

# THE CHILCOTIN MYSTERY

*In this package you will find some resources to help you uncover the mystery of the Chilcotin Conflict. Why did the Tsilhqot'in attack? Was it a case of murder, justifiable homicide, resistance, massacre, or war? Were these deaths an inevitable result of cultural collision? Were the men hanged guilty of murder or was it self-defense?*

**GROUP #\_\_**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**(Student names...)**

**DUE TO THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE INFORMATION ENCLOSED PLEASE WAIT FOR INSTRUCTION TO OPEN THIS PACKAGE.**

# YOUR EVIDENCE

*Remember, nothing in history is 100% true or accurate. This information is based on a variety of primary documents which have biases and may or may not convey the "truth."*

- **INTRODUCTION**

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".

- **POWERPOINT NOTES**

**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 (Teloot, 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.

- **Case Study: The Chilcotin "War" pp. 84-85 of your Textbook**
- **Our Definition Posters**

How did the following features of colonial expansion play a role?

DISEASE

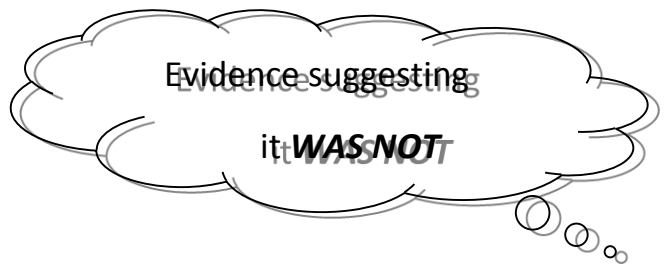
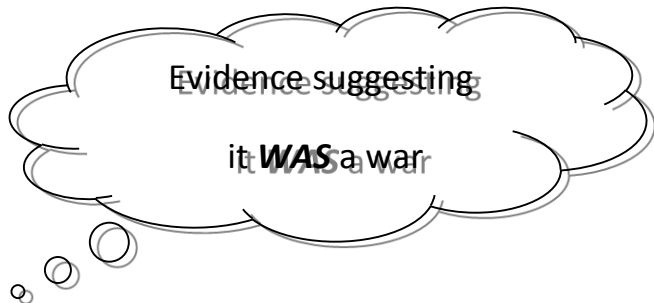
GOLD RUSH

*Chilcotin  
Conflict*

DIFFERING WORLD VIEWS

COLONIAL GOV. POLICIES

# ORGANIZE THE EVIDENCE



*Other things to consider:*

**Conclusion:**      **WAS IT A WAR?**                      **YES**                      **NO**

If **NO**, it was a \_\_\_\_\_