenous communities from their territories. As with the rest of former British North America,<sup>70</sup> officials determined that the creation of a system of reserves would most effectively open the territory for white settlement. Further, the logics at play in the creation of the reserve system in BC were reflective of those in the rest of Canada and British North America. Namely, as described by one of the early Commissioners responsible for setting the policy by which boundaries were to be established (Harris, 2002), “Not only was the land to be made open to settlement, but Indigenous nations on the territory were to be educated and civilized so that they may end up living among their ‘white brethren’” (Harris 2002: 101).

How were these reserves to be established? While there was already the established method of treaty-making across much of the rest of Canada, the lack of treaties in BC required a separate system through which to create reserves. This is not to say that reserves were not fixed by treaty at all, because of course some had originally been through the Douglas years of making treaties with the Indigenous nations referenced above; however, the question still remained open in much of the province.

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<sup>69</sup> For additional information, see: Barman, 2007; Edmonds, 2010; Mackie, 1997

<sup>70</sup> Comprising the territory in what is today Canada and the United States.



Exacerbating the tensions surrounding the Indian land question were the Provincial-Dominion tensions with respect to the settlement and management of lands. Like the rest of Canada, lands and their management remained under the authority of the Provincial government. Likewise, in entering Confederation the Government of BC transferred authority over issues relating to Indigenous peoples to the Dominion. In much of the country this was (relatively) unremarkable, as Indigenous communities had already been localized to reserves. This of course was not necessarily the case in BC due to the determined integration of Indigenous waged labour into the economy, and was to become a point of tension that was not settled in the eyes of governments until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, the issue in some respects remains a flashpoint across the province even today. According to Harris (2002: 73), much of this stems from article 13 of the terms of Confederation, which included an agreement that the Dominion government would pursue “a policy as liberal as that pursued by the British Columbia Government” including that only “tracts of land of such an extent as it has hitherto been the practice of the British Columbia Government to appropriate for that purpose” were to be set aside for Indigenous communities.<sup>71</sup> The problem, as Harris has documented (Ibid), is that Dominion officials had not yet made themselves aware of what BC’s policy with regard to the setting aside of reserve land was. Further, had there been a defined practice of the BC Government understood by the Dominion government, such an agreement would not have been an issue. Such was not the situation.<sup>72</sup> As a result, nearly 50 years of tension between the Dominion and Provincial governments would ensue.

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<sup>71</sup> See Article 13 of the Terms of Confederation.

<sup>72</sup> This is clearly outlined in a description of the issues dating from the first discussions of incorporating BC into Canada, which was sent to the Dominion government by Lieutenant Governor Trutch (1872).

The first volley tension came in 1872 when the Dominion government appointed Dr. I.W. Powell as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in BC. With the office came the mandate to fix reserve boundaries at various points within the province, a task made more difficult for having to cooperate with a Provincial government who sought to have the Lieutenant Governor be authorized to operate in the area of Indian affairs (Trutch, 1872). Ultimately, this first dispute was settled in favour of Powell, the Provincial government consistently undermined Powell's – and thus the Dominion government's – positions on matters pertaining to the fixing of reserves, from the acreage to be allotted to each family (in the eyes of the Province, 6 acres had been the standard pre-Confederation despite the Dominion determining a need for 80 acres), to the actual size of the family itself (again, 6 individuals in the eyes of the Province) (Harris 2002: 74-6). Because of these disagreements over authority and the amount of space to be set aside, Powell could not field survey teams until 1874. Even then, despite its 'generous' agreement to an allowance of 20 acres of land per 'Indian family', provincial obstruction continued apace.

Notably, despite provincial obstruction on the question of how much land to set aside, there was agreement (or at least an absence of dispute) between both governments as to the rationale for setting aside land for Indigenous communities. Read through the lens of Article 13, territory was to be set aside for Indigenous communities only in accordance with the *existing* practice of Victoria. In his memo to MacDonald (Trutch, 1872; emphasis mine), Trutch outlined what that practice was, and what the expectations of Victoria were as to the continuation of that policy:

Then, as to Indian policy I am fully satisfied that for the present the wisest course would be to continue the system which has prevailed hitherto, only providing increased means for educating the Indians, and generally improving their condition moral and physical. The Canadian system, as I understand it will hardly work here. We have never bought out any Indian claims to lands, nor do they expect we should, but *we reserve for their use and benefit from time to time tracts of sufficient extent to fulfill all their reasonable requirements for cultivation and grazing.*

Jurisdictional disagreements aside, what is crucial here is the final phrase, which identifies cultivation and grazing as the two criteria behind the allocation of Indigenous lands in BC. This means that the decision over how much land to allocate Indigenous communities (the 6 acres<sup>73</sup> and then 20 after Confederation) were to be based on whether the amount set aside was sufficient for families to realize the level of agriculture deemed necessary for the survival and improvement of the Indigenous community.

Because of the disagreements between the Dominion and the Province, it was agreed that a resolution to the question be undertaken jointly. The first coordinated attempt then came in 1876-1878 with the creation of the Joint Indian Reserve Commission (Joint Commission). While Harris (2002) has perhaps the most detailed description and discussion of the Joint Commission, there are some crucial points to briefly outline here. As discussed above, the Joint Commission arose out of a need to manage the Dominion-Provincial tensions stemming from differences over approaches to the division of territory between settlers and Indigenous nations. To this end, the Commission had three members: Alexander Caulfield Anderson representing the Dominion, Archibald McKinlay representing the province, and Gilbert Malcolm Sproat as the joint representative. While slightly different between the two, the sets of instructions given to the Commissioners were focused on completing the allocation of territory in such a way as to ‘raise up’ the Indigenous communities (Ibid, 100-101), reflecting prevailing British imperial understandings of the role of colonial rule at the time (Bell, 2007).<sup>74</sup> Reflecting attitudes at the

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<sup>73</sup> Of note, the amount able to be pre-empted by settlers was approximately 160 acres of land.

<sup>74</sup> The Dominion instructions to Anderson asked that he maintain focus on realizing his duty “to assist the Indians in their efforts to raise themselves in the social and moral scale, so that they may ultimately enjoy all the privileges and advantages which are enjoyed by their fellow white subjects” (footnote 79 on Harris 2002: 100). While more detailed with regards to explicit instructions regarding the size of reserves and the need to minimize the costs of the Joint Commission, provincial instructions to McKinlay and Sproat “were to assure the Indians that it had always been ‘the anxious desire of the Local Government to deal justly and reasonably with them, and to see them raised both morally and physically until they’” are on par with their ‘white brethren’, and that “every indulgence should be shown them compatible with the welfare and advancement of the rest of the community” (Ibid, 101).

time—including those animating logics of the Indian Residential School System (see: TRC, 2015)—this ultimately centred on the need to integrate Indigenous peoples into local economies through agriculture, waged labour, or specifically in the case of BC, the fishery and cannery economies of the coastal regions (Harris, 2002).

On the level of knowledge then, that which animated the division of territory intended to settle the Indian land question reflected settler conceptions of what a ‘civilized’ life entailed. In particular this included an understanding of the land and surrounding features of the landscape as resources to be drawn on, with decisions about territorial organization made in small part on the basis of ‘traditional sites’ (Harris 2002, 101-102)—though of course only those sites such as direct encampments and burial sites recognized by the Commissioners and their authorizing governments—and primarily on understanding the territory through the framing of its usefulness to realizing economic goals of agriculture and self-sustainability for the communities.<sup>75</sup> Notably, here we see the same historical attention to the focus on economy and ensuring that Indigenous communities were properly integrated into local, provincial—and more recently, national and international—markets that we continue to see reflected in contemporary iterations of the APS such as in Chapter 3. While the form may be different now—though not entirely when we look outside of the focus on oil and gas production and other extractive industries—the same logic animates settler policymaking, with that policymaking also being based on the same kinds of knowledges, though expanded for our contemporary understandings.

Between joint commissions there was a period where two men were ultimately responsible for much of the allotment of territory in the province – though, as I describe below this needed to

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<sup>75</sup> Indeed, the information underlying these determinations of levels of civilization were even done in a similar way, such as through the use of census-taking as a way of cataloguing the various traits of an Indigenous community. The process was so widespread that, while rudimentary, each attempt to settle the question of land allocation in BC included one individual charged with taking a census of the population.

be confirmed by two subsequent joint undertakings between the province and Dominion. These men were Sproat and O'Reilly, both Indian Land Commissioners, who were each responsible for answering the Indian land question between 1878 and 1898. While the two men would have an outsized impact on the distribution of territory in the province, they went about organizing the land in notably different ways. First, Sproat was kept on from his time on the initial Joint Commission, and maintained many of the same trappings of the Commission, including maintaining the census-taking (Harris 2002, 136-7). However, where Sproat's time as the sole Commissioner differed from that of his time as one of the Joint Commissioners, is that his approach shifted more markedly towards one that recognized Indigenous rights to land, with his allotment decisions reflecting this. Indeed, understood a certain way Sproat even prioritized Indigenous lifeways, including by attempting to allot land in such a way as to give nations "the lands that they wanted" (Ibid, 136). Moreover, Sproat was interested in moving past a reductive view of allotting land according to its potential for agriculture, and as he wrote during his time as Commissioner, and saw such a farming-centric approach as "too rough, summary, and leveling" (quoted on Harris 2002: 146). This represents a shift because despite some previous recognition of Indigenous fishing cultures, land was still organized according to its economic viability. Instead, Sproat at least comprehended that the land had some non-economic value for the nations and sought to be "attentive to Native ways" (Harris 2002: 147) in its distribution. This new approach also included an early belief in Indigenous self-government, with nations being capable of determining for themselves what decisions would be made (see: Ibid, 153-159).

Despite his more humane approach to allotment and recognition of Indigenous peoples' rights, the possibility for meaningful change in the regime of settler coloniality should not be oversold. As with his contemporaries, Sproat's approach to Indian administration continued to

maintain an understanding of the white man's civilizing mission at its core. Here Pike's (2018) description of Sproat's 'humanitarian civilizing' approach, is appropriate. That is, while seeking to vest more authority with Indigenous peoples so that they may govern themselves, they were still expected to make their lifeways conform with modernity and civilization as imagined by settlers. Even in Sproat—who at that time represented something of a sympathetic administrator—Indian policy was still aimed at ensuring Indigenous entry into a settler reality, rather than the coexistence imagined by many Indigenous communities.

Ultimately, even Sproat's limited expansion of Indigenous self-government and recognition of Indigenous rights in the process of land organization proved to be unacceptable to the provincial government, with the Dominion not pushing back in support of Sproat in his capacity as their official on the ground. The concern on the part of the provincial government came in large part because of the 'insecure' situation that Sproat was said to have enabled. This situation was the convening of Indigenous nations to advocate for themselves, a particularly notable example being that in Spuzzum described by Harris (2002). These meetings concerned settlers in the areas – who then pressured the provincial government – and were allegedly enabled by Sproat's granting of larger reserves to communities. This was said to allow for nations to come together, for events which would enable attacks on settlers and their territory in the area (Ibid). Clearly unacceptable to the provincial government, Sproat resigned in 1878. Sproat was replaced as Indian Lands Commissioner by O'Reilly, who reverted to previous understandings of land allotment, which emphasized allotting enough land for 'Native farming' or other industry such as waged labour and fisheries (Harris 2002: 172-173 & 182) while also limiting the amount of territory to minimize the threat from Indigenous nations. As Harris (2002)

notes, O'Reilly is responsible for the initial allotment of the largest portion of reserves in BC.<sup>76</sup> While the records available do not offer the possibility for in-depth analysis (because of his impact on the answer to the Indian land question) it is still important to highlight his approach. As mentioned above, O'Reilly emphasized allotting land according to economic viability and needs, this being his interpretation of the Dominion government's instructions that he "have special regard to the habits and pursuits of the Band, to the amount of territory in the country requested by it, as well as to the claims of white settlers (if any)" (quoted in Harris 2002: 171). In this context, he continued to centre the importance of improvement for Indigenous peoples. His vision of how this could occur was likely more expansive than many others of the time, inclusive as they were of fishing and waged labour (where nations lived closely enough to white settlements for this to be viable) in addition to agriculture (Harris, 2002; Thistle, 2015). Indeed, in allotting land O'Reilly also sought to ensure educational 'opportunities' for Indigenous peoples (Harris 2002: 182). Such views were very much in line with both provincial and Dominion perspectives on the purpose of Indian policy at the time (see: MacDonald, 2019; Harris, 2002; Thistle 2015; TRC, 2015), as outlined in the Bagot Report. This was centred on the twin aims of civilizing Indigenous nations and opening space for white settlement—including through force if necessary—or, as framed as in Chapter 1 of this text: assimilation and elimination.

This approach meant that O'Reilly oftentimes ignored Indigenous nations' existing patterns of use and relationships to the territory (Harris 2002: 184-5). For example, though he would set aside 'fishing reserves' for some communities in which this was appropriate, of course

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<sup>76</sup> While he allotted much of the territory, there are notable exceptions of large swathes of land, such as with what would become the Babine Agency in northern British Columbia. There was less of an emphasis on settling the question there, as there were few settlers establishing themselves in the area. Indeed, even today the region remains (relatively) sparsely populated in comparison to the south of the province.

this was never done as fulsomely as was being requested. He also went as far as to create agricultural land within communities who were not seeking farmland, as this was deemed to be the best way for Indigenous peoples to advance themselves (Ibid, 178)—while also enabling white settlement by sedentarizing Indigenous communities and formalizing their specific territory. In allotting land this way, O'Reilly reified this view of advancement through land policy, describing to Indigenous leaders the governments' view that "they wish you to have a central home where a school could be established" (O'Reilly quoted on Harris 2002: 187). Such a preoccupation with bringing Indigenous nations to white lifeways remained the central thrust of land allotment policy under O'Reilly, and indeed, should be seen as motivating the ultimate answer to the question of land allotment in British Columbia. However, such an approach was clearly not acceptable to Indigenous nations, who remained resolute in their opposition to the dividing up of their territory in the face of claims to title. This resistance took many forms, including not cooperating with governments and their agents, and open resistance that caused the governments enact military rule throughout territories (Harris 2002: 204-5). Though O'Reilly largely mapped out the question of land allotment in BC, it is difficult to say that he *settled* the question as organized Indigenous resistance only grew throughout the following years. Indeed, as I discuss in the next chapter more deeply, O'Reilly's organization of territory engendered such resistance and discomfort on the part of the province that another Royal Commission was ultimately seen as necessary to finalize the question of territory through BC.

### *Conclusion*

The settlement of BC came in waves. In this sense, as I argue above, settler coloniality as it manifests in BC should not be seen as an immutable fact, but rather as a shifting phenomenon put into practice in different ways at different times as a result of various pressures. These



include a dependency of new arrivals on already existing and relatively prosperous Indigenous nations, to the inclusion of whites into existing Indigenous trade networks. However, what holds this history together from an analytical standpoint are relationships: from those between Indigenous nations and their territories, to those (various) forms of relationships between Indigenous nations and white arrivals, to those of trade and imaginary that connect white arrivals in BC with the rest of the British empire, each work to structure the way in which settler colonialism was practiced in BC.

## Chapter Five: ‘Have they cultivation there?’

The history of land organization in BC has been centrally concerned with ensuring that territory is productive. As I described in the previous chapter, white settlers’ early engagement with territory was detached and focused on the extraction of furs and other resources that did not require a large-scale presence on the territory. Though, given BC’s embeddedness in the social imaginary of the British Empire, this would not last. Accordingly, we see a shift from a detached to a more rooted extractive impulse beginning with the Gold Rush. Over the course of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a more fully realized settlement of the territory, as agriculture (both cultivation and cattle raising) increasingly became a broader economic activity, decoupled from the self-sufficiency of the household—or trading fort. To continue to pursue this imperative towards settlement, governments turned to dispossessing Indigenous nations of their lands in order to open them for new arrivals.

In this context, the *Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia* (known as the McKenna-McBride Commission and hereafter referred to as such, or simply ‘the Commission’ in this chapter) falls into a familiar history. As I discuss below, the Commission joins the 1876-1878 Joint Indian Reserve Commission discussed in the previous chapter as another attempt at a joint resolution between the province and Dominion over the ‘Indian land question.’ This was a task not easily managed due to the disagreements between the two over how much land was to be set aside for Indigenous communities. Indeed, the McKenna-McBride Commission stands out not because it is markedly different in intent than previous attempts to resolve the outstanding question, but rather, because of its substance. While this would not be the final attempt at finalizing the distribution of territory in the province, it is in many respects the most complete. This is partly due to the fact that the Commission oversaw

perhaps the most extensive survey of the existing allotment in BC through its mandate to ‘reconsider’ the existing organization of territory and allotment of reserves (Privy Council Office, 1912). While all attempts to settle the question involved some level of documentation as to why decisions were made, this Commission offers the deepest existing record of its decision-making process.<sup>77</sup> Crucially for this project, the Commission’s records also include nearly all of the ‘technical’ information on which the commissioners based their decisions. This includes each of the historical reports, correspondences, and testimonies. These testimonies included those from Indigenous national leaders and others such as Indian Agents, municipal authorities, corporate representatives (especially of railway companies seeking access to territories), and individual citizens. This offers a deep well of empirical evidence, especially in terms of those representations on which the Commission’s decisions rested.

My analysis in this chapter draws upon this Commission’s archival data, juxtaposing it with more recent scholarship and testimony to highlight the discontinuities and chasms between the knowledge of the commissioners and that of Indigenous nations whose territories were being divided up for settlement by (primarily European) newcomers. I argue that the way in which these discontinuities exist in the Commission’s official evidence ultimately allowed for decisions to be made on the basis of evidence ignoring Indigenous knowledges and ways of being. This not only further deepens those discontinuities, but I argue that the understanding of ‘improvement’ outlined in the previous chapter frames those decisions about what territories are to be given to Indigenous communities. Basing decisions on these sets of knowledge then creates the need for

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<sup>77</sup> Here especially it is important to refer to the exemplary work of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. The organization’s library and archival workers have over the years compiled and organized an incredible volume of work on land claims cases, including nearly all of the official documents of the Commission. This project would have been made significantly more difficult without the work they have done. The documents are available online at: [https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/mckenna\\_mcbride\\_royal\\_commission](https://www.ubcic.bc.ca/mckenna_mcbride_royal_commission).

settler intervention into Indigenous life in order to raise it to being equal to that of settler life. Ultimately, by ignoring Indigenous knowledges and modes of governance, the Commission reified and deepened settler coloniality on the territory of what is today British Columbia through an organization of territory that was reflective of settler (mis)understandings about the relationships already existing on the territory.

