

Chilcotin Conflict Inquiry

(Slide 1) Intro: Read narrative:

The blood of the twelve men spilled into the Homathco River before dawn on the morning of April 29th, 1864 was only the beginning. By the end of May, 19 road-builders, packers and a farmer would be dead. It was the deadliest attack by Aboriginal People on immigrants in western Canada, before or since. Within six weeks, an army of over 100 men were in the field to hunt down the killers.

Finding them was not going to be easy. The killings had taken place in a remote triangle in central British Columbia, a country of jagged mountains, torrential rivers, and high plateau, remote from any settlements and inaccessible by road or even a horse trail. The dead had been trying to change that, they all had some connection to the attempt to build a road from the coast to the goldfields of the Cariboo.

This was the territory of the Tsilhqot'in people who had lived on the high Chilcotin Plateau for centuries, perhaps for eons. The survivors of the attacks identified the principal leader of the more than 20 involved in the killings as a Tsilhqot'in chief, who was called by his people "Klatsassin".

Ask: does anyone know what this story is referring to? A: This was the Chilcotin Conflict (p.84-85 in text)

(Slide 2) The Plan:

Solve the Mystery: Was this a massacre (history books) or a war (Tsilhqot'in)?

Learn about race, violence, and justice on the Canadian colonial frontier.

Some Questions we will uncover in our inquiry: *Why* did this happen? *Why* did the Tsilhqot'in attack? Was it a case of murder, justifiable homicide, or war? Were these deaths an inevitable result of cultural collision? Did each side have a right to self-defense?

Were the men hanged guilty of murder or was it self-defense? Were their tactics designed to protect their homeland? Would they have been convicted by the same evidence if they were non-aboriginal?

(Slide 3) MAIN QUESTION: WAS THIS A WAR?

We need to look at the definition of war and other possibilities...

STEP 1) Definitions Activity:

Group brainstorms: Definitions of massacre, uprising, terrorism, war, resistance (chart paper on walls)

Students in to 5 pre-made groups. Each group will be given a different coloured marker and will have 2 minutes at each poster, then move on to the next.

Round 1: Discuss and come up with a definition for your word

Round 2: Add anything you think is missing from the definition. Discuss and come up with an/some example(s) for your word

Round 3: Add anything to definition/example. Discuss and come up with a sentence using your word

Round 4: Add anything to definition/example. Discuss and come up with some non-examples of your word.

Round 5: Add anything else that you think should be included.

(Show them an example of what this will look like: Rebellion)

See what they come up with: might have to add some info to clarify differences?

Massacre: some group is killed by another. Perpetrators perceived to be in total control of force... victimized party is perceived to be helpless/innocent /unresisting with regard to any legitimate offense. Brutal, indiscriminately. violent killing of many people. atrocity, cruelty. cruel murder.

Uprising/Rebellion/Revolt: A refusal of obedience or order. Aimed at destroying/taking over the position of an established authority. Could be nonviolent or violent. Most in history have sought to establish a new government in their place. Take violent action against an established authority. An attempt to end the authority of a person/body by rebelling.

Terrorism: Criminal acts intended to provoke state of terror in general public/group of people/certain people for political purposes. Use of violence and threats to intimidate or coerce, especially for political purposes. Unlawful/threatened use of force or violence by a person/organized group against people/property with intention of intimidating/coercing societies/governments, often for ideological or political reasons.

Resistance: The use of force or violence to oppose someone or something. Refusal to accept or comply with something. A group working to overthrow the occupying power, usually by acts of sabotage, guerilla warfare, etc. Term usually used when movement is considered legitimate. People fighting against colonial domination and alien occupation. Depending on perspective of state's government may be labeled terrorist group (whether= lawful/unlawful)

War: state of armed conflict between different countries/different groups within a country. Situation in which people/groups compete with or fight against each other. Organized effort by government or large organization to stop/defeat something that is viewed as dangerous/bad. Extreme violence, generally social disruption, economic destruction. political violence- intentional and widespread armed conflict.

STEP 2) Learn More: Ppt & Reading

Powerpoint:

Context:

Gold Rush: Discovery of gold in the Cariboo in 1858. Previously, few went to the interior of province, but now people came along the routes from the Fraser River in search of gold.

Small Pox Epidemic: Thought to have been started by an incoming miner in 1862. It struck the Tsilhqot'in and was devastating. 1/2 to 2/3 of population died in 1862-63.

Building of the road: In 1862 Alfred Waddington began lobbying for a wagon road from Bute Inlet to Fort Alexandria where it would connect to the Cariboo Road and continue on to the goldfields at Barkerville. Received approval in 1863.

Overview:

- Commonly called Chilcotin War/Bute Inlet Massacre
- Confrontation between Tsilhqot'in people and crew of white road construction workers
- Killed: 19 men (colonial), 6 men (Tsilhqot'in)
 - 14 men (employed by Waddington) killed
 - 3 men with pack train killed
 - Ferryman & Settler at Puntzi Lake killed
 - Klatsassin + 5 others hanged

Events:

Day 1: Ferryman refused Tsilhqot'in men's demands for food. He was shot and his body was thrown in to the river. Food stores and supplies were looted.

Day 2: Workers' camp was attacked at daylight. Three escaped and fled down the river. The remaining crew was killed and their bodies were thrown in the river.

Further up the trail, foreman William Brewster and three of his crew were working on the trail. They were killed. Brewster's body was mutilated, and the other bodies were thrown in the river.

The settler William Manning was killed at his farm at Puntzi Lake.

A pack train was warned to stay away, but they continued in to the area. They were ambushed and three of the drivers were killed.

Colonial Response:

Nearly 200 troops as well as Governor Seymour left from New Westminster to find the men. They searched through the summer.

Eventually they arranged a "safe" meeting between the Governor and Klatsassin and his men (Tellood, Tah-pitt, Piele, and Chessus). The Tsilhqot'in thought they were going to negotiate a peace settlement. When they arrived, unarmed, they were arrested and charged with murder. They were tried in September of 1864. They said that they were waging war, not committing murder. They were found guilty of murder and hanged.

Causes?

Waddington thought that the incident was caused by the fears of the introduction of smallpox.

One of his crew members argued that it was caused by providing firearms to the Tsilhqot'in at a time when they were suffering from lack of food.

The judge who presided over the case argued that it was caused by the Tsilhqot'in concern over land title.

Other accounts say that the Tsilhqot'in packers in Brewster's crew were starving while the white members of the crew were well supplied.

Now each group will read info in resource package + textbook to complete their evidence sheets. Each group has handouts to organize their information.

STEP 3) Analysis & Decision

Decide if *you* would call the conflict a war.

List the evidence that supports it being called a war.

List the evidence that does not support it being called a war.

If you decide it was not a war, what label would you give the conflict?

Another question to discuss: How do you think the Tsilhqot'in people would have labeled it? What about by colonial society?

STEP 4) Presentation of Decision

As a group, you will need to tell the class what you decided and why. What are the key points that back up your decision?

STEP 5) Reflection Journal

- *What are your personal views on what the Chilcotin conflict was? Are they different from what your group came up with?*
- *What is the most memorable or interesting thing that you learned today?*