To make this case, the chapter first describes the Commission and its work, then turns to the content of the knowledge produced and relied upon by the commissioners in their decision-making. This second portion is organized thematically. It begins with a broader view of what information was collected and the framings this reflects, then turns to the question of territorial boundaries, territorial organization and lines of authority and access, governance through ceremony, and finally, the relationships illustrated by the transcripts of the Commission. In each section I outline not only the slippages and discontinuities between the settler and Indigenous knowledges relied upon by the Commission to organize the territory, and also speak to what these discontinuities enable. In the context of this chapter these discontinuities illustrate the way in which the knowledges imposed through the reification of settler coloniality—consciously or not—dis-embedded Indigenous nations from their implication within the rest of Creation. That is, the instantiation of governance through settler framings disrupted Indigenous modes of governance premised on the interconnected relationships nations maintained. When connected with the imposition of governance systems such as Band Councils, this serves as the basis for the way in which settler colonialism manifests in the contemporary world.

### *A Forced Compromise: The Commission in Context*

The McKenna-McBride Commission was established because of the dissatisfaction that remained after O'Reilly, the previous Indian reserve commissioner, divided much of the territory

of BC between settlers and Indigenous communities in the previous attempt to settle the Indian land question. This dissatisfaction came to a head during the tenure of A.W. Vowell as Indian Reserve Commissioner, and was particularly felt by two parties: the provincial government, which viewed O'Reilly's allotment as too generous to Indigenous nations (Harris 2002: 216-217), and the nations themselves, who continued to demand better quality land (Thistle 2015: 51-52). The nations also organized to advocate for title to their land—understood by them to bring increased rights and authority on their territory—and greater access to, and protection for, water (Trutch, 1872; Harris 2002: 217). Both parties agitated for a change to the settlement more favourable to their own perspective. In particular, Indigenous nations worked closely together, building their own inter-national committees and associations to advocate more effectively. Reflecting the nations' understanding of their own sets of relationships within the British Empire—and the international encounters within empire discussed in the previous chapter—they even went so far as to organize a visit with the King in an attempt to deal directly with who they saw as their sovereign counterpart (Harris 2002: 217-218).

Within the next 20 years, the situation became untenable for the Dominion government. Indigenous nations continued to resist settler encroachment onto their territories, and settlers, anxious to gain access, produced a relatively steady stream of calls regarding what they described as unacceptable violence from the nations (Barman, 2007; Harris, 2002; Thistle, 2015). In what can be seen as a sort of forced compromise by the Dominion government, J.A.J. McKenna (a Special Commissioner appointed by the Department of Indian Affairs) was sent from Ottawa to BC in an attempt to finally answer the outstanding question once and for all. While in BC, McKenna negotiated an agreement for another joint commission with Richard McBride, the provincial premier at the time. The resulting Royal Commission on Indian Affairs

(the McKenna-McBride Commission), was intended to realize a ‘final adjustment’ of land allotment, with five Commissioners assigned the responsibility of recommending the ‘final adjustment’ regarding which lands were to be set aside for Indigenous communities throughout the province (Trutch, 1872).

The Commission ran from the middle of May 1913 to the end of June 1916, with one commissioner resigning and being replaced during its tenure. The work of the Commission ‘fully occupied’ its members (Progress Report No. 1, 141). Sittings lasted from 10am to 5pm each day of the week, save Sundays and holidays, while conducting business in Victoria. The commissioners also traveled to each of the regions of the province where they gathered evidence in the form of documents and testimony from Indian Agents, national representatives, implicated settlers, municipal and civic leaders, and others. In addition, the Commission also received and transmitted correspondences with many others, including corporate representatives of railroads and other areas of business who might be affected.

Two factors make the Commission an ideal object through which to illustrate the interconnection between territory, national imaginaries, and settler colonialism. First, as it was intended to be a ‘final’ solution to the problems of the division of territory within the province (vis-à-vis the Indigenous nations, at least), the Commission offers the most complete view into the question of what was known about the territorial division of BC—as the above discussion regarding its investigations illustrates. Second, in part flowing from the first factor, is the extensive record of evidence described in Chapter Two. As I outline below, the evidence produced by the Commission reflects European ideals of scientific practice described in the preceding chapter. Namely, the commissioners sought to systematize and standardize all the information they collected in a rationalized manner—a reading helpfully confirmed by the

commissioners themselves in the second Progress Report (151) and exemplified by the *Analysis of Evidence* tables analyzed below. This evidence also represents the information on which the Commission's decisions rested, and as such it is the primary object of focus for this chapter.

Described in greater detail in my methodological discussion in Chapter Two, my focus is on the evidence from the area encompassing what was at the time the Babine Agency, as defined by the Dominion Department of Indian Affairs. The Agency includes large portions of land in what is 'northern' BC, though geographically is closer to the western centre of the province, between what is today Prince Rupert to the West and Prince George to the East. The choice of the Babine Agency is deliberate insofar as in 1916 the Agency encompassed those territories on which the Wet'suwet'en live and continue to practice their own systems of authority (see: *Delgamuukw v British Columbia*; Midzain-Gobin, 2019; Mills, 1994 & 2005). They are also the lands to which I travelled as part of the research for this project, which offers me first-hand knowledge to bring to the text.

### *Knowing to Improve*

Focusing on the Commission's work in the Babine Agency means that the analysis offered here should not be taken as a generalized account of the dissonances between the settler knowledges mobilized by the commissioners, and the knowledge of the nations they encountered. Rather, while my analysis of the documents of the Commission from the rest of the province points to similar preoccupations and particularities in the focus of commissioners, my discussion here should be read as one centred on a specific colonial encounter. Other studies have done the work of analyzing more broadly the work of formalizing what is still a colonial British Columbia.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Harris' (2002) work of analyzing the imposition of reserves stands out here, and indeed, remains foundational for any study of colonialism in relation to the province.

My purpose here is a deeper analysis regarding what the commissioners knew—and what they sought to know—and how their ignorance of Indigenous modes of existence made space for the extension of (settler) colonialism by limiting the potential interventions to those that reified settler imaginaries and recreated settler relationships.

To begin my analysis, I begin with the report of the Babine Agency itself. One of the first parts of the report is a description of the Commission's visit to the Agency, including the condition of those nations in the region who met with the Commission. These descriptions are interesting in that they offer a view into the understandings commissioners both brought to, and resulting from, the Commission's time in the agency. In so doing, they also offer a view into the framings guiding the Commission's decision-making. To that end, the commissioners describe the 'period of transition' facing nations in the area thusly:

Old conditions governing their means of self-maintenance are changing; and while in times past they have looked upon fishing, hunting and trapping as their natural avocations and sources of livelihood, the time would appear to be comparatively near when farming and stock raising must necessarily replace the hereditary occupations of these Indians as their means of self-support. This fact has been recognized and taken cognizance of by the Commission, as also the generally inferior character of the available lands of the district, in adjusting, the areas of confirmed and allotted lands to the measure of the Indian requirements.

The description is worth considering in full, as the opening description of Indigenous self-determination prior to White settlement as 'self-maintenance' serves to undermine the legitimacy of national authority. Moreover, the description also undermines the possibility of Indigenous futurity and existence by understanding Indigenous nations as static, and unable to 'improve' in the Lockean way imagined as necessary by settlers. It de-politicizes Indigenous governance by using language similar to that which frames Indigenous rights and existence as cultural in nature, rather than political or economic in a similar manner to any other nation (see: Engle, 2010; Starblanket, 2019). This is meaningful not because Indigenous existence is not cultural; rather, because the framing reflects an understanding of the *mode* and *temporality* in which Indigenous



peoples exist—as a cultural community and not a contemporary political nation capable of continued existence and development into the future. Again then, we see the concept of improvement mobilized to enable the erasure of Indigenous ways of being and modes of governance. In doing so it makes the introduction and imposition of settler coloniality not only acceptable, but given the lower status accorded to Indigenous culture (see: Macdonald, 2019), necessary.

Clearly, this first line of the description carries significant depth, and detailed analysis unveils the way in which it reflects settler assumptions of the place of indigeneity in ‘modern’ and contemporary life. However, this line rests at the beginning of the report, and what follows in the information itself further illustrates these same settler understandings. Indeed, also important is the description of this ‘maintenance,’ identified as fishing, hunting and trapping. While not inaccurate in many respects, the description also omits the trading relationships built by the nations discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, the ‘comparatively near’ shift to ‘farming and stock raising’ is understood as an imperative (ie. ‘must necessarily’ occur), rather than as a decision forced upon the communities through the concretization of settlement in the area – both directly in the form of continued settlement of lands, but also by the general shift in context towards that of settler coloniality.

These assumptions of civilization – that is, improvement through the instantiation of an agricultural mode of production, education, Christianization, effectively a ‘making White’ of Indigenous peoples – follow through in into the reference tables for the report. Three tables, together labelled *Analysis of Evidence*, were included in the individual reports for each agency. Each set of tables sets out specific aspects of the evidence gathered and relied upon, and the format reflects those categorizing and quantification methods central to knowledge producing at

the time. Moreover, looking at the tables themselves offers insight into what information the commissioners saw as necessary for basing their decisions on, and then convincing policymakers in Victoria and Ottawa of the same. The tables each identify the tribe/band and the specific reserve visited (identified by title and number). Where the tables diverge is in what information each captures:

<b>Table</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Information Captured</b>
A	'Reference and General'	Occupation status
		Visitation date
		Acreage
		Acreage per capita
		General condition
		Community buildings
		Accessibility
		Value of the land
		Special
B	To describe physical conditions	"Character" of soil
		Proportion of land used (est.)
		Primary products
		Proportion of land timbered
		Quality of timber (grade)
		Animal stock
		Remarks
C	To describe population, social conditions, etc.	Total population
		Number of family members (categorized)
		Occupations of the family
		"Condition of the Indians"
		Educational facilities
		"Views of Indians" towards education
		Remarks

Table 1: Breakdown of information in McKenna-McBride Commission Report

As seen through Table 1's description of reported information, much of what was of interest to the Commission relates to the area given to communities as well as the specific circumstances of the land and those living on it. Particularly striking is the closeness with which the information collected corresponds to the imperative of improvement outlined above. Indeed, if the purpose of improvement is to effectively create the conditions in which indigeneity does

not exist, basing decision-making on the number of buildings and levels of cultivation, stock-raising, timber production, education, and ‘Condition of the Indians’ aligns with an understanding of improvement which privileges White settler lifeways.

The notations and information collected also align closely with the expectations of ‘improvement’ as reshaping the territory in settler images to promote agricultural settlement, mining, and the trappings of settler civilization that come along with them. The commissioners’ entries in the table make this clear. To draw on the example of the Wet’suwet’en community at Witsset (formerly Moricetown), the Commission described their ‘occupied’ territory as containing “Potential farmland, generally timbered” and “wooded” land of “Indifferent quality”, and containing only a Church. Their unoccupied lands had no buildings, and were comprised of “Fenced meadow”. From this, the community produced “Root crops, hay and vegetables”,<sup>79</sup> along with some timber from poplar and jackpine trees. Despite no mention of a fishing station or other fishing area, the chief occupations of the those in the community are described as “Hunting, trapping, fishing (for food supply), farming, freighting, packing”. These were understood to be lucrative as they led to a “Prosperous and progressive” community which seemingly viewed education in a positive light by seeking to send their children to nearby schools in order to learn industrial skills.

While I discuss the question of fishing in relation to Wet’suwet’en social and governance practices below, one aspect of its inclusion in the data tables is interesting to explore here. Looking to the data tables, we see no references to a fishing station in them, despite the community being identified as comprising hunters, trappers and fishers among their primary

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<sup>79</sup> Notable is the description of the character of the soil, in which the Indian Agent Loring’s land is described as “Fair” and “cultivable”, while in the same area Wet’suwet’en land is described as “Gravelly and poor”, leading to the question of who exactly was doing the producing of the vegetables and root crops, and if it was the Wet’suwet’en, just how much ‘improvement’ either the land or the community required.

occupations (see: Table C: Population, Social Conditions, Etc.). This disconnect here is worth highlighting, as it (in part) points to the imperfections and disjunctures that appear in the move from imaginary to produced knowledge. That is, this process of translation from what one understands, to what gets included in the systematized and concrete representation of that knowledge produces omissions even where the understandings informing both are consistent. It is possible that the understanding of improvement which underlies the collection of evidence is not expansive enough to include fishing as an occupation. However, in the same moment the commissioners found it to be a primary occupation of the Wet'suwet'en, and included it in their evidence for why they confirmed the reserve allocations in this area, begging the question of the rationale for its exclusion. More meaningful with relation to settler coloniality however is that the exclusion points to an ignorance of Wet'suwet'en relationships and governance practices. If these had been understood or taken seriously by the commissioners, they would have seen that the way in which the location of fishing sites are one of the ways in which the Wet'suwet'en divided their territory between clans so as to ensure that all had access to resources, and that the fish taken from these sites ends up nurturing not only the nation's members, but those connected to them through the trading networks described in the last chapter (fieldwork notes; Morin et al, 2011; Mills, 1994; Maxlaxlex in Mills, 2005). This alternative framing may have allowed the Commission to identify the community as 'traders' in addition to the other listed occupations above. Indeed, the transcripts of the Commission's visit to the area point to this having been brought up by Indigenous leaders (Royal Commission transcripts, 1915), though it was not included in the Commission's report.

A second step in this disconnect is that the designation of the Witset community as 'prosperous' and 'progressive' seems out of place with the descriptions of the primary

occupations as being those which are framed by community members as ‘traditional’ practices. Namely, the hunting and trapping activities by community members, which for generations served as seasonal ways of producing food (especially animal protein from larger game) and other goods such as leathers, etc. (Personal observation, October 9, 2017). These were useful within the community, but also in traditional trade networks discussed in the previous chapter. One explanation for their inclusion then might be that the activities were also recognizable to settlers as they had been relied upon during the fur trade economy. However, even if true, it also highlights the way in which settler and Indigenous (in this case, Wet’suwet’en) knowledge systems should not be seen as wholly incommensurable. While framings—and the interpretations which follow from them—may be different, Wet’suwet’en practices can still be seen as legible within the context of settler understandings.<sup>80</sup> Rather than a failing of either party, I believe this can instead be seen as a way in which shared recognition can reflect the influence relationships and ongoing connections can have on the mode of knowledge production. Moreover, it also offers the possibility of a path forward if relationships can be based on points of mutual comprehension.

Taking a broader view of the information in the reports, we can see that the reports themselves are organized very much in accordance with the framings of knowledge prevalent at the time. As I described in the previous chapter and above in this one, these framings are informed by assumptions of scientific rigour and the Commission ensured that “a scheme scientific analysis and tabulation of all information gleaned by the Commission...” would be completed (Progress Report 2, 151), illustrating an attention to the importance of objective,

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<sup>80</sup> Another example of this might be the setting aside of land identified as ‘graveyards’ by the Commission. Despite their mandate to set aside land primarily for the agricultural and pastoral use of Indigenous communities, the Commission repeatedly saw fit to set aside lands that were used as burial grounds, suggesting a shared recognition of the importance of these areas.

observable data reported in a quantitative format. It is precisely this framing that we see in the reference tables mentioned above. Rather than have qualitative data in the form of written paragraphs describing each community, the tables are standardized, with the same information being collected in each case, and presented in an easy-to-read format. Such a presentation of the data makes it more comparable across communities and nations and crucially, more easily legible and accessible for officials making the final determinations. Indeed, there is a reason I presented the data captured in precisely this form above as well. As I describe in greater detail throughout this chapter however, the combination of a hierarchical settler relations of power and logic of improvement ends up producing a set of knowledges that excludes Indigenous imaginaries. In doing so, it sets up a situation whereby ‘settlement’ and settler lifeways are assumed, including through the demarcation and organization of land that I turn to now.

### *Fixing Territorial Boundaries*

While these tables take up a large portion of the report, they do not comprise the whole report. In addition to the short qualitative description of the whole of the agency quoted above, the report also includes the Commission’s Minutes of Decision, which outline the decisions made by the commissioners with respect to what specific territories are to be set aside for Indigenous communities. In order to set these territories aside it is necessary to identify where they lie—that is, the *boundaries* of the land must be identified. These decisions are rendered in paragraph form instead of a table.<sup>81</sup> Despite the difference in form, the information contained within the reports remains straightforward and recognizable in relation to other government land records at the

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<sup>81</sup> Though, helpfully, the applications considered and decisions rendered in the Minutes of Decision are also available in table format in one of the documents which accompany the entirety of the report for the two governments. It is then only in the more detailed, agency-level report that the information is presented qualitatively.

time.<sup>82</sup> As an example I am here reproducing the decision concerning one of the Wet'suwet'en's application for new territory (Ibid, 208):

The Commission having under consideration Babine Agency Application No. 54, of the Hagwilget Tribe, Moricetown Band, for a certain tract or parcel of land containing an area of Six Hundred and Forty (640) acres, more or less, West of Coryatsaqua Indian Reserve No. 2, and described as follows, viz.: "Commencing at the North-west corner of Lot No. Twelve Hundred and Twenty-nine (1229), Cassiar Land District; thence West One (1) mile; thence South One (1) mile; thence East One (1) mile; and thence North One (1) mile to the place of commencement, for general Reserve purposes, it was

Ordered: That there be allowed under this Application and established and constituted a Reserve for the use and benefit of the applicant Hagwilget Tribe, Moricetown Band, that certain tract or parcel of land described in the Application, containing an area of Six Hundred and Forty (640) acres, more or less, subject to survey.

The above descriptions of the Commission regarding the lands to be added to the Wet'suwet'en's reserve are straightforward, and rely on points imposed on the territory by settlers to mark the boundaries of the new reserve territory. Indeed, the markers used to orient the boundaries of the territory (e.g. 'Lot No. Twelve Hundred and Twenty-nine') are not natural boundaries as would be a stream or mountain. Rather, they exist only because of settlers' need to map out the territory in ways legible to them. At times this is done by reference to the natural landscape—for example, the next record of decision in the report concerns Application No. 70 by the same community, which is described as "bounded...on the East by the Bulkley River" (O'Reilly, Pre-emption records, 208). However, many of the spaces given to the Wet'suwet'en are bordered by specific other lots portioned out in specific acreages and mapped out with specific linear boundaries reminiscent of land organization in other Anglosphere settler colonies such as Australia (Edmonds, 2010; Mar and Edmonds, 2010) the United States (Estes, 2018) and more broadly throughout the British empire (Goettlich, 2019). Indeed, where it would simply be too large a territory to be given to a single community, even those "unnumbered Lot[s]" (see:

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<sup>82</sup> These other records include the pre-emption forms settlers filled out to claim the 'empty' territory of the new lands.

O'Reilly, Pre-emption records, 208) adjacent to those territories requested are upheld as separate territory, despite not having been surveyed or pre-empted. While this is but one description, it matches in form – and content with respect to the underlying understanding of the way in which territory is organized – to the rest of the descriptions in the report for the Babine Agency and the other decisions of the Commission.

These descriptions also contrast sharply with the ways in which the Wet'suwet'en organize their territory. Instead of a linear organization characteristic of settler distribution of territory, the Wet'suwet'en have marked out their territories with natural divisions. Juxtaposed to the description by the Commission is Maxlalex's (Johnny David) description of Kilwoneetz territory,<sup>83</sup> which he gave in the evidence for the Delgamuukw trial (in Mills 2005: 339; italics in the original text):

*The Kilwoneetz area is between two mountain peaks, it's in a valley. McDonnell Lake, let's say this area, McDonnell Lake is in this area and there is a creek that runs through, and that is used as the boundary, and the area this side of the creek is Kilwoneetz area... [Upon being asked to name the mountains] The Hudson Bay Mountain and Dennis Mountain. It is between two mountains where the Kilwoneetz area is.*

Further, when asked to describe his own territory, Maxlalex identifies creeks, mountains and lakes as bounding the space over which he has rights (in Mills 2005: 132-133; italics in the original):

*There's a little mountain in behind Hudson Bay Mountain, on the west of Hudson Bay Mountain, and there's a lake. The name of it is Guksan Lake and that is where the boundary starts... the boundary [goes as far as the Telkwa River]...Below or above the McDonnell Lake area, in this direction, the Gitksan people own the territory and they have their own names for the rivers and the mountains.*

What I want to highlight in the above two quotes is the way in which Maxlalex understands the territory as being organized around, and bounded by, natural features rather than the straight lines of settler's maps (see: Map 3). This is not to say that settlers did not also use natural

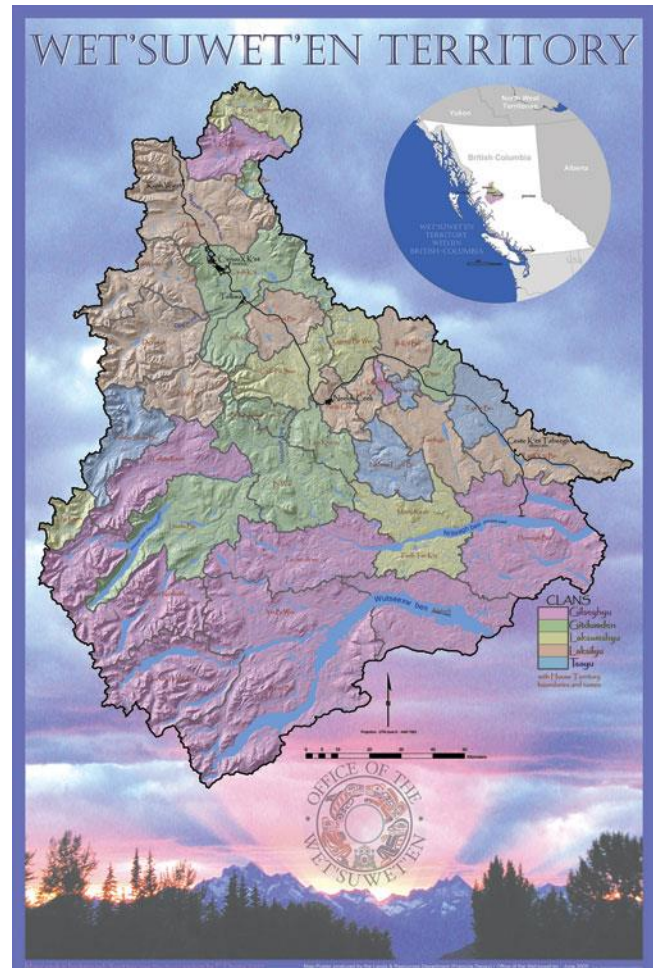
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<sup>83</sup> Kilwoneetz is Wet'suwet'en territory, though was also used by the Gitksan for salmon fishing; Maxlalex was being asked to describe this specific territory, which is adjacent to his own, at the time.





reflect not only technological differences with regards to mapping abilities, but also that settlers and the Wet'suwet'en maintain two different understandings of the spatialization of territory itself. Only one of these understandings was used in decision-making regarding which lands were to be set aside for Indigenous communities, and which were to be made open for settlers, however. By basing their decisions regarding land organization and the creation of the boundaries of property on this settler understanding of territorial spatialization, the Commission—and each government which has confirmed these decisions—produced a situation in which the underlying knowledge of the territory and its divisions interpellated the land into settler coloniality. While Wet'suwet'en spatial imaginaries continue to exist in a sort of overlapping relationship with those property boundaries reified by settlers, the existing relations of power has effectively turned Wet'suwet'en territory into settler property when viewed through a lens of the on-the-ground reality.



Map 4: Wet'suwet'en Territory from the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, n.d.

### *Imposing Patriarchal Imaginaries onto Matrilineal Realities*

This creation of settler property through the imposition of spatial imaginaries, rooted in divisions of territory foreign to Witsuwit'en understandings, reflects a broader undermining of Indigenous governance realized through the Commission. In arguing that the Commission's decisions reproduce the exclusion of Indigenous knowledges inherent in the enterprise of settlement, this chapter illustrates the interconnectedness of Indigenous lifeways. Towards this end, the division of territory has effects not only on the spatial imaginaries of the Wet'suwet'en, but also on the social organization and logics of governance. To illustrate this, I engage here with a 'jagged' collision of worldviews (Littlebear, 2000) between the matrilineal Wet'suwet'en land tenure system and patriarchal assumptions of settler governance.

In Table 1 above, I have described a portion of the information included as 'number of family members (categorized)'. To further break this down, Table C of the final report for the Babine Agency includes specific columns for each of "Heads of Families", "Youths over 18", "Widows", and "Orphans". This breakdown makes sense from the perspective of the government: families were oftentimes counted according to the 'heads' of households in documents such as censuses and other information-gathering systems (RDBN, 2012). Digging beneath the surface it becomes clear that 'heads of families' refers to male heads of households (Morrissey, 1997),<sup>84</sup> reflecting the patriarchal organization of society. This assumed social organization then in turn structures sets of knowledge regarding society. However, such background assumptions directly conflict with the matriarchal structure of the Wet'suwet'en. There is much to say regarding these structures, and for a more in-depth discussion of the social

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<sup>84</sup> Indeed also this is in part also clear through the inclusion of the 'widows' category, which is meant to capture those women whose husbands had passed away, both leaving them with children, or whose children were over the age of 18.

organization between families, houses and clans it is worth consulting Mills' extensive work (1994 & 2005) with the Wet'suwet'en. For the relevance for the present text, this familial shift is important for what it means for questions of territory and governance.

Embedded in the assumption of a patriarchal social organization is also an understanding of the way in which territory is to be assigned and divided, and given the mandate of the Commission, this would include the question of how much territory is to be set aside for each community. Recall that there were to be relatively standard amounts of land allotted on a per-family basis, and that changes to this allotment were to come as a result in the change in the number of families. If who is counted as the head of the family is different between settler authorities and the nation, then it is possible that the number of families may be counted differently – and thus the amount of land set aside for the community as a whole to differ between worldviews. Indeed, there is direct evidence of this difference in the transcripts themselves, where Commissioners are asked how many heads of households there were, and the numbers reported reflect the views of the Indian Agent Loring instead of the view of Indigenous representatives (Royal Commission, Interview with Loring, 1915).

Past the initial allotment, there is the question of inheritance of land, and the continuation of those territories being set aside as reserve land. These questions are not inconsequential, as there was much time spent during the *Delgamuukw* trial and appeals on questions of who had rights to which territories, with a profound gap in understanding between Crown and Wet'suwet'en authorities because of both the assumption, and the imposition of patriarchal social organization on the part of settler authorities.<sup>85</sup> On the settler side, we see the imposition

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<sup>85</sup> These issues included the registration of trap lines by settler authorities, who assumed a patrilineal passing of the rights of lines, where within Wet'suwet'en law these passed along matrilineal lines confusing attempts to establish rights to territory through the court process (Mills 2005: 29).

of systems of land ownership and rights being passed down along patrilineal lines, which Maxlalex (Johnny David) relates to settler lawyers through a story regarding the registration of trap lines by one member of the community. In the story, the member is given access for one year to a specific set of traplines which rest within a chief's jurisdiction in return for a favour during a time of starvation. Over the course of this time however, the lines were registered by the man's daughter with settler authorities, a move which conflicts with the matrilineal inheritance of territory (as well as Wet'suwet'en law regarding length of access). According to settler understanding, the daughter would not have rights over her father's territory (in Mills 2005: 29-30).

While this specific instance was settled between the parties—and indeed, the trapline registry was not brought into existence until after the conclusion of the Commission's work—the example is reflective of the broader settler social imaginary of the commissioners. Further, it reflects the knowledge they produced and used in making and communicating their decisions to other settler authorities. That this reflection offers an example of what Little Bear (2000) calls 'jagged worldviews colliding' is accurate, but more pertinent for this study is that this collision between matrilineal and patrilineal systems of territorial organization and access made possible the imposition of settler law and knowledge systems over Wet'suwet'en legal orders. In doing so it offers an example of the type of contestation over authority and jurisdiction Pasternak (2018) identifies as central to the spread of settler colonialism, as these encounters are oftentimes settled through reference to settler systems as authoritative. This particular contest is especially relevant in the case of the Wet'suwet'en, as initial rulings in the *Delgamuukw* case reflected the assumed authority not only of settler law, but of settler systems of knowledge,<sup>86</sup> in part through their

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<sup>86</sup> In the first ruling at the BC Supreme Court, Justice McEachern did not consider oral testimony of Wet'suwet'en elders, including Maxlalex's discussed here, as meeting the level required to constitute reliable testimony.

interpretation of patrilineal systems of land access and ownership rights. In doing so, the courts reinforced settler claims to authority, in part by recognizing patriarchal social and patrilineal territorial imaginaries over matrilineal rights enshrined within Wet'suwet'en law and modes of governance.

### *Ceremony as Governance*

Similar to the imposition of patriarchal assumptions regarding inheritance and land access reflecting the exclusion of matrilineal Wet'suwet'en social and territorial imaginaries, the imposition of settler economic imaginaries by the Commission similarly obscures Wet'suwet'en modes of governance. Here I highlight the question of fishing as it is particularly poignant in order to understand the gaps in knowledge reflected in the Commission's description of the Wet'suwet'en at Witset as 'Prosperous and progressive'. Notable is that the Commission describes the fishing activity of the Witsutwit'en as "for food supply". As with the occupations of hunting and trapping, this is not an incorrect description – the fish caught by the Wet'suwet'en was indeed caught for personal consumption – however, it is also incomplete.

The first thing left out of the description of Wet'suwet'en fishing practices is that their fishing could only be 'for food supply' because of *Indian Act* restrictions in place at the time. These outlined the specific forms of commerce available to Indians, and notably absent from those forms allowable is the commercial sale of fish, a provision which was extended to encompass even small-scale sales of fish in the form of an individual bringing their own personal catch to market (Personal observation, October 10 2017). It is fair to point out that this example does not extend to touch on a point of difference between Indigenous and settler knowledge. Indeed, even if the Commissioners were not aware of this prohibition—and there is no clear evidence either way—that Dominion officials would have been. Regardless, this one example

should not be extended out to illustrate a generalizable series of policy implications due to the disconnect between Indigenous and settler knowledges. However, this example can be taken to illustrate the way in which the report, like any other, should not be accepted as the sum total of knowledge regarding a specific situation.

More revealing is the way in which the description of fishing as being ‘for food supply’ *does* demonstrate a revealing ‘lack’ with respect to the understanding of Indigenous lifeways, relationships, culture and governance. In this discussion, it is crucial to remember the way in which Indigenous communities (broadly) relate to their territories. While this changes with each, it can be described as a question of maintaining a ‘relationship of rightness’ (Coyle, 2017; see also, Coulthard, 2014 and Stark, 2017). While not explicitly outlined in those terms during my visit, a similar sentiment exists for the Wet’suwet’en wherein the relationship between the Wet’suwet’en is not one of national ownership of, or authority over, their territory. Rather, as described to me during my fieldwork, the Wet’suwet’en are both responsible for, but also *responsible to* the land and those other, non-human beings which inhabit it (Personal observation, October 9 2017; see also, Mills, 1994 & 2005). Indeed, it is this understanding of the relationship with territory and the non-human world animating the nightly offering of food and prayer to “all our relations” prior to mealtimes, which is intended to give back and nourish the land, waters and other beings in the way that they nourish and protect the Wet’suwet’en (Personal observation, October 8, 2017). Those knowledgeable within the community explained that the prayer reflects the nation’s broader understanding of its relationship to the land and other beings, and the need to be attentive to the needs of others and work to maintain that balance. Understood through this lens, the description of the fishing as a practice in food production

captures neither the cultural context, nor the cosmological vision of the relationship between the Wet'suwet'en and their territory.

It is not just a question of culture and cosmovision that is missed in the Commission's report of the Wet'suwet'en, however. In addition to these, I argue that settler colonialism's reproduction hinges in part on the erasure of what I have called *indigeneity*. This broader term encompasses not only culture and the way of being in relation within the world, but also, crucially, modes of governance. Here fishing also plays a part, because for the Wet'suwet'en, fishing has historically played an important part in their trading networks, which connected nations from the coast through to the prairies, as well as their modes of governance which centred on the feast ceremonies (potlatch). It is also important to recognize that these networks and modes of governance are not only historical phenomena which have been replaced by more 'modern' practices; rather, they continue to be practiced and maintained today.

As Mills (1994) outlines, at the centre of Wet'suwet'en governance for generations has been the feast, a situation that continues today with 'traditional' business still completed through the ceremony. Indeed, despite *Indian Act* regulations having forced Band Council systems of government on the nation, important business is still done through feasts, and historical systems of government continue to be practiced.<sup>87</sup> These events are central to Wet'suwet'en life, and bring together not only each of the clans and houses of the nation, but also representatives from surrounding nations, such as the Gitksan and others. There is a defined seating arrangement at each of the feasts: clans are arranged in a pattern determined by which is hosting, with chiefs and other important representatives present occupying central seats. More than just an opportunity to

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<sup>87</sup> This has of course set up tensions between settler-imposed Band Council governments (ie. the Wet'suwet'en council and traditional hereditary chief councils. As I have engaged with elsewhere in the context of recent oil and gas development, this division is a central feature of settler governance, and must be deconstructed if we are to move towards a meaningful vision of decolonization (Budd & Midzain-Gobin, 2019).



bring together the nation, feasts continue to play an ongoing role as the place “where issues can be openly and officially discussed” (Mills 2005: 39). In this respect, feasts play a role similar to a court of law in settler society: “As in any court of law—and as in Witsuwit’ en potlatches—strong words [are] uttered” (*Ibid*, 63).

Potlatch hold a greater role in Wet’suwet’ en life than do courts of law in settler society. They represent the ceremony during which business of the nation is completed, perhaps more akin to a combination of court, parliament, and registrar. The activities undertaken during, and which are only possible through, potlatch encompass all aspects of decision-making for the Wet’suwet’ en. When asked about a time during which territory was transferred between individual chiefs, Maxlaxlex described the transfer thusly: “*He was given probably at the feast. I wasn’t there but everything is done according to our Indian law. If it is done according to Indian law, is it given at the feast? Yes, it was announced at a feast*” (in Mills 2005: 103). Similarly, names<sup>88</sup> were only taken on through the potlatch ceremony, and even then, only when the recipient (and their clan) had given enough to have earned the honour. In the case of Johnny David, to take on Maxlaxlex, he and the clan put on three feasts, giving gifts and commissioning the trappings of the role (such as button blankets, and specifically, the position’s totem). He and the clan did so throughout this period to the point that it was only with the conclusion of the third feast that David was given the name Maxlaxlex (in Mills 2005: 105). Another example of governance practices taking place through ceremony includes the Delgamuukw case, which while much of the planning was completed outside of the direct participation by members of the nation, decisions were only formalized at feasts with the laying of eagle down (Mills, 1994 &

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<sup>88</sup> For the Wet’suwet’ en, names were not necessarily markers of an individual, but represented positions within the community. For example, specific names were maintained for those at difference positions within the chiefly and clan hierarchies. As such, along with names and positions came access to, and responsibility for, specific territories. Here I use ‘name’ and ‘position’ interchangeably.

2005). While the case of *Delgamuukw* is more recent than the McKenna-McBride Commission's report, the practice dates back generations, and survived despite the ban on potlatch lasting from 1885 to 1951. The ban may play a small part in explaining some of the reason for the absence of Wet'suwet'en governance tradition with respect to its 'food supply'—indeed, would we expect a joint Commission established by two governments to contextualize the ongoing political significance of an act with ties to illegal activity?

Despite maintaining quasi-judicial powers enough to summon witnesses and compel documents (Privy Council Office, 1912), the Commission itself was not set up to investigate Indigenous nations breaking settler laws. However, the ban cannot explain all of the ignorance of Indigenous national politics and governance, either historically, or especially since Sect. 149 of the *Indian Act* was repealed to allow potlatch again. Instead, I want to suggest that the ignorance of Indigenous practices of governance is a deliberate move wrapped up in the eliminatory logic of settler colonialism. In this case, this can be seen in the way that the documents of the Commission centre settler knowledges, which (deliberately or not) exclude the myriad of ways that Indigenous national relationships exist, are enacted and maintained in the world. Whether or not these exclusions are deliberate on the part of the knowledge system, there is ample evidence presented in this text, but also elsewhere (see: Macdonald, 2019; TRC, 2015; MMIWG, 2019) of the settler view of Indigenous peoples as less than, and not fully human. As a result, settlers could feel the need for Indigenous peoples and their systems of knowledge and politics to be eliminated, and replaced with civilization in the image of Whiteness (British and northern/western European). The residential school system and the ongoing genocide against Indigenous women and girls are two aspects of this (TRC, 2015; MMIWG, 2019). On the level of political orders, the eliminatory move of forcing Indigenous nations to govern themselves

through the Band Council system is another. Examples of Indigenous nations and peoples re-establishing, renewing, or otherwise implementing their own governance protocols while asserting their own authority and jurisdiction do exist. However, cases such as the Camp, the Haida Nation's enforcement of its own jurisdiction, or the Tsilhqot'in Nation's system of mushroom harvesting permits,<sup>89</sup> largely provoke retaliatory responses from settler governments, and are maintained through the sustained efforts in the face of these responses.

Within reference to BC land allotment specifically, Harris (2002) and others (see, for example: Thistle, 2015) have extensively documented the fear and concern expressed by government officials at both the prospect and practice of nations coming together in an organized fashion to demand their own positions be considered. In response, there is a long history of Dominion and provincial governments undermining the rebuilding of relationships between nations both proactively and reactively. Indeed, while they listened to organizations such as the Allied Tribes which came together as a direct result of land allotment, governments continue to control who could and could not speak for and represent the nations, and ultimately sought to impose their own visions of governance towards improvement. Initiated through military force (see: Harris 2002: 204), or through the selection of legal representation for Indigenous communities by the government itself, what this tells me is that there is a recognition that Indigenous modes of governance exist, but that the solution is not to engage and work together, but to close off the possibility of Indigenous-centric modes of governance prevailing (even amongst Indigenous nations) in the territory that became BC.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> These examples, and more, can be found in the Yellowhead Institute's Red Paper: Land Back (Pasternak & King, 2019).

<sup>90</sup> This is not to say that they would have necessarily become dominant either. In reading through the history of what has become not only British Columbia, but also Canada more generally, we see not only an acceptance that White customs and ways of life were here to stay, but a willingness of Indigenous nations to learn about and incorporate those aspects which make the most sense for them. One example of this is the area of education, where nations are quick to demand better educational services for their youth. Even in the wake of the genocidal impact of the Indian

This critique of erasure is not necessarily a new one, and here I am certainly building on the work of other scholars before me who have also offered critiques of the erasure of Indigenous peoples by settler colonialism. We have even seen, as is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, more recent moves towards the acceptance of Indigenous peoples as having a ‘place at the table’ when it comes to governance and decision-making processes. However, there remains a fundamental gap in knowledge. Even in these critiques and new calls and initiatives to more fully include Indigenous nations in decision-making, we can see an inclusion of Indigenous peoples as a cultural group. What I am suggesting instead here is that these framings of the impacts of settler colonialism are not enough (see: Engle, 2011; Povinelli, 2002; Starblanket, 2019). Instead, we need to take seriously the continued existence of Indigenous cosmovisions, and the governance practices as seen in ceremony which have been built around them. Analyzing questions of governance in this way leads us to see the ways in which an understanding of Indigenous modes of governance remain lacking, both in the academic and policy-centric realms.

While the inclusion of Indigenous nations as cultural beings is important, equally so is the engagement with them through the framing of national *politics*. Insofar as Indigenous governance is framed as a cultural concern, the misrecognition remains and the breadth of possible policy interventions shrinks dramatically. Even in situations where policymakers mean well, an unintentional ignorance can still lead to a reproduction of the types of relationships and knowledges which reinforce the imperative for colonial policymaking. If we can instead

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Residential School system, there has been a continual emphasis on the importance of education within Indigenous communities, with the imperative that this education reflect Indigenous knowledge and relationships. Initiatives in this line are finally beginning to take hold, and there remains great promise in these initiatives supporting youth who end up pushing forward with decolonial initiatives. In this way, we can see the creativity and resourcefulness in Indigenous communities, wherein they are taking structures which still remain fundamentally colonial, and working to transform them to better serve their own needs.

incorporate Indigenous knowledges (including politics) into policy decisions, the possibility of opening space for the pursuit of decolonial policy begins to present itself.

### *Transcribing Relationships*

For this new form of policymaking to be possible, relationships are crucial. Especially important is de-centring the sorts of hierarchical and colonial relationships we see the Commission relied upon in its gathering of information on the then-present situation in BC. Following from the central claim of this dissertation, the information contained in the reports does not simply exist; rather, it was produced through a process informed by the imaginaries and understandings of those that gathered it. In the case of the Commission, the information reflects understandings of improvement and civilization circulating within not only the province and Dominion, but also more broadly throughout the British empire. Regarding the information's origins, the transcripts of the Commission's visits to the regions offer a view into the questions asked, and who asked them. In doing so the transcripts illustrate the type of relationships practiced within the context of the Commission, as well as the understandings brought by both the Commissioners as well as those national representatives they are interviewing. Compiled by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, the transcripts are deep illustrations of the commissioners' focus on questions of cultivation and the trappings of 'civilization.' Relatedly, they can illustrate the way in which authority was practiced in the production of knowledge: despite collecting testimony from Indigenous representatives (see: Progress Reports No. 1, No. 2 and No. 4 especially for references to these meetings), the meetings at which this is done retain two features. The first is that they are led by the Commissioners, with questions from Indigenous nations regarding land rights and other issues largely dismissed by saying it will be brought back to Ottawa or that it is outside of the scope of the Commission's mandate (Royal Commission, Babine Testimony,

1915). Second, when the testimony is compared against the information compiled and presented by the Commission, it becomes clear that the source of much of what they knew were the appointed Indian agents and other, non-Indigenous witnesses.<sup>91</sup>

Turning to the testimony gathered by the Commissioners, and the reports produced both for them as well as by them to justify their decisions. The testimony itself is illuminating because the Commissioners were tasked with confirming or cutting off the reserves already allotted, with their decision-making to be in line with historical precedents, that is, based on the needs of communities defined in terms of agricultural and grazing land (Privy Council Office, 1912). As a result, the common thread in the questions posed by the commissioners cuts directly to this focus. As an example, here is the back-and-forth exchange typical of those from Commission visits to communities:

*MR. COMMISSIONER CARMICHAEL (Q) TO HAGWILGET BAND CHIEF CHARLES (A)*<sup>92</sup>

*...[discussion of previous land matters]*

*A. Yes; and the second thing is about the schools – we want to learn something – that is one thing we want to get from the Government. From Fraser Lake to here and Kitimat and Babine, this used to belong to us people before; now all the white people they all have it covered up, and all thes [sic] hunting grounds is just the same as a bank where we have our money; and all these little lakes where we used to get out fish, it is just the same as a kitchen box where we put our food. I want this place to be as big as you can make it so that we can make out living.*

*Q. You are the Chief of the Hagwilget Band?*

*A. Yes.*

*Q. Do you know the acreage of that reserve (examining map)?*

*...*

*Q. How many people are there on your reserve?*

*A. Five hundred.*

*Q. How many families are there on the reserve?*

*A. Sometimes ten in a whole family.*

*Q. But how many families are there on the reserve?*

*At this point, Felix George (A) is called and sworn:*

*Q. Do you know, Felix, how many families there are on the reserve?*

*A. We don't know.*

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<sup>91</sup> Thistle (2015) finds the same as well with reference to rangeland through the Okanagan and the Interior regions of the province.

<sup>92</sup> Royal Commission, Babine Testimony, 1915: 35-37

*Q. How many houses are there on the reserve?*

*A. Twenty-six houses.*

*Q. Well how could 500 people live in 26 houses?*

*A. There are only 26 houses because this reserve is not big enough, so when they come home in the summer time they live outside the reserve, in tents.*

...

*Q. How many heads of cattle have they?*

*A. We haven't got any cattle because we have no place to keep them. We have two or three or four or five horses and we have to give those to some of the white farmers so that they will feed them during the winter, because we have no place to feed them here. We want to keep a little more animals but we have no feed for them and some of our animals are dead because we have no money to feed our animals with.*

*Q. Have you any pigs?*

*A. No.*

*Q. You were speaking about schools, how many children are there old enough to go to school, say between 8 and 16, in this reserve here?*

*A. Our Indian Agent knows that.*

*Q. You say you are very crowded on this reserve and therefore you have got much land under cultivation – Now how much land have you under cultivation on this reserve?*

*A. A man who has money in his pocket can do it, but we have no money to work out land with and we cannot do it. When the Government built the road only the white people got work, and when we go out hunting all the white people are hunting there, so how may we make money to cultivate our land?*

*Q. And is that the reason you have no land here under cultivation?*

*A. Yes.*

*Q. Have you any timber on the reserve at all?*

*A. We burned it all and as soon as we go outside the line we are chased off by white men.*

*Q. But have you any timber on the reserve at all?*

What comes out through the transcripts then is a sort of slippage between settler ontologies of territory and life framed through the lens of improvement and cultivation of a fixed plot of land, and the situation(s) on the ground in the communities they are encountering. This is vividly illustrated by the repeated questioning from multiple Commissioners who throughout the transcripts ask the question ‘have they cultivation there?’ (Royal Commission, Babine Testimony, 1915), or in this case “Now how much land have you under cultivation...? or “But have you any timber...?” As I have outlined here and in the previous chapter, the settler focus on questions of cultivation of a particular form mistakes Indigenous lifeways as effectively less intentional. Indeed, as we have seen above, the knowledge of territory, way of life, and context brought by Indigenous nations is much deeper than a question of how many heads of cattle are

on a specific reserve, the amount of timber, or in other cases, the quality of the soil (Royal Commission, Babine Testimony, 1915).

It is not that Indigenous nations did not produce their own food and other staples for sustenance, but rather that the context for it was wholly different than what is legible within settler frameworks of ‘improvement’ and ‘cultivation’. What the knowledge produced through a settler ontology misses are the ways in which nations are embedded within relationships. Because of this information being missed the social, political, economic and cosmological context remains absent from the commissioners’ questions.<sup>93</sup> In some respects, the slippage is perhaps understandable given that none of the commissioners were experts – or even knowledgeable – in Indigenous communities at the outset of the Commission’s work (Harris 2002: 232-233). What this ‘ignorance’ (Ibid, 233) meant though, is that instead of engaging deeply with Indigenous knowledge and framings of what they knew about territory, the Commissioners instead relied upon the sort of quantifiable and measurable data that settlers across the colonial world relied upon in order to understand the landscapes over which they claimed dominion. In doing so the commissioners reinforced the existing views of Indigenous nations as lesser than settler civilization. When such empirical evidence was brought to this existing context, it created the imperative to civilize. This is the same imperative identified by the TRC as having led to the formation of the genocidal residential school system (TRC, 2015). When connected to the dominant relations of power then, the result was a genocidal system that

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<sup>93</sup> This can be seen in some other instances as well. Notably, cemeteries and burial plots were set aside for Indigenous nations. However, this was done in the context of the Christianization and missionary efforts involved in colonization, rather than with an understanding of national spiritualities which have been maintained for generations and continue to come into conflict with Canadian law and decision-making, with the conflict at Oka in the early 1990s and the Ktunaxa Nation’s recent loss at the Supreme Court of Canada.



largely aimed at teaching Indigenous children farming and agricultural practices to have them achieve this level of civilization (TRC, 2015; Macdonald, 2019).

What I am arguing here is that at its core, this structure of settler colonialism has been built on a particular view of relationships enacted throughout history. Settler frameworks view the relationship between both Man and territory, and settlers and Indigenous nations, as hierarchical. Land is there to be used in service to mankind, who is in turn responsible for its ‘improvement.’ In the minds of settlers who assumed authority, this meant cultivation. The same can be said for Indigenous nations, who were viewed as being in need of civilization by White settlers, so that they too might cultivate and improve the land. These relationships are illustrated by the transcripts, as in addition to asking about levels of cultivation, the commissioners repeatedly ask Indian agents, missionaries, and sometimes Indigenous leaders, about the educational and spiritual needs of those nations for whom they have been made responsible.

This is perhaps unsurprising, as it accords easily with the conceptual framework of elimination and assimilation I outlined in the first chapter, and also the rest of the more popular received history of colonization as a mode of erasure of Indigenous culture. What rests more uneasily with this reading are some of the responses from Indigenous national representatives to the questions of the commissioners. Instead of conforming to what might be expected given a reading of Indigenous lifeways discussed throughout this text, national representatives answered the questions relatively directly, rather than dismissing or contesting the settler framings:

*MR COMMISSIONER MACDOWALL [Q] TO TYEE LAKE ABRAHAM [A]:*

*Q. Can you show me the piece of land that you want?*

*A. He points it out on the map as being Lot 795, marked “a, b, c, d”.*

*Q. What buildings have you on this piece of land?*

*A. My father has a smokehouse on it, two living houses, and there are three graves on it.*

*Q. Have you a fence around it?*

*A. No.*

*Q. What do you use it for?*

*A. My father uses it for hunting—I was born and raised there.*

...

*Q. Do you grow anything on it?*

*A. No, because I thought it belonged to someone.*

*Q. Who told you that it might belong to some one?*

*A. No one told me; I just thought it might belong to some one.*

...

*[in reference to another plot of land, Lot 1196, marked “E”]*

*Q. Is it fenced?*

*A. My fence runs on both sides of the road all around.*

*Q. What do you grow there?*

*A. Oats and timothy.*

*Q. Have you any cattle there?*

*A. I have 5.*

What this passage<sup>94</sup> illustrates is the way in which Indigenous representatives ultimately made their answers conform to the norms of settler questioning. This may seem strange: why, if Indigenous nations maintained their own ontologies and frameworks (and insisted upon their own authority), might they also accede to the settler framings brought by the commissioners? Harris (2002: 231) has referred to a strategic calculus by national leaders—that is, the leaders did so as a way of being heard. However, when framed through the lens of relationships my own analysis is that the transcripts illustrate Indigenous attempts at building a shared future with settlers.

One of the things that becomes clear in reading the history of Indigenous-settler relations within BC is a marked difference from the rest of Canada with respect to proximity. That is, Indigenous individuals moved in and out of settler society quite freely (if also somewhat uneasily) in BC. This was in part an economic feature, as integrating Indigenous peoples into the system of wage labour was seen as necessary and positive for all involved, but can also be seen in many other aspects of life (Edmonds, 2010; Harris, 2002; Mills, 2005; Morrissey, 1997). This is not to say that this did not happen in other parts of the country, as Mohawk iron workers throughout what is

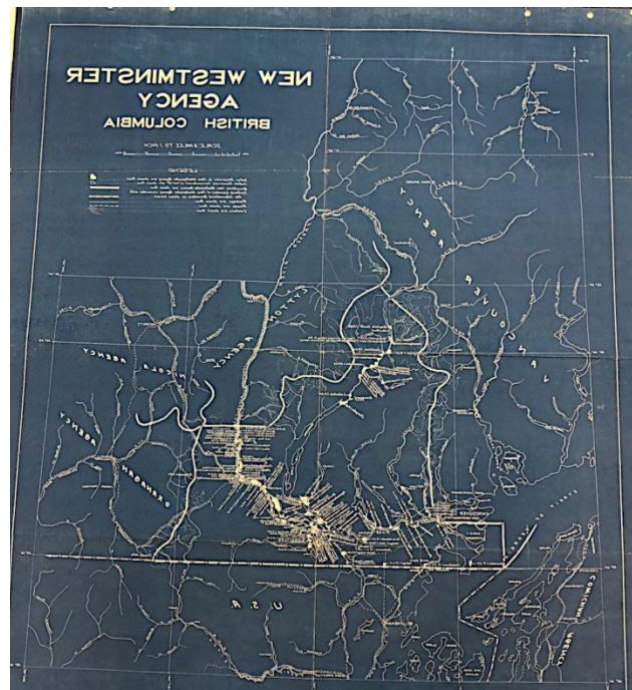
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<sup>94</sup> Royal Commission, Babine Testimony, 1915: 64-67

now Ontario, Quebec and the US state of New York illustrate. However, even the maps of the Commission illustrate that reserves and Indigenous communities co-exist with settler communities, with both sharing much of the same land through highly populated areas such as the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island (See Map 5 for example).

More than just a description of the distribution of populations over territory, what this proximity means is that indigeneity was present in a meaningful way. This is also reflected in the attention paid to the integration of individuals from Indigenous nations into the wage labour economy.<sup>95</sup> What I want to suggest here is that in understanding the arrival of White settlers as a more permanent event, Indigenous leaders sought to build a shared future with settler populations. Indeed, following the logic of Beier (2009) and King (2017), their engagement in the Commission itself can be read as a form of diplomatic relationship-building with settler authorities. Not merely a space to try to get access to territory from an accepted authority figure, this framing suggests that the visits of the Commission to Indigenous communities can instead be viewed as opportunities for the work of co-constituting a shared future to be done.

Crucially, this shared future was not imagined as one organized through a settler relations of power. Instead, the use of settler framings at the hearings of the Commission can be read as an attempt at engaging a sort of



Map 5: New Westminster Agency, 1916

<sup>95</sup> In addition to references within the transcripts, the integration of Indigenous individuals into the wage labour economy in BC is discussed in: Barman, 2007; Harris, 2002; Mills, 2005; Morrissey, 1997.

common language to allow for coherence in building this shared future. Here I would align with Harris' (2002) reading of the use of language as strategic,<sup>96</sup> while also emphasizing that the ultimate goal was for Indigenous nations to maintain their own self-determination and authority while also seeking to incorporate new technologies into their own modes of life. Their insistence on their own rights to their territory—and that discussions of the setting of reserves be based on those authorities—attests to their view of a co-equal relationship, rather than a hierarchical one. This need not take the form of two, completely separate entities, as Bruyneel's (2007) reading of a 'third space' of sovereignty illustrates the possibility for the co-existence of Indigenous authority and self-determination alongside settler authority, allowing individuals to travel between the two worlds while remaining within a single shared physical space.

What this reading also offers is a dynamic view of Indigenous nations. That is, instead of insisting that what have been described (including throughout the present text) as 'Indigenous lifeways' remain static and unchanging, the requests for farming equipment and education from Indigenous leaders in the transcripts attest to an interest in increasing their communities' capacities. Indeed, this sharing of technologies such as new agricultural techniques and equipment could, if implemented differently, be an illustration of the co-constitution of a shared future. However, settler assumptions of their own jurisdiction and civilization, and their insistence of the Indigenous lack thereof due to Indigenous 'savagery,' closed off this possibility. In this respect, the transcripts are illustrative of the dynamic at the heart of my central argument: through them we can see the collision of two different visions and understandings of the world, with Indigenous nations attempting to engage and work together towards a mutual and beneficial

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<sup>96</sup> However, as I make clear, I move past his own reading of the meaning of the Commission's engagements with Indigenous nations in reading them as illustrative of a broader building of relationships, and focus less here on questions of focused resistance at the hearings themselves.

relationship while settler conceptions of the hierarchical relations of power eliminate the possibility of alternative sources of authority.

In making this argument I am not suggesting that Indigenous leaders were unaware of the assumption of authority and jurisdiction on the part of settlers, or operations of a relations of power. We cannot read Indigenous nations and their leaders as naïve without falling into the same trap of civilizational fitness at the heart of the colonial imperative towards improvement. However, the insistence on their own rights and authority over their territory in the hearings of the Commission can be paired with their organizing work of the nations, including through the Allied Tribes of BC and other organizations—work that revolved around demands for recognition of their rights to territory. When read together, I argue that this represents a continued insistence on their own authority in the context of this shared future, instead of an acceptance of the legitimacy of the paternalistic hierarchical relationship settlers sought to impose. This is further evidenced by the planned trip to London to speak with the Crown itself as their partner.

Looking back to the transcripts, despite using the language of the commissioners, the meaning given to its use by Indigenous national representatives carries a much different weight. When viewed through the lens of a dynamic Indigeneity, I suggest the use of settler language in the transcripts show Indigenous nations seeking to engage with settlers. That is, they are working to both build relationships with settlers, while also insisting on the maintaining of their own authority and jurisdiction.<sup>97</sup> It is this willingness to live together while still maintaining their own authority that shows the mutual engagement at the heart of such a co-constituted possible future.

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<sup>97</sup> In this respect this mirrors the way Inuit leaders have referred to their use of English and the creation of new terms in Inuktitut during the course of the negotiation of the Nunavut land claims agreement. The leaders have spoken of how the language they had did not capture the meanings presented during the negotiations, and thus, in order to move forward together, they needed to adapt their own language (see: Clarida Fry, 2008).

In so doing, the requests for assistance and farm implements by national representatives represent them seeking to use the newly-available technologies to support their own communities. A generous reading of the actions that followed would see them as resulting from a miscommunication of this attempt to build a shared future; one more attuned to the logics of assimilation and elimination that drive settler colonial governance would interpret this slippage as deliberate exclusion. Regardless of the interpretation of intent however, the ignorance on the part of settler authorities—when connected to imaginaries of improvement—has helped to produce the conditions of exclusion from which our ‘settler colonial present’ (Veracini, 2015) has been built.

### *Conclusion*

As one of the most comprehensive and systematic decision-making processes regarding land organization within what is today Canada, the Commission represents an ideal object from which to analyze the collection and use of knowledge in policymaking. Read in relation to existing framings and understandings, the data relied upon by the commissioners aligns closely with imperial conceptions of ‘improvement’ and ‘civilization.’ This framing makes sense from a settler perspective on scientific calculation, but ignores Indigenous nations’ modes of life, relationships, governance and economies. Moreover, the transcripts of the testimony from the Commission show these notions of improvement through cultivation and integration of Indigenous peoples into settler lifeways to be the over-riding focus of the commissioners—even where these encounters illustrate Indigenous representatives seeking to build a shared future. The practicing of the relationship in this particular, hierarchical way ultimately works to minimize the universe of policy possibilities (Taylor, 2018) and shape interventions towards those aimed at

bringing about improvement as reflected in the statistical achievement of Indigenous nations and communities on scales set by settlers.

If we accept the framing of the ‘Indian land question’ as posed by the Dominion and provincial governments, the Commission was narrowly focused on the question of the allotment of territory. However, this framing misses the ways in which territory is embedded in Indigenous cosmologies and modes of governance, as I have shown here with reference to the Wet’suwet’en. Doing so erases Indigenous knowledges and relationships which had shaped the territory well before the arrival of Whites, let alone their settlement of the area that is now BC, a process which is at the core of the continual reproduction of settler colonialism.

These past two chapters have taken a historical approach to analyzing this process. The next moves the analysis into the present day by offering an analysis of contemporary land use policy in BC and the survey tools by which the federal government ‘knows’ Indigenous populations. In doing so it connects the logics underpinning these policies and tools to the historical imperatives towards improvement and civilization.

## Chapter Six: ‘A definite relationship exists’

The previous chapter examined the McKenna-McBride Commission, and highlighted the way the commissioner’s decisions regarding land allotment in British Columbia (BC) reflect an imperative towards ‘improvement.’ In doing, I argued that Indigenous existence itself remains unrecognized within settler framings, especially insofar as Indigenous ways of being cannot be neatly separated into frames legible to those creating the conditions for settler sovereignty. This chapter picks up from the previous chapter by focusing on present day manifestations of this phenomenon. In the previous chapters, I explained the way early settlers built relationships with Indigenous nations on the basis of economics. First, these centred on enabling trade, in particular the fur trade early in BC’s history. This was then followed by a shift in the relationship as a result of the coming together the settler state in BC. The process enabled the reification of the doctrine of *terra nullius*, which was undertaken through the organized instantiation of settler land-grabbing, in particular for the purposes of ranching. Overall, the previous chapters put forward a vision of settler colonialism as understanding land through the lens of economic value, using scientific knowledge and modes of categorization to do so. This chapter brings this lens to a more contemporary settler colonialism, moving the period under discussion from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>. In doing so it focuses on contemporary land use policy, and in particular on those programs established to ‘know’ the territory of what has today become BC. Through this focus, I argue that settler colonialism’s focus has shifted away from a recognition of Indigenous (in this case, First Nations) economies towards reading Indigenous existence on territory as one of cultural relevance, all while maintaining colonial relations of power which largely exclude Indigenous nations from maintaining authority, jurisdiction, or the place of scientific knowledgeholders.



The McKenna-McBride Commission would not be the final resolution of the ‘Indian land question’ however. Indeed, in what might be understood as typical Canadian fashion, none of the principal parties involved (Indigenous nations and the provincial and Dominion governments) were fully satisfied. However, both governments put in place legislation to enable themselves to ratify the Commission’s findings (Harris 2002: 251). This may have occurred had Indigenous nations not so effectively organized against the effort. The primary issue rallying nations were provisions that enabled the reduction (‘cutting off’) of already-inadequate reserve lands without prior consent by the nations affected (Harris 2002: 249-50)—a situation enabled by the continued unwillingness of either government to discuss Indigenous land rights. Instead, another inquiry was established, the Ditchburn-Clark Inquiry. This too ultimately ended with none of the parties satisfied.<sup>98</sup> Given this, the question would remain unsolved until 1938. It was only then that the provincial government agreed to a final answer to the question, where McKenna-McBride was largely ratified.

The final response to the Indian land question provides the temporal framing for this chapter, though I do skip ahead through the end of World War II. This chapter also moves away from questions of federal jurisdiction towards understanding the role of the provincial government of BC in the (re)production of settler sovereignty in the present day. While the now-provincial government has built and maintained relationships with Indigenous nations since prior to its official entry into the British empire in 1858, much of the text to this point has focused on the organization of land. As I have described through the previous two chapters, this process was

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<sup>98</sup> This was likely a happy result for Indigenous nations, as one member of the Inquiry came to the belief “that the reserves in British Columbia were far too scattered and ‘a decided check on the progress of white settlers,’ and favoured the concentration of Native people on a few reserves for their education and technical training” (Harris 2002: 252). Had this been followed through on there would likely be a further homogenization of nations into increasingly smaller and more concentrated parcels of land.

one jointly undertaken between the provincial and Dominion (now federal) government.

However, Canada's constitutional order places authority over land use policy primarily in the hands of provincial governments. This authority is excepted in the case of 'lands reserved for the Indians' (*Constitution Act of 1867*), which has been interpreted to apply narrowly to those lands set aside as reserves (INAC, 2008). Given the deliberate minimizing of lands reserved for First Nations throughout the country, this leaves a situation whereby provincial governments hold authority over much of the territory that makes up Indigenous land bases—a situation exacerbated by the lack of treaties in BC specifically.

Between this on-the-ground reality and the shifting legal landscape wherein courts have recently recognized a role for provinces in fulfilling the Crown's responsibilities to Indigenous nations (McIvor and Gunn, 2016; Starblanket, 2019), understanding Indigenous-provincial relations has become crucial. Instead of the focus on the division of territory, and the flows of authority that follow, this chapter frames the question of contemporary relationships between Indigenous nations and settlers. It does so by looking to land use planning through rangeland management policy, and continuing to understand the place, or lack thereof, of Indigenous knowledge. I argue that land continues to be imagined in an extractive frame by settlers. Relations between what are today referred to as First Nations and the provincial governments and officials then retain the hierarchical relations of power described in the previous two chapters—an approach I identify as a 'stakeholder' relationship below, and with Indigenous knowledge limited to questions of cultural heritage.

However, I do not want to suggest that this hierarchical relationship is *necessarily* the case. Nor do I want to suggest that it maintains a sort of universal or everlasting presence. The reason for this is twofold. First, on a theoretical level, unproblematic assumptions of universality tend to

miss many of the shifts in empirical realities in a world built on contingency. I made this point as it relates to settler colonialism directly in Chapter 4, and it is one that is as important to reiterate in the context of the present day as it was for historical patterns of colonial settlement. Moreover, one of the issues with work in the critical tradition is that of unwittingly universalizing the phenomena one is studying, ultimately reinforcing the Eurocentric nature of academic work through projects aimed at deconstruction and noting the constructed and contingent nature of knowledge (Foucault, 2002; Scott, 1998).

Second, and related to the first, there has been a move towards building a different kind of relationship between settlers and Indigenous nations. Looking past the rhetorical reconciliation put forward by the federal government,<sup>99</sup> on the level of policy there have been important strides made by BC's government and other non-federal jurisdictions to engage with Indigenous knowledges in land management practices, as Nadasdy (2003) illustrates with respect to the Kluane peoples in southwest Yukon Territory.<sup>100</sup> These are included in the Conclusion, focusing especially on the Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF). However, prior to that I discuss framings of land use in the period from post-war to present, followed by an analysis of those present policy frameworks in place today.

### *Postwar to Present*

If one of the defining features of land management in BC at the time of its founding was a focus on improvement, the same can be said of the period from after the 'Indian land question' was settled until the present day. Indeed, outside of the southern Island and the Fraser Valley, BC's

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<sup>99</sup> This is further described through the framing of 'reconciliation lite' by Midzain-Gobin and Smith (forthcoming).

<sup>100</sup> As I refer to briefly in the conclusion, this text was largely written at a time prior to the introduction of Bill-41 the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Because of this, and because it is legislative rather than policy-centric, I do not include this in my analysis of Indigenous-settler relations, though would initially suggest that it represents an important step towards living together in a 'good' and respectful way.

economy remains quite focused on two industries: natural resource development and forestry and agriculture. Looking at the area in and around Wet'suwet'en territories, we can see some of the highest concentrations of employment income derived from these industries, with the combined rates reaching into the high 40 to 50% marks in municipal areas such as Smithers-Houston, Vanderhoof, and Burns Lake, all of which are within the Bulkley-Nechako district (Horne, 2009). Indeed, some of these areas also represent the least-economically diverse areas in the province, with the result being that they are among the most dependent on forestry and rangeland management. Moreover, this is not a new phenomenon, with this dependency and sense of vulnerability having been maintained over much of the postwar period as exemplified below, and continues into the present day (Horne, 2009).

Looking directly to land use studies and planning guides, one of the most interesting aspects to jump out is the type of language used. Surrounded by dry descriptions of crop yields and soil conditions are examples of the type of security language that has been taken up by the discourse of human security. Notable here is a planning guide for the Okanagan region prepared in 1948. The guide begins as might be expected of a region whose economy is based primarily on agricultural production: the guide opens with references to the need for “equilibrium” between the total population and the amount of irrigated agricultural land being (Okanagan Region, 1948). The existence of this equilibrium is based on an assumption of a “definite relationship” between the ability of the Okanagan region to maintain a population, and the levels of arable land available (reference to the guide). Notably, the use of terms of relationality here are more in line with those of the logic of improvement outlined in Chapter 4, as the relationship

is one in which settlers are able to harness the productive potential of the land to enable population growth and the expansion of settlement.<sup>101</sup>

Perhaps more importantly than the question of improvement is the way in which the report constructs agriculture and cultivation as a question of security. Not only focused on the farmers and their livelihoods, the report expands the referent object of this security to encompass the province and state as a whole. In doing so, the report invokes improvement and cultivation within the context of the possibility of settler sovereignty.

In this light, the guide relates the rapidly increasing population of the region in the post-war era as being akin to an existential threat. Indeed, after identifying a growth of over 40% in total population, the guide quickly shifts the language from identifying a new lack of balance given the lack of a concurrent rise in either agricultural productivity or land availability to meet population numbers. However, what is most telling regarding the place of agriculture in economic planning is the way this lack of balance produces a “fundamental insecurity” because of the “precarious situation” facing the population of the region (Okanagan Region 1948: 1). Such language, especially the starkness with which security framings are employed, invokes the need for government intervention, connecting it to the engagement of sovereign authority to secure its own territory and population. Moreover, with this report being produced in 1948 there is a close mirroring with the type of language used in the mobilization around the just-completed Second World War. While this specific guide may look like a particularly stark example, it is not alone. Another report prepared for governments both provincial and federal in 1955-56 outlines

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<sup>101</sup> Notably, the guide mainly ignores Indigenous nations within the region, and does not speak to either their own ongoing, non-hierarchical, relationships to territory or the ways in which they survived and thrived in the region prior to settler settlement bringing new technologies for irrigation and increasing the productivity of the land. Doing so may have offered a different guide as a final product, one less centred on expansion of settlements and the potential for territory to produce.

the ‘menace’ of annual flooding in the Fraser Valley (Kidd, 1955), a situation which then demands government resources to sustain agricultural production.

On some level, the language has seemingly been effective, as the BC government established the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in 1973 to protect agricultural land in the province from concerns over its loss due to urbanization and other economic development. Administered by the independent-from-government Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), the ALR consists of lands specifically set aside only for agricultural pursuits—meaning that other development (ie. housing, other economic development) is not allowed on the land absent its removal from the ALR via an application process to the ALC. This setting aside of land has been controversial in the province since the ALR’s inception, however, it remains broadly popular, with the language of those officials connected to the system continuing to align with the types of security rhetoric touched on above (CBC News, 2018; 2019). While not a core feature of my analysis moving forward, the ALR is worth pointing to here as it is reflective of the important place that agriculture and in particular the logic of improvement continues to hold in the imaginary of the BC government. I discuss this in greater detail with respect to rangeland and forestry management below, but in a broader sense the importance of land and its management remains as central to the contemporary BC as it was to the formation of New Caledonia and its management from 19<sup>th</sup> century Victoria.

### *Contemporary Land Policy in British Columbia*

The Postwar period saw a reinforcement of the idea that extraction lies at the heart of the development of BC. It saw a continuation of the focus on agriculture and cultivation, and the further development of mining and the direct extraction of natural resources. Indeed, as I outline, it even went so far as to imagine the continuation of agricultural development as an existential

threat, effectively tying the sovereignty and security of the province to its continued ability to produce. In this respect, that concept of improvement remains alive and well. Even if it is no longer a central impulse and justification, it lives on in the continued focus on productivity of the land. Indeed, provincial policy and the creation of the ALR to protect and maintain improved land illustrate this clearly.

If the Postwar period saw a focus on natural resources and extraction in the BC economy maintained, then the place of Indigenous peoples also remained what it was prior to the wars. Where they would integrate into society and the waged economy, they were encouraged to do so; where they were not the type of ‘productive citizens’ settlers imagined themselves, they were not.

As I discussed in my Introduction, and reinforced throughout Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, one of the central aspects to the colonization of BC is the notion of ‘improvement’ in the Lockean sense.<sup>102</sup> In the settler imaginary, the need of improvement enabled the process of colonization by offering an imperative for settlement: it would take the work of White settlers to tame the wilderness and harness the land’s productive capacity. I discussed immediately above in this chapter the way in which the 1950s to 1970s saw a shift in tone to one of agricultural production as a central security concern for the province moving forward. Shifting our attention to contemporary land use policy, this question of agriculture as playing a central role in settler imaginaries remains, as the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako’s (RDBN) Agriculture Plan (2012: 1) makes clear in its opening:

Agriculture is a significant component of our history, our economy, and our culture...  
Agriculture is responsible for providing and maintaining the aesthetics and views that we enjoy and that help define our region, in addition to the important role agricultural lands play

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<sup>102</sup> This refers to the assumption that land as it existed ‘in nature’ needed to be made productive in an agricultural sense, and that this was to be done by Man. See the Introduction and Chapter Four for an additional discussion.

in providing habitat for many species of wildlife. The agricultural way of life helps define our character and our values. As a result, the Plan itself articulates that it is important that “The regional agricultural industry...be economically viable and sustainable to thrive in the long-term” (RDBN 2012: 1) in order for the region itself to remain economically sound. However, by tying agriculture to the ‘history’ and ‘culture’ of the region, the Plan carries on work of tying together agriculture and the social and political spheres of the settler imaginary. Indeed, reading the language of the Plan through the lens of imaginaries, it becomes clear that even in the present day maintaining a specific type of authoritative relationship to territory becomes an existential question—or a ‘settled expectation’ in the words of Mackey (2016). What this does is further reinforce “a deep sense of entitlement and a supposedly natural right (even a responsibility) to own and develop property/land” on the part of settlers (Mackey 2016: 7-8). I have argued throughout this text that this sense of entitlement and assumption of authority through Indigenous erasure reifies a hierarchical relationship between Indigenous nations and settlers through law and policy. This is not to say that the relationship is not shifting and changing, and sometimes even towards a more inclusive approach towards Indigenous knowledge and existence. However, as I discuss below in relation to a stakeholder approach and cultural heritage, a more inclusive, multicultural, view of relationships does not necessarily transform the underlying relations of power.

Following the focus on the notion of ‘improvement’ discussed in previous chapters, the contemporary policy analyzed for the purposes of this chapter is primarily that which deals with ‘rangeland’ (grazing), and forestry. While I touch on each of these, the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP) is the central part of the analysis stemming from my continued focus on the territories on which the Wet’suwet’en live. In these areas, as the RDBN Agriculture Plan (2012: 16) notes,



In all regions...forestry provides upwards of 40% of basic after-tax income. Further to this, the region's economy suffers from a lack of diversification as compared to other regions of the province. as such, regional economic vulnerability to the forestry sector is very high. As a result, and to continue centring those territories on which I have myself spent time, I focus here on the FREP, as it remains an important part of land use planning and management interventions on the part of the province in the Region, and has a large program of work in the area.

The Program itself is one aspect of the Integrated Resource Monitoring program the province has put in place, and is connected to the Natural Resource Sector Multiple Resource Value Assessments program. Effectively the implementation of a monitoring framework, the FREP has as its mission to “Collect and communicate the best available natural resource monitoring information to inform decision making, improve resource management outcomes and provide evidence of government's commitment to environmental sustainability” (BC Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations 2019: web). It does this through putting in place 11 separate monitoring frameworks, with each focusing on one of what the Program calls ‘resource values’.<sup>103</sup> The FREP is an effective focus for this project as it relies primarily on “science-based evidence” when putting these monitoring frameworks together, and has gone through an accreditation process, lending it legitimacy on this front. Further, as I discuss in greater detail below, the FREP rests alongside the Cumulative Effects Framework I touch on in the final chapter as one of the provincial programs that explicitly aims to engage Indigenous nations in its work. I now turn to an analysis of not only the information collected on the resource values, but also the way in which Indigenous-provincial relationships are reified within the context of the Program.

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<sup>103</sup> These are: Biodiversity, Cultural Heritage, Fish/Riparian, Forage & Associated Plant Communities, Recreation, Resource Features, Soils, Timber, Visual Quality, Water and Wildlife.

### Scientific Information Collected

One of the areas of central importance for this text is to articulate the ways in which land and peoples are *known*: what information is collected? In what form? What assumptions does this reflect? Above I described the way in which contemporary land management policy in BC continues to be premised on a notion of improvement—continuing on in a long line of policy written from these assumptions. What we also see is the importance of *scientific* data collection. This is the case for statistical data collection (Thompson, 2016), range management (Thistle, 2015), wildlife management (Nadasdy, 2003) and the division of land and territory between Indigenous nations and settler arrivals (Harris, 2002). Looking past questions of framing, and directly at the content of the land use and management documents themselves, it becomes clear that this attention to scientific rigour of a Western framing remains at the heart of these programs. Indeed, in the case of the FREP this comes across quite explicitly in the program’s literature.

Here it is important to keep in mind the earlier discussion regarding the use of science in colonial decision-making from Chapter 4.<sup>104</sup> Especially important in relation to the FREP for the purposes here are the questions of ontology and standardization. However, prior to discussing each of these in turn, it is important to highlight the logics which underpin the program. The program literature claims that the FREP represents somewhat of a shift in focus for the BC government, as it represents the development of a scientific ‘results-based’ monitoring program centred around the development of specific targets, results and strategies (Province of BC 2005: 1). The literature further notes that this strategy is defined in terms of the sustainability of forestry and rangelands in BC (*Ibid*). What is unclear in the literature is precisely how this is

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<sup>104</sup> For the larger discussion, see pages 102-107.

new, however. While perhaps worded differently, Thistle's (2015) overview of rangeland and forestry interventions throughout history illustrates the importance placed on the sustainability of rangeland, and the engagement of scientific knowledge of the time towards that end. Indeed, my discussion of the way reports from the postwar period to the present represent agriculture and rangeland management as a security concern highlight similar concerns regarding the need to ensure that agricultural production in the province remains sustainable. Given this, I argue that the FREP and associated policies, regulations and procedures with regards to land management at the provincial level remain firmly within the context of the logic of improvement identified over the preceding chapters. This is especially the case as the seeming purpose for the program is to ensure that the lands remain productive and 'improved' going forward—my reading of the engagement of a 'sustainability' discourse.

Where we do perhaps see a more concerted shift is in the rigour with which scientific data is engaged within the program. Indeed, the earliest program documents identify this clearly (Province of BC 2005: 2):

Under FREP, scientifically based and peer-reviewed RSM [resource stewardship monitoring] monitoring protocols will be developed for all 11 resource values identified under FRPA. RSM results will provide district staff with the data and analysis needed to inform district managers and other decision makers whether on-the-ground practices by licensees are achieving FRPA resource value objectives and/or whether Forest Stewardship Plan results and strategies are being achieved.

From the documents produced at the beginning of the program, it is clear that the purpose of the program is to build a framework for the implementation of a system to monitor the status of those resources identified as being of central importance to maintaining the quality of forests and rangeland across the province. That is, the system is being put in place to enable the provincial government to monitor whether or not the resources it is targeting are being depleted. This monitoring framework is to be based in scientific knowledge, with the ultimate outcome being the production of "peer reviewed, scientifically valid, measurable, verifiable and cost-effective

indicators...[that] provide the necessary information to facilitate district manager decision-making and continuous improvement of forest practices and/or policy” (Province of BC 2005: 4).

The way in which this is to be implemented is that once a resource has been identified, there is to be an ongoing process of data collection and analysis on a specific resource to ensure its continued sustainability. As outlined in the RSM Framework, this too is to be done according to scientific sampling methods, in particular randomized site selection with targeted sampling only at the request of licensees or “to meet immediate operational needs” (Province of BC 2005: 12). Moreover, the sampling must include at least 15 sites so as to offer an adequate data base for decision-making (Ibid). As outlined in the program’s literature itself, the purpose of randomized samples is to produce “objective and defensible” results that can be inferred at ‘population’ level (Ibid). This is typically the district, as this is the level at which the sampling decisions are made. However, data from multiple districts can be combined to give a picture of the health of a certain resource value at regional or provincial levels as well.

One of the notable aspects of the focus on ‘scientific’ knowledge is the place of Indigenous knowledges within this—or rather, the lack thereof for much of the life of the FREP. I speak of the relationship of the provincial government to Indigenous nations in relation to its locating of indigeneity to the cultural realm, and the form of engagement, below; however, here it is worth moving into a brief discussion regarding the place Indigenous knowledge holds in a system based on ‘scientifically valid’ data.

The FREP’s engagement with Indigenous knowledge is primarily through a process of ‘stakeholder’ engagement, as I describe further below. However, Indigenous knowledge is not identified explicitly, rather, my discussion of it in this context is my own inference that government officials are gaining access to Indigenous knowledge by engaging with First

Nations. That is, rather than seeking that knowledge out, the provincial government is necessarily confronting it in their consultations itself. This was identified by one of my participants who spoke of the way that First Nations organizations bring their communities' knowledge and understandings to the table each time that they engage with government officials (Individual 1 Personal Interview. 2018). That is, rather than it being an explicit *point* on which consultations are oriented, Indigenous knowledge becomes *part* of the consultation. Because of this, the FREP has at least encountered Indigenous knowledge as long as they have been consulting First Nations. However, this engagement was indirect, and the outcomes did not lead to an explicit integration of Indigenous knowledge over the first decade of the program. It was not until the renewed Strategic Plan 2016-2019 that Indigenous knowledge was deliberately included in the FREP's RSM monitoring work.

As with previous guiding documents, the Strategic Plan 2016-2019 begins by outlining the FREP's mission: "Collect and communicate the best available natural resource monitoring information to inform decision making, improve resource management outcomes and provide evidence of government's commitment to environmental sustainability" (Province of BC 2016: 1). To complete this mission, it identifies the need to support 'decision makers' by "Provid[ing] science-based evidence to guide continued improvement of practices, policies and legislation", and adding that it further provides "an opportunity to meaningfully engage First Nations in sustainable resource management through participation in resource stewardship monitoring" (Ibid) and even to make them "partners in forestry" (Ibid, 2). Insofar as this continues in the tradition of incorporating Indigenous peoples into settler economies, what is perhaps most striking and new in this commitment is the language of partnership. Indeed, it is a far cry from

the intentional incorporation of Indigenous peoples as wage labourers that I discussed in Chapter 5.

More aligned with my focus in this text is that the Strategic Plan 2016-2019 includes as one of its Guiding Principles the intention to “Develop a meaningful and collaborative role for **First Nations** in natural resource monitoring and evaluation” (Province of BC 2016: 3, emphasis in original). The document continues reiterating the need for ‘science based’ results to ensure that the best information is given to decision makers. Appendix A of the Strategic Plan outlines the workplan, both on a program level, but also for each individual resource value, offering a look at precisely the terms on which BC government officials will be held accountable regarding their implementation of the program. For my purposes here this is especially illuminating regarding the BC government’s intention to implement its commitment to First Nations engagement. Here, engagement is understood as a process of incorporating First Nations as forestry partners, but also crucially, their involvement in the monitoring evaluation work—that is, the work that is to be scientifically based.

Indeed, reading through the Appendix of the Strategic Plan 2016-2019 we can see the inclusion of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) in amongst the resource values to be monitored (Province of BC 2016: 10). My own reading of this suggests that this displays an understanding Indigenous knowledge can be useful in monitoring the resources identified by the province, and that its inclusion with the individual resource values is illustrative of a recognition of its rigour and legitimacy. In that respect, TEK’s inclusion points to a more holistic understanding of knowledge on the part of provincial policymakers, one that reflects an expansion of settler imaginaries to provide for the recognition of Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies as the bases of knowledge. I do not want to undersell this shift, as it does

represent a recognition of knowledge held by Indigenous communities, a clear difference from historical (and other contemporary) forms of settler coloniality as it exists across Turtle Island. Perhaps it even represents as much as can be hoped for in terms of engagement of Indigenous knowledge from a mode of governance still premised upon settler sovereignty and its unilateral recognition of Indigenous peoples' material and immaterial existence.

However, this unequal politics of recognition—and the associated relation of power—remains. Not only that, but the FREP itself retains colonial understanding of indigeneity, one which most prominently recognizes Indigenous knowledge and expertise only in the realm of the Cultural Heritage resource value (Province of BC 2016: 10).<sup>105</sup> That is, the workplan remains silent on the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in the monitoring and evaluation work for the other 10 resource values, even where other initiatives outside of BC, such as the Kluane Game Sanctuary have begun this work.<sup>106</sup> While we may have the mobilization of Indigenous knowledge alongside the scientific knowledge held up as the most valuable, we also see the continued ghettoization of Indigenous knowledge. Moreover, the depth of engagement is unclear outside of a plan to initiate a project and meet with the Lake Babine First Nation, also within the context of the Cultural Heritage resource value. It is of course possible that there were plans to do more consultation, or to incorporate TEK alongside the scientific knowledge in other resource values such as wildlife, riparian, or biodiversity, as particularly salient examples. If so, we would expect to see budgets reflecting these intentions. Instead, the plan includes a total of \$30,000 for First Nations honorariums over the course of the three years (Ibid, 13). This is approximately double the amount planned for a single outreach strategy to licensees (Ibid, 12). While this can

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<sup>105</sup> This is also consistent with the shifting definition of 'cultural heritage' within the context of the FREP, with more recent definitions focusing on Indigenous culture and the removal of references to settler cultural artifacts.

<sup>106</sup> For a detailed discussion of the efforts at incorporating TEK into wildlife management, see Nadasdy (2003).

change, it isn't clear that the relationship with First Nations was prioritized within the FREP outside of understanding it through a cultural lens. Perhaps ironically, the FREP's minimal taking up of TEK could be read in a positive light. As Nadasdy (2003) identified in relation to the Kluane Gaming Sanctuary, in its incorporation into settler land and resource management initiatives, TEK can be altered through processes of 'bureaucratization' to look more like the settler knowledges it is meant to complement—alternations no doubt impacted by the unequal politics of recognition discussed throughout my text. A form of this is further explored below in relation to the framing of Indigenous knowledge as relating primarily to culture.

### Indigeneity as an Ongoing Cultural Concern

Picking up on this question of the *long durée* of relationships, the engagement with indigeneity as a cultural, rather than political, concern remains stark in contemporary land use planning and management policy in BC. When looking at the documents that make up the instructions to those undertaking FREP's monitoring program, it becomes clear that Indigenous concerns and knowledge are being targeted within the context of Cultural Heritage Resources (CHR) rather than more expansively within the program. Indeed, a review of the available protocols and websites shows that the only one in which First Nations referred to is in relation to culture and the CHR Value.

One of the clearest ways in which this is seen is in the FREP program's Cultural Heritage 'Resource Value' (also referred to as an indicator below). While one of 11, this specific indicator is the one most directly associated with Indigenous peoples, with the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan for the program referring to TEK<sup>107</sup> only in reference to cultural heritage and this indicator (see:

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<sup>107</sup> 'Traditional' being the typical way governments refer to Indigenous knowledges. Another reference to indigeneity as historical, rather than contemporary.



Province of BC 2016: 10)—this despite ecological knowledge being precisely what each of the other indicators rely upon. Indeed, even more on the nose is the definition of cultural heritage resources, which as noted by the FREP’s website, has shifted over the years from the initial version in the *Forests Act 1996* as:

an object, a site or the location of a traditional societal practice that is of historical, cultural or archaeological significance to British Columbia, a community or an aboriginal people.

Now, cultural heritage resources to be protected are identified more stringently in the regulations implementing the *Act*, with Section 10 of the regulations identifying those protected as:

1. The focus of a traditional use, by an Aboriginal people, and that are of continuing importance to that people
2. Not regulated under the Heritage Conservation Act

While perhaps not a significant-seeming shift, the first definition appears more inclusive, as it opens the possibility of cultural heritage being of a ‘community’ and not narrowly of ‘an Aboriginal people’ as the second prescribes.

Further, a close reading of the documents related to each of the resource values for the FREP finds that Indigenous nations are referred to only in relation to cultural heritage resources. Not even for wildlife or riparian (waterways and fishing) resources is there mention of Indigenous nations (even in the form of First Nations) in the manuals which are intended to guide the work of those undertaking the monitoring—two areas intimately connected to Indigenous cosmological relationships to Creation. In this way, when coupled with the exclusive focus on Indigenous peoples and knowledge in the context of cultural heritage, the shift itself is revealing in its ghettoization/locating of indigeneity to a cultural concern, and further reflects the types of epistemological violences that Todd (2014; see also 2016; 2018) identifies in the colonial erasure of what they call ‘fish pluralities’, that is Indigenous knowledge of, and relationships to, fish.

As I have done throughout in this text, I want to emphasize that the contemporary engagement with Indigenous communities by governments on issues of cultural heritage should not be read as a wholly negative move. In some respects, it indicates a shift in the relationship between Indigenous nations and governments in that governments are at least *engaging* as opposed to *dictating*. Indeed, in reading through the documents it becomes clear that there is a willingness on the part of governments to listen to Indigenous nations. This represents clear shift from the type of relationship which characterized the relationship in the previous two chapters—and a normatively positive one at that. While I am not in a position to question the sincerity of this effort, the Supreme Court’s decisions to award nations varying levels of title and authority over their territories in cases such as *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* and *Tshilchot’in v. British Columbia* no doubt played a role.

However, the central concern with treating Indigenous life and artifacts as ‘cultural heritage’ rather than as part of the social and economic life, governance protocols, and legal orders is that it furthers the erasure of Indigenous nations as political. This was discussed in previous chapters, but in looking to contemporary policy it becomes clear that there remains a significant gap in the understanding of policymakers as it relates to the political status of Indigenous existence. As an illustration we can look to the description of ‘Aboriginal Trails’ from the CHR Supplement to the FREP Protocol (Archer CRM 2009: 24), which writes of the trails:

In the pre-contact and early historic periods most travel in the BC interior was conducted via an extensive network of trails. These trails connected to other trail networks, as well as to the lake and river systems that ultimately spanned the entire province. It is this early transportation system that shaped exploration and settlement in British Columbia. As a result trails hold considerable historic value as well as recreational opportunities for the people of the province.

While this selection is not the full description, it does enable an analysis of the way in which CHRs are represented.<sup>108</sup> Important to note in this description are two aspects, both of which draw on my earlier discussion of the Grease Trails from Chapter 5.

First, the description centres settlers and their activity on the land, rather than Indigenous nations' use of such territory. While the description begins with references to pre-contact travel, and the way in which the trails connected the entirety of the province, the value of the trails is located in identifying them as the vehicle for the “exploration and settlement” of BC. Looking past the historical inaccuracy—as early arrivals have attested to, the province was very much known and settled prior to the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples—this would seem to suggest that the trails are only valuable to maintain because of their role in enabling colonization. This is odd, as the use of the trails by Indigenous nations should be the driving logic of their inclusion here, given that the entire focus of the CHR is Indigenous cultural resources.

Second, and flowing from the first, the description is telling in its omission of the significance of the trails for Indigenous nations. Indeed, as we saw earlier in the text, the trails represent extensive trading networks that connected nations and formed a crucial part of Indigenous economies. In such a situation, the connections also represent diplomatic encounters, with relationships between nations possible because of their connection through the network of trails. It was this set of relationships both diplomatic and economic that helped to organize the political life of Indigenous nations, and as I described earlier, built the web of international relationships into which European arrivals entered at the point of contact.

The omission of these relationships and the centring of settler framings of history have important effects. Indeed, by reproducing this understanding of BC's history the provincial

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<sup>108</sup> Moreover, the selection is representative insofar as none of the rest of the description engages more closely or fully with way the trails enabled migration, trade, and diplomatic relations between the different nations.

government further reinforces the underlying assumptions of *terra nullius*: that political and legal orders did not exist on the territory prior to European arrival. Brought into the present-day, this view underwrites the assumption of sovereign authority on the part of settlers. It imagines the relationship between Indigenous nations and the Crown as one wherein authority flows from the Crown—one in which the relationship remains hierarchical with power invested in settlers and where indigeneity is domesticated within the confines of the state.<sup>109</sup> Without this assumption, the settler state is illegitimate.

### *Nations as ‘Stakeholders’*

The first phenomenon I highlight here as it relates to settler colonialism and land use planning is a shift in the mode of relationship between government and Indigenous nations. In the previous two chapters it was clear that Indigenous nations were strictly *subject* to the power of government—while they may have been a part of the process of organizing the territory of what has become British Columbia, the relationship remained notably hierarchical. Put differently in the context of a coloniality of power, Indigenous nations were ‘targets of intervention’ (Sabaratnam, 2017). What we see today at least on the surface should be different, in that there are explicit legal protections for ‘Indians’<sup>110</sup> with respect to requirements that they be consulted and any impairments on their own rights be accommodated. As a result, we see what I am referring here to as a ‘stakeholder’ relationship, language that reflects a broader shift in the language of government. Indeed, in BC, First Nations are consistently referred to as

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<sup>109</sup> ‘Confines’ here can be both literal, in the case of bordering, but also understood through the questions of authority and sovereignty discussed throughout this text. I have expanded on this move to domestication of Indigenous rights and authority in another paper (RIS R&R, under review), as have others (Bruyneel, 2007; Lightfoot, 2016 & 2017; Kuokkanen, 2019).

<sup>110</sup> In this case “Indians” refers not only to Status First Nations, as it has exclusively for generations, but also the recent *Daniels v. Canada* (2016 SCC 12) in which the Supreme Court of Canada recognized obligations to Métis under s. 91(24) of the Constitution. This effectively recognized Métis as ‘Indian’, and Inuit hold much the same status in areas where they have a recognized land claim agreement.

‘stakeholders’ to be consulted across many of the land and resource planning and management streams of the BC government.

The first thing to note regarding this relationship is that it is not necessarily a product of the government’s own design. Instead, the need for governments to consult with those communities affected by policy decisions that they take flows from S. 35 of the Canadian Constitution, which recognized the existence of ‘Aboriginal’ rights within the Canadian legal framework.<sup>111</sup> While the content of these rights remains decidedly undefined in the Constitution itself, the Canadian courts have filled in the role of outlining the meaning of this recognition—over time offering a steady expansion of the responsibilities on governments to meaningfully engage with Indigenous communities. At this time, courts up to, and including, the Supreme Court have established a context within which Canadian governments must undertake ‘meaningful’ engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities who will be affected by decisions made.<sup>112</sup> While meaningful remains undefined, courts have upheld that these engagements must be “substantial” and tailored to the specific circumstances of the decision to be taken by the government. In so doing, the government must also be mindful of the accumulated effects of other decisions on the community in question, with the accommodation offered taking these effects into account.

Importantly, however, courts have also upheld that ‘meaningful’ consultation and accommodation does not require consent from the communities affected. For First Nations in BC, we have already seen the ways in which historically their perspectives were marginalized in

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<sup>111</sup> That Indigenous rights needed to be recognized by settler legal systems to have legal effect is perhaps as clear an illustration of the operation of power and asymmetry in the need for recognition in the Indigenous-settler relationship as could be expected. For a deeper theoretical engagement with this asymmetry see Coulthard’s (2007 & 2014) work; for a discussion of the colonial erasure of Indigenous authority and rights through settler legal systems, see Comaroff (2001) and Comaroff and Comaroff’s (2007) work.

<sup>112</sup> For a more complete picture on the legal context surrounding consultation and accommodation, the West Coast Environmental Law group has an excellent outline on their website: <https://www.wcel.org/blog/trans-mountain-and-honour-crown-indigenous-legal-challenges-round-two>. I draw on their outline here.

previous chapters—especially with regards to views on land use and policy. An approach through which nations exist as stakeholders for the BC government today shifts the relationship from exclusion and elimination through the formation of reserves, to one of incorporation into policymaking regimes. However, a stakeholder relationship for First Nations exists separately from the kinds of relationships imagined by nations themselves as they relate both to the provincial government, but also importantly, to their own territories.

The first notable distinction is that this approach positions Indigenous nations on par with other, non-Indigenous stakeholders with regards to the policymaking process. This is illustrated clearly in a 2013 Technical Note from the FREP, which outlines the process for drafting the Resource Development Impact ratings (Forest and Range Practices Branch, 2013), that is, the ratings by which the government determines the on-the-ground impacts on one of the 11 resource values identified by the provincial government. These reports are then both made public, but also used by policymakers within the BC government to establish Action Plans to address the issues identified in these reports. That is, the reports become central to the process of resource development planning in the province, as they are the information relied upon when decisions are made regarding conservation or extraction of resources.

The second distinction is in the process of engagement itself. Up to 2016 there was little direct engagement between the BC government and First Nations with regards to the FREP. However, as I discussed above, the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan shifted this to the point that the government recognized the FREP as “an opportunity to meaningfully engage First Nations in sustainable resource management through participation in resource stewardship monitoring” (Province of BC 2016: 2). Indeed, there are positive moves insofar as the government is seeking to engage nations in monitoring on their ‘traditional territories’ and not just over lands that they

have legal title over (Ibid, 5). Even with this positive move though, the process for consultation remains one of the government developing its indicators through engagement with industry and scientists, and only after this discussing them with First Nations who might be effected (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, 2016; Province of BC, 2016). Instead of collaborating with First Nations, there remains a focus on ‘scientific knowledge’ in the development of the indicators. When combined with the use of terms such as ‘traditional’ knowledge to refer to Indigenous knowledges, the use of this type of language would point to the post-development engagement with First Nations as a sort of confirmation of acceptability before deployment of the indicators. While this is oftentimes the way in which government operates in relation to other stakeholders, it undermines a collaborative relationship in favour of one that continues to centralize decision-making.

The relationship embedded within ‘stakeholder-ship’ (ie. that framing of First Nations being a stakeholder with regards to their relationship to government) remains one of *incorporation*. Recall from Chapter 1 that the twin logics of settler colonialism remain the co-constitutive work of assimilation and elimination—elimination of indigeneity to enable the assimilation of Indigenous individuals into settler coloniality. In order to be a stakeholder, Indigenous nations are first translated into First Nations, who are then given an interest (a ‘stake’) in the projects and policies on which they are consulted. That is, they are *brought in* as parties to the processes that are set to unfold as a result of their rights to the land to be developed. This creation of stakeholders out of Indigenous nations is by no means a feature unique to North American settler colonialism, with similar logics also being enacted in the settler colonies of Australia (Kukutai & Walter, 2015) and Aotearoa (Lightfoot, 2010). In each situation, this creation of stakeholders does similar work to incorporate communities into the project of

remaking settler coloniality itself. Specifically, this incorporative logic operates by bringing Indigenous nations into the (re)production of settler sovereignty through engaging them in the management of their territories (in the case of the FREP), or the territories' 'improvement' or 'development' in the case of extractive projects.<sup>113</sup>

Put plainly then, 'stakeholder' relationships and a consultation-based approach also helps settler colonial (re)production by reaffirming settler jurisdiction and authority. Insofar as consultation and the stakeholder relationship rests on a colonial legal framework, continued engagement in these processes risks lending legitimacy to them, precisely in the way Sharp (2014: 21-22) speaks of the government accepting any plans for development so long as the correct process has been followed. By making this argument I am not seeking to offer a judgement on the choices made by First Nations to engage or not—as I discussed in the previous chapters, Indigenous nations generally have proven themselves to be astute and thoughtful actors, and engagement can be a move which brings otherwise unavailable benefits. Instead, I am drawing on a similar point to my previous chapter regarding the engagement of Indigenous nations in building a shared future with settlers, and it is worth noting that this vision of the future is only possible through engagement. Rather, with this text offering a better understanding of the ways in which settler coloniality is (re)produced in the context of contemporary Canada, recognition of Indigenous nations' existence as economic subjects fits within these processes. This is especially so when the recognition of indigeneity as economic existence erases Indigenous cosmologies and non-human relationships.

It is important to note that settler authority cannot be exercised entirely unchecked. Indeed, the Crown maintains a duty to consult Indigenous peoples where their rights are to be impacted.

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<sup>113</sup> For which the 'proponents' of projects are the entities which conduct the consultation on behalf of the governments themselves.



Notably, courts have ruled that consultations must be “deep” (*Clyde River (Hamlet) v. Petroleum Geo-Services Inc.*, [2017] 1 SCR 1069) or “meaningful” (*Haida Nation v British Columbia*, [2004] 3 S.C.R. 511), and that the duty is ongoing (*Taku River Tlingit First Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Environment)*, 2014 BCSC 1278). Without meeting the conditions outlined, and without adequate accommodation in cases where communities are impacted, projects can be—and indeed, have been—disallowed from moving forward. In this sense, the stakeholder relationship held by Indigenous peoples is somewhat different than that of other groups. However, this is not to say that these relationships equate to a sharing of jurisdiction or authority. For example, the extent to which the concerns of Indigenous peoples—for their territories, sources of food, and ways of life—are incorporated into the designs of the projects or the planning processes for land management programs remain limited. As identified by Indigenous peoples involved in consultation processes for other extractive projects in the region of the Bulkley and Fraser rivers, at times the sense is that the fact of a consultation session itself is more important than the outcome of the engagement—especially so in the case of achieving agreement (Sharp, 2014). Indeed, consultation with ‘stakeholders’ may very well result in continued opposition from the First Nation engaged, a situation that has become a feature of Indigenous consultation in the realm of energy development projects in the region (Bowles & Veltmeyer, 2014) and more broadly. Consultation sessions can be little more than opportunities for notes to be taken, with some describing situations where government officials were attending these sessions while simultaneously coordinating the construction of websites announcing the approval of projects or having a Prime Minister previously state that projects were moving ahead (Bellrichard, 2018; King, 2019). This does not change that Indigenous nations are now incorporated into the process of planning and developing the projects and policies though, and in

so doing, they are brought into the project itself. This is both a notable departure with regards to the requirement that they be consulted, while simultaneously part of a historical pattern of engagement by governments without the willingness to cede authority.

The problem here remains one of a relations of power. When considered through the lens of stakeholders, First Nations effectively become one other group to ‘consult’ with during the process of resources development. This is a notable departure from a relationship based on Indigenous authority over their own resources—in that case, rather than being a party to be consulted, the decision on what and how to take from the territory would rest with the nation whose territory it was. Indeed, as I described in Chapters 4 and 5, the assertion of Canadian (via the Crown) sovereignty over *terra nullius* rests not on an agreement between Indigenous nations and new arrivals (Borrows, 1999), any sort of existing right of Europeans to the land, and certainly not on the ‘rightness’ of a relationship (Coyle, 2017; Stark, 2017). Rather, Canada’s claim to jurisdiction largely rests on the assumption of its own authority, and the exercise of power. Even in BC, where some of the most forward-looking modern treaties and Reconciliation Agreements have been signed, Indigenous-settler relationships (and relations of power) remain fundamental unequal.

A stakeholder approach to engagement with First Nations affirms this. It proceeds for the assumption that the decision-making authority rests with settler governments within today’s Canada, and reflects a continued understanding on the part of the government of the relationship between Indigenous nations and settlers to be one in which settler governments maintain jurisdictional authority. Moreover, it reflects a continued understanding of the relationship between people and territory to be one of extraction. While the framing may have shifted towards emphasizing the need for sustainable extraction, the extractive impulse, and imperative

towards improvement of the land, connects to the ways in which settlers have engaged with the territory that became BC since their arrival.

### *Conclusion*

What we can see in the contemporary land management policy of the BC government is movement towards a more inclusive policymaking process. Above I have described this as it relates to the FREP, and in the conclusion of this text I point to even further work the government has undertaken through the Cumulative Effects Framework. This is a step towards better decision-making, especially insofar as it reflects Indigenous knowledges. However, it is here that we arrive at what I read into Wolfe's (2006) point regarding the structural aspect of settler colonialism: more inclusive approaches to policymaking do not change the underlying relations of power between settlers and Indigenous nations. Indigenous nations don't retain the right for a withdrawal of their consent for a project or initiative to be enough to stop it. Settlers retain the power to move forward without the ongoing free, prior and informed consent of affected Indigenous nations. In that sense, increased inclusion isn't a *decolonial* move with regards to settler colonial institutions. Rather, as long as land remains central within the settler imaginary of Canada—and as long as it remains securitized as fundamental to settler understandings of Canada—settler sovereignty will continue to be (re)produced.

This is not to say that we should not aspire to more inclusive policymaking, but rather that a decolonial policymaking process is one which moves forward only through the nation itself. Moreover, this is not to say that nations are not able to resist, and even stop the advancement of projects and initiatives to which they do not give consent. It is to say that this resistance is extraneous to the policymaking process. It itself is a process of decolonialization through the reification of the nation's self-determination. The policy and the process by which that policy

was brought into being was not decolonial. Understood through the framing of knowledge and its place in the policymaking process, a more decolonial policymaking process would see a move away from a stakeholder relationship to one of shared sovereignty between Indigenous nations and settler institutions. In such a relationship, land management policy would be co-constituted, with Indigenous knowledge serving to inform the indicators and underlying information produced about the land and not only discussed in relation to culture.

## Conclusion: Towards an Inclusive Future?

Throughout the previous chapters I have built an argument for the centrality of knowledge to the process of settler colonial (re)production. The “(…)” are important here, as knowledge not only played a central role in the initial processes of settlement and dispossession of what is today British Columbia (BC), but continues to structure the ongoing remaking of settler sovereignty today. However, unlike more spectacular forms of violent government intervention, the role of knowledge in building and maintaining settler coloniality is largely unremarked upon, finding itself instead a part of the everyday, or ‘technical’ policymaking process.<sup>114</sup> Further, as I highlight throughout the text, the knowledge many might assume is neutral, or simply to be taken for granted as fact, offers a view into the way Indigenous cosmologies and ontologies continue to be erased and marginalized. In their place, settler imaginaries are reified, establishing the conditions for the continual reproduction of settler colonialism. Within the space of contemporary Canada, I argue that knowing territory and individuals through settler framings is one of the ways the settler state seeks to resolve the fundamental insecurity at the heart of the settler colonial project. Only through a determined non-recognition of Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies do we see the possibility for the continual reproduction of settler sovereignty.

While I speak of Canada and BC throughout, it is important to understand the way in which these processes not only have international and global effects, but also underpin our global order. Insofar as our international order is made up of a set of sovereign states (Salter, 2012), the logic of sovereignty underlying state authority is fundamental to our conception of the

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<sup>114</sup> For more on this in the context of the governance of measurement, see Best (2010 & 2014); the emergence of technicalization and expertise in international politics has also been discussed in the context of security practices (Bigo et al., 2016; Schwarz, 2015) and international law (Leander & Aalberts, 2013).

international as well. What I show in this dissertation is that in the case of settler states, this sovereign authority rests not only on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, but also the erasure of Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies. This erasure comes not only at the moment of settler arrival, but as I illustrate, is reproduced into the present day in an effort to maintain the legitimacy of settler sovereignty. In this respect, I follow Nisancioglu (2019) in understanding sovereignty as fundamentally racialized in the image of the white settler. Importantly, this is not only the case in the settler Anglosphere (Vucetic, 2011), but this racialization also organizes our global politics both through coloniality (Howell and Richter-Montpetit 2019b; Rutazibwa, 2016; Sabaratnam, 2017; Shilliam, 2015) and manifested in the ‘global colour line’ (Anievas et al, 2015; Bell, 2019; Sajed, 2013). Understood through this lens, settler colonial policymaking not only serves to re-establish the conditions within which settler colonialism in Canada is reproduced, but also offers insights into the constitution of international and global politics more broadly.

Chapter One began this work by outlining the conceptual framework employed throughout my research. I first theorize a ‘relationship of (a)partness’ that describes Indigenous peoples’ existence within contemporary Canada. This relationship captures the way in which Indigenous individuals and their territories are interpellated into Canada, while indigeneity is left out to remove alternative claims to authority in the context of settler coloniality. Next, Chapter Two offers a view into the way in which I conducted my research for this dissertation. As I discuss there, this project began as a very different one, but after spending time in Wet’suwet’en territory, it became clear that following the ethnographic approach I had committed to would mean moving from a community-based project to a community-inspired one. Instead of speaking

to the community-level impacts of data collection, there was greater interest in research that spoke to the ways in which the settler state was actively dispossessing the nation.

My empirical analysis begins in Chapter Three in which I use the APS to illustrate the gaps between settler and Indigenous knowledges, and in particular the way in which subjectivities are understood. These gaps are then mobilized in order to make possible the manifestation of settler imaginaries overtop of the existing Indigenous relationships with land. I pick up on this importance of territory in Chapter Four, in which I argue that knowledge and cosmologies were fundamental in the shaping of what is today BC. I build my argument through a discussion of the ‘waves’ of early settlement in BC by European arrivals, using this to illustrate the ways of knowing and understanding the territory and relationships that they entered. Particularly important here is the notion of ‘improvement’, which has remained a central logic motivating land use policy in BC ever since. Chapter Five continues my discussion of settler colonialism in BC, moving ahead to the McKenna-McBride Commission and its solution to the ‘Indian land question’. In the chapter I argue that in making decisions regarding the organization of territory, the Commission relied on settler knowledges and cosmologies, and especially a sense of the imperative to incorporate Indigenous peoples into settler lifeways. Chapter Six moves forward to the present day, analyzing contemporary land use policy in BC and the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP). I argue that despite a more inclusive approach to policymaking, the underlying relations of power continues to affirm settler authority, thus enabling the contemporary reproduction of settler coloniality.

Read together, this dissertation puts forward an illustration of one of the ways that the contemporary reproduction of settler coloniality is enabled. Specifically, it identifies the erasure of Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies as central to the reification of settler sovereignty.

Importantly, this erasure affects not only those relationships between settlers and Indigenous peoples, but also those relationships between humans and the non-human world, as even where Indigenous knowledge is brought into the policymaking process, we see the exclusion of these relationships from consideration. While this argument draws from, and speaks to, many sets of literatures, as I identified in the Introduction and in Chapter One, critical IR and critical security studies have framed its development. The connection can be seen not only through the mobilization of security forces against Indigenous assertions of authority and jurisdiction (Bell & Shreiner, 2018; Pasternak, 2017), but also on a more conceptual level in the way the argument centres the connected themes of the reproduction of (settler) sovereignty through the erasure of indigeneity, and emancipation from this sovereignty (de Larrinaga & Salter, 2014; Mutimer et al., 2013). In doing so, however, it seeks to engage more broadly with what de Larrinaga and Salter (2014: 1) call the “ubiquitous deployment of security discourses and practices in the post-9/11 world” by shifting our gaze from the recognizable realm of security to identify the ways in which practices of knowledge production embedded in demographics and government land management policy enable this reproduction through Indigenous dispossession and erasure. This argument engages with Howell and Richter-Montpetit’s (2019a&b) critiques of the blindness of security studies to questions of race, while also further pushing the field forward with respect to its engagement of Indigenous peoples by looking outside of them as explicitly ‘securitizing actors’ (Greaves, 2016) or specific invocations of settler security-making (Crobey & Monaghan, 2012). It also engages deeply with the roles of land and territory in the remaking of settler coloniality through the framing of relationships, seeking to understand the issues outside of Marxist frameworks of primitive accumulation which can characterize academic engagement with the connections between land and settler colonialism (Coulthard, 2014; Estes, 2019).



The rest of this conclusion begins to look ahead, beginning by contextualizing recent policy initiatives and moves by the government in BC to implement the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP or Declaration). I then close by decentring settler governance and instead looking to Indigenous futures outside of settler enclosures, and the way in which my work can support this going forward.

### *A More Inclusive Contemporary Policy Framework?*

This is not to say that there are not seemingly moves towards increased inclusion for Indigenous peoples and knowledge within contemporary settler coloniality. This is especially the case in BC where at the time of writing, the provincial government has recently passed the UNDRIP into law, and has also implemented the Cumulative Effects Framework (CEF)—as several of my interview participants indicated. It is worth (briefly) discussing each initiative in turn, as they represent key aspects of the present BC government’s ‘Building relationships with Indigenous peoples’ agenda towards reconciliation. Both can be seen as imagining the shared future together that I spoke to in Chapter Five, and point to potential avenues for incorporating Indigenous knowledge into policymaking processes.

I turn first to the Declaration, which was incorporated into provincial law in November 2019 through the passage of Bill 41 in the provincial legislature, the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. The Act followed a federal attempt at passage, which was held up in and ultimately did not pass the Senate prior to the 2019 election. Bill 41 mirrored the federal legislation in many ways, including that the text of the Bill contained little more than the text of the Declaration itself. As described by the government, the *Act*:

...mandates government to bring provincial laws into harmony with the UN Declaration. It requires development of an action plan to achieve this alignment over time – providing transparency and accountability. And it requires regular reporting to the Legislature to monitor progress. In addition, the legislation allows for flexibility for the Province to enter

into agreements with a broader range of Indigenous governments. And it provides a framework for decision-making between Indigenous governments and the Province on matters that impact their citizens.

The adoption of the Declaration into provincial law was a central part of the government's reconciliation agenda, reflected in part by the way that the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation's mandate letter listed it as the first priority specific to their mandate (Office of the Premier, 2017). Moreover, in a concrete step away from previous approaches to legislative drafting, the provincial government developed the Bill by working with what is known as the 'First Nations Leadership Council', which includes representatives from the BC Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs. In part because of the level of consultation—and the importance of the Declaration to Indigenous peoples—the passage of the Bill was met with much excitement both in the province and across Canada. Indeed, the Act includes relatively strict reporting requirements, offering those interested annual opportunities to hold the provincial government accountable in the way originally envisioned by Indigenous peoples at the time of the Declaration's passage (Lightfoot, 2012). As the inclusion of reporting requirements indicates, the Bill was intended to be transformational, but to do so in incremental ways, and in accordance with existing governance systems.

It would seem then that the passage of the Act offers great promise for meaningful reconciliation in BC—and potentially even opportunities to begin processes of decolonization. In addition to the creation of ongoing accountability mechanisms, especially important is the way the Act and the BC Government's associated engagement can be read as rooting reconciliation in inter-national action. This action includes the further creation of working relationships, joint engagement tables, and ongoing dialogues between First Nations and the BC Government—all of which promote the construction of ongoing relationships. It is true that the way in which the Declaration has been interpolated into BC's contemporary imaginary has been one of its

*incorporation* into settler coloniality,<sup>115</sup> effectively a domestication of international rights.

However, it can also be true that such a move enables the construction of relationships through which the existing colonial relations of power can be undone.

Provincial officials seem unwilling to meaningfully deconstruct these relations however. Briefly, I see three reasons for this. The first recalls my discussion from Chapter One of the politics of recognition underpinning Canadian multiculturalism and settler colonialism, wherein indigeneity has meaning within Canadian politics to the extent that it is recognized and accepted by the settler state. While recognition has expanded over the years, this maintains a colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and settlers. The BC Government's implementation of the UNDRIP through the Act offers little opportunity for substantive change in this relationship. Instead of accepting Indigenous authority, the Declaration frames its engagement with First Nations—themselves a colonial construct—as being through those 'rights' imbued on them through settler legal frameworks, and recognized by the Government. One example of this is the ongoing confrontation at the Unist'ot'en Action Camp, which at the time of this writing was still undergoing a structured invasion by the RCMP in order to enforce Coastal Gas Link's (CGL) work order to build a liquefied natural gas pipeline opposed by the hereditary chiefs. This invasion is itself a product of the BC Government choosing to recognize the settler-derived authority of the Wet'suwet'en Band Council instead of the authority of the hereditary chiefs who hold not only traditional authority derived from their responsibilities to the yintah (territory), but also, ironically, underlying authority as found in the Delgamuukw decision. While the CGL pipeline had been approved for construction prior to the passage of Bill 41, and thus is not be

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<sup>115</sup> This is especially true when understood through the framing of 'lawfare' (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2007), whereby the Declaration is brought into settler law, rather than making settler law subordinate to it.

covered under the new expectations, I use the invasion of the Camp to highlight the continued reliance on colonial relations of power and authority—even in an age of reconciliation.

The second and third reasons can in some respects be seen to flow from the initial reinforcement of settler authority and a framework of recognition. Both also reflect a reification of settler cosmologies over Indigenous ones. As I pointed to above, the BC Government’s implementation of the Declaration opens the possibility for the construction of new and meaningful Indigenous-settler relationships. However, in both the Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia’s Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (Ministry of Indigenous Relations, 2018) as well as the communications around the implementation of the Declaration itself, the Government identifies only its relationships with individual (First) Nations. This misses out on the way in which settlers entered into, and continue to be embedded within, relationships with the rest of Creation—a central part of Coulthard’s (2014) ‘grounded normativity’ and of Wet’suwet’en (and many other) Indigenous cosmologies as I have spoken to throughout the text.

Third, these relationships also further an incorporative approach to engagement. This is notable in the attention paid to creating economic opportunity for Indigenous individuals through a partnership based approach (Ministry of Indigenous Relations, ‘A New Path Forward’, web). While economic relationships are indeed important, the incorporative nature of bringing Indigenous peoples *into* BC’s existing economy, even when done through ‘partnership’ initiatives, strikes me as further reinforcing the relationship of (a)partnership I theorized in Chapter 1. Indeed, in bringing Indigenous individuals and their territories into settler coloniality, indigeneity understood as governance structures and mechanisms, legal orders, and cosmologies are further marginalized. Again, the invasion of Wet’suwet’en yintah illustrates this on a

concrete level. That the invasion came after the passage of Bill 41 further speaks volumes. Instead of moves towards a decolonized and shared future, the BC Government's implementation of the UNDRIP seems inconsistent, with decisions being made simultaneously that reinforce those colonial relationships.

What I have sought to stress throughout this dissertation is that it is important to analyze policy, and the knowledges underpinning it, when trying to understand the way in which settler colonial reproduction becomes possible. In that respect, the CEF as a policy-level ecosystem monitoring initiative stands out for its incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and holistic understanding of the regional life (Public Servant 1 and 2. Personal Interview. 2018). Similarly to the FREP, the CEF is a resource monitoring and management protocol, though unlike the FREP, once fully implemented,<sup>116</sup> the Framework protocols (those documents which outline the information collected and analyzed) are intended to mobilize a cumulative lens that takes into account not only past and present actions, but also future actions (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations, CEF FAQs, web). This attention to the future allows for greater potential for accuracy in forecasting when doing planning and assessment work. In addition, two other features of the Framework stand out in relation to the FREP analyzed in Chapter Six. First, the assessments are intended to account for both human activities and natural processes. While the FREP may ultimately have captured both, it did so almost incidentally, and without a clear picture as to which processes produced which effects.

Second, whereas the FREP included Indigenous consultation as an after-the-fact process, the officials I spoke with sought to stress that the building of the CEF has included Indigenous

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<sup>116</sup> Currently the CEF is only organized around an interim policy, with the expectation that a more complete and final policy direction will be approved by BC's government in the (relatively) near future (Public Servant 1 and 2. Personal Interview. 2018).

engagement from the beginning (Public Servant 1 and 2. Personal Interview. 2018). This can be seen not only in the frequency and depth of the consultation processes described to me in the interviews, but also concretely in the ‘values’<sup>117</sup> government officials selected as guiding and framing their assessments. These officials also noted that the values themselves were identified and defined (including the indicators used and data to be collected) by provincial officials through discussions and “engagement sessions” with those First Nations who elected to be a part of the process (Public Servant 1 and 2. Personal Interview. 2018). Notably, these sessions were described as being deeper than would be a consultation, and included ceremony and in some cases, feasts (Public Servant 1 and 2. Personal Interview. 2018). Specifically, and with reference to the regional assessments which include the Wet’suwet’en nation’s territory—which sits on the edges of the Skeena and Omineca regional boundaries within the CEF territorial distribution—the results of these engagement sessions include the construction of monitoring values such as the Grizzly Bear, Moose, Old Forest, and Medicinal Plants, among others. Indeed, it is notable that unlike with the FREP, the values centred in the CEF are not those which would traditionally be the focus of industry attention. This would seem to offer evidence of a different approach to land and resource management, one that emphasizes less the economic importance of a value to industry.

In this respect, like the pledge regarding the UNDRIP, the CEF as a policy instrument seems to be a positive step forward in terms of incorporating Indigenous peoples and knowledge into the policymaking and resource management process. However, what is difficult to ascertain—and which, as a result, will be included in my future work in this area described

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<sup>117</sup> Defined by the CEF as “things that the people and government of BC care about and see as important for assuring the integrity and well-being of the province’s people and communities, economies and ecological systems...” (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Resource Operations, CEF ‘Values’, web).

below—is the extent to which Indigenous knowledge is centred in the Framework. This is because while the communications materials, and my interviews, around the Framework all speak to the importance and depth of the engagement with First Nations, none of the reports on the values refer to Indigenous knowledge specifically. Instead, each refers to either the work of BC Government officials or other scientists and consultants as “foundational” to building the protocols (Provincial Moose Technical Working Group, 2018). Without specific references and descriptions of the way in which Indigenous knowledge was incorporated in the government’s documents, notes and reports on the CEF, it is difficult to assess the CEF’s effectiveness in building relationships and a shared future between Indigenous nations and settler governments. Further access to documentation through the BC Government’s Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) program, or more fulsome ethnographic work with nations engaging with provincial officials would both be potential ways at accessing this information. Given the opportunity, both may be a part of the future research work I referenced in Chapter Two, and which is further described below.

Further exacerbating the difficulty in assessing the level of meaningful engagement by the BC Government are the decisions it has made. Exemplary here is the decision to move forward with the Site C dam project in northeastern BC. The project’s approval was reconfirmed in December 2017 by the BC New Democratic Party, which had just formed government in the province. The project will include a massive hydroelectric megadam. It is described by provincial officials as necessary to meet upcoming power needs for the province in an environmentally-sustainable way (BC Government News, 2017).<sup>118</sup> Opponents of the project include many of the First Nations in the area, including those whose territory will be flooded as a

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<sup>118</sup> In the controversy over the project, the John Horgan, the Premier, expressed discontent at the management of the project by the previous BC Liberal government, while reaffirming its need to continue.

result, with the impacts being described as amounting to “cultural genocide” by the chief of the West Moberly First Nation (Cox, 2019a).<sup>119</sup> While the provincial government is not disputing that the territory will be affected, they are disputing the permanence of the impacts, and whether they constitute a need to halt the project (Cox, 2019b).

The statements by the West Moberly First Nation, and their subsequent decision to continue with legal action (Cox, 2019b; Oud, 2019), are notable as this is one of the First Nations explicitly identified as a ‘partner’ with the government on assessments under the CEF (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Northeast Regional webpage, web)—a process that would have been ongoing during the time of decision-making around Site C. That is, the BC Government was simultaneously partnering with First Nations in the region to better capture the cumulative effects of both natural and human impacts on land and making the decision to move forward with a project it knew would flood that very territory. Understood through the framing of relationships and engagements, we can see the exercising of settler authority despite the opposition of Indigenous nations. Moreover, the provincial government would have known of the impacts of the project, and had contemporary access to Indigenous knowledge of it, and decided to move ahead with the project regardless. Ultimately, the decision was to reinforce settler understandings of impact mitigation, despite an inability to lessen the destruction of Indigenous relationships to, and on, their territory. While the example of the Site C megadam does not in and of itself undermine the claims of my interview participants to more meaningful engagement of Indigenous knowledge through the CEF, it does highlight that this engagement continues to mean incorporation of indigeneity into settler coloniality.

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<sup>119</sup> This is not the only example of such a megaproject being undertaken despite it being known that it would flood Indigenous territories. The Kenney Dam’s construction in the 1950s flooded the territory next to that of the Wet’suwet’en nation, with affected nations continuing to seek redress through court processes in BC today (Trumpener, 2019).



The conceit of this project has been that, following Allan (2018), knowledge and cosmology are foundational to international order and worldmaking. If that is the case then moves towards inclusion of Indigenous knowledge in policymaking such as the CEF, or the alignment of provincial laws with the UNDRIP, hold the promise of a shared future that could be built through relationships between Indigenous nations and settlers (and their governments). However, while there have been some moves towards this, at the end of the day the moves the BC government has made towards building a shared future have not been accompanied by a demonstrated willingness to move away from a colonial relationship. I do not want to undersell the importance of recognizing Indigenous rights and title, or increasing opportunities for joint decision-making. However, neither of these require a shift away from existing relationships of power on which existing models of governance have been built. Moreover, if reconciliation is to be based on a politics of recognition enacted through the continued supremacy of settler law and legal frameworks, there is little indication of meaningful moves towards decolonization.

### *Indigenous Futures Outside of Settler Enclosure*

As I have described settler colonialism throughout this dissertation, the phenomenon can seem all-encompassing. Especially when framed in terms of structural dispossession, and through the ways in which much of the seeming potential for organizing continues to operate within settler structures of power, or reinforces a system organized by settler logics and continually (re)produced by knowledges. It is important however, to identify and speak to the ways in which these settler modes of governance and their own futurity are indeed *contingent*. That is, despite the reification of dispossession, it is not a ‘natural’ phenomenon, and in analyzing settler modes of governance it is crucial to highlight the ways through which Indigenous nations have continued to survive, and to maintain their own knowledges, languages, and modes of

governance. Indeed, it is especially crucial for me as a settler scholar to do so given my own position within the settler structures of power—both as a result of my settler identity and the privileges that this affords me, as well as because of my role within a discipline, an academy and an academic workforce that has historically been at the forefront of ‘colonial sciences’ (Smith, 2012; Vitalis, 2015). In closing then, I want to highlight Indigenous presence and futurity in the face of settler replacement (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013), as together they begin to point to the ways in which nations are already building this future as a move towards a decolonized future.

My reference point through which to speak to futurity is the Wet’suwet’en nation. As my own travels to what is now the Bulkley-Nechako region have taught me, Wet’suwet’en presence there is not a recent phenomenon; rather, as I have described in this dissertation, and as Mills (1994) has shown, the Wet’suwet’en have maintained their own modes of governance and legal system for generations. While this manifested itself in the Delgamuukw case with the hereditary chiefs taking on a prominent role in the preparation of the trial, it has perhaps become even more apparent through the Unist’ot’en Action Camp. Despite being tucked away in a remote area of northern BC, the Camp has captured international attention because of Coastal Gas Link’s (CGL) enforcement of work orders permitting it to build an LNG pipeline across Wet’suwet’en yintah in the face of opposition. This opposition comes from not only members of the nation, but notably for my discussion regarding futurity here, those traditional chiefs whose authority derives from their positions as the leaders of each Wet’suwet’en house and clan. These leaders have each offered their support to the Camp even in the face of RCMP and government pressure, and especially important in this have been those on whose territory the Camp and its resulting decolonial infrastructure have been built. This support has been crucial to the Camp given CGL’s

engagement with Band Council leaders, whose authority is drawn from their recognition by the federal government. Not only has it offered the Camp a moral and political support within the nation, but as a result it offers an illustration of the contemporary importance of ‘traditional’ governance systems and authorities which draw their legitimacy not from settler governments, but from the nation’s own legal systems and relationships. In the case of the Camp, this has included the laying of Eagle Down to concretely signal the nation’s opposition to extractive industrial development with the backing of Wet’suwet’en law.

However, the Camp itself offers much more than a site to protest. As the Camp developed, it had begun centring healing as its primary objective and activity, even going so far as to construct a lodge where visitors both Wet’suwet’en and non-Wet’suwet’en were welcome to come and stay on their own journeys towards decolonization. A defining part of these journeys as they take place through the Camp has been its recreation of bonds and relationships between the Wet’suwet’en and their territories. According to media accounts as well as my own discussions there, this rebuilding of relationships was at the heart of the construction of the Camp; however, it took the threat the pipelines represent to spur the action on. This initial moment has had its own effects in terms of the whiteness of supporters who initially arrived at the Camp, but over time the Camp had become more of a space for supporting decolonization through reconnecting to territory and all our relations than it has a space for violent resistance to extractive capitalism. This is evident not only in the physical construction of the healing lodge and other space in the Camp itself, but also in that since at least 2016 the Camp has been the site of a field education course run by UNBC’s Department of First Nations Studies. Other Camp-only land educational activities have been ongoing through the Camp for longer. We can see these as a part of a decolonizing project similar to those I described in Chapters One and Two. In

the case of the Camp, it is one that centres the decolonial potential of education as a way of interrupting processes of settler colonial reproduction (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013) and building new possibilities in the future.

This move towards reclamation and rebuilding by the Wet'suwet'en has not only taken place on the territory itself. In addition to re-occupying their territory with a view towards transforming the space into an area of decolonial healing, rather than settler property, the nation has also undertaken processes to reclaim place names over their territory. One of the early and most impactful settlers in the area was Father Adrien Gabriel Morice, an Oblate missionary posted to the region from 1885 to 1905. Father Morice is well known in the area for his work cataloguing a history of the region, *The History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, Formerly New Caledonia, 1660–1880*, and producing the first written syllabic script for 'Carrier', which he (wrongly) understood to be the language of the Indigenous nations of the area. As a result of his prominence, many of the landmarks in and around the Wet'suwet'en's territory were named after him, including the largest town of the nation, Moricetown. However, as the Wet'suwet'en have undertaken the process of reaffirming their own history and legal orders, language has been an essential part of this. As Mills (2005) describes in relation to the testimony of Maxlalex (Johnny David) (as I refer to in Chapter Five), the language has always been spoken within the nation. However, now the Wet'suwet'en are expanding access to language classes and reclaiming their own names for landmarks across the territory. Indeed, only a year prior to my arrival in the territory in Fall 2017 the Wet'suwet'en had completed the process of changing the name of Moricetown to Witset. And instead of the Camp's being built on the banks of the Morice River, which cuts across provincial Crown Land, it was instead built alongside Wedzin Kwah on Wet'suwet'en yintah. While perhaps not a formal transfer of

authority or power, the re-affirmations of Wet'suwet'en language on their territory can be seen, and indeed are discussed among members of the nation itself, as enabling the rebuilding of relationships on the yintah, and ultimately revitalizing the nation. In doing so, the nation is affirming its own futurity, one which is not subject to the limits of the settler imaginary.

I am hopeful that I will be able to offer my own form of support in this decolonizing effort. As I mentioned in my Introduction, and Chapter Two, this is not the end of my own engagement with either the Wet'suwet'en or questions of the reproduction of settler coloniality. On a personal level this is due to my own commitments to supporting the work of decolonization and the dismantling of the global colour line. I discussed in both the Introduction and Chapter 1 that my approach to scholarship is informed (though, importantly not directed) by my own commitments to organizing and community-focused work. From these also flow an ongoing academic engagement with the major themes of this dissertation. Following from what I have done here, my next project will also build into new areas of inquiry. As I stated in Chapter Two, the research for this dissertation left both much on the cutting-room floor in the form of unused federal ATIP documents, as well as data from interviews and other archival sources. Moreover, in putting together this text, I was not able to access some of those documents that might be available to me through the BC government's own ATIP program. In these documents there is a treasure-trove of information to be analyzed, and I am especially hoping to use them to trace the channels through which the policy knowledge I focus on in this dissertation passes. This sort of genealogical analysis will allow me to speak directly to the specific programs constructed on the knowledges I analyze here. While this is relatively straightforward for BC's Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP), the knowledge produced through the APS is much more broad in

scope, and tracing its travels will offer insights into the way in which so much of settler Canada is built on the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous peoples.

In addition to analyzing the existing documents I have collected—and have identified as relevant to the focus of my work here—I am also in the process of building the more community-engaged project I referenced in Chapter Two. This will be undertaken through a postdoctoral fellowship at UNBC, where I already have built a network of academic colleagues whose experience and expertise (both with Indigenous nations and the Wet’suwet’en specifically) will be of immense help. This project is perhaps to look more like the original project I was interested in undertaking when I left for the Wet’suwet’en yintah in Fall 2017: one which looks to the impacts of data collection on the community itself. However, it will at the same time be broader than that, and focus more on the Wet’suwet’en-provincial relationships being built through policies such as the Cumulative Effects Framework, ongoing territorial negotiations, agricultural land use planning, implementation of the Declaration, and indeed the ongoing standoff at the UAC over pipelines and the development of extractive infrastructure.

Researching and analyzing these relationships, and the knowledge that is mobilized through them, can tell us much about the way in which a shared future can be built through the instantiation of multiple, overlapping, and ‘complex’ sovereignties (Lightfoot & MacDonald, 2017; Simpson, 2014). In so doing we may be able to get a view into the way in which the global colour line can be undone, dismantled in favour of an inclusive world-making project which takes seriously our responsibilities to each other, and to the rest of Creation.

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