

Looking for Causes

Just before midnight one dark and stormy night, a man called John Smith, an engine mechanic, was sitting in an isolated cabin in the woods. As he reached for a cigarette, he noticed he had only one left. Glancing at his watch, he realized that he had just enough time to hop in his car, and drive to the gas station down the road to buy cigarettes before it closed. As his car pulled out of his driveway and onto the highway, it was hit by his neighbour, who, returning from a long night of drinking, was unable to stop his car soon enough on the icy road. Smith was killed instantly. Later, as the townspeople were discussing the sad event, they shook their heads one after another and said, “We always knew that smoking would kill Smith.” It is worth noting that local officials had long been warned of the dangers of that part of the highway, especially in winter, and yet they seemed uninterested in doing anything about it. Apparently because the residents of that part of the town did not have any influence with local authorities. Others wondered if the liquor laws had been more faithfully enforced in the town whether the neighbour who smashed into Smith would have been as drunk as was.¹

Immediate Causes	Underlying Causes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are often the most obvious and easily identifiable; • typically occur just prior to the event in question; • removal of immediate causes may do little to prevent similar events from reoccurring because the bigger factors are still in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are usually less obvious and more difficult to identify; • are often a broader underlying belief, condition, or practice and not tied to a single event; • removal of an underlying cause may help avoid a similar event from occurring.

¹ Taken from *Heaven & Hell on Earth: The Massacre of the “Black” Donnellys*, part of the Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History series: www.canadianmysteries.ca

Immediate and Underlying Causes of the Accident

Immediate Causes	Underlying Causes
<i>John Smith ran out of cigarettes and if he wasn't a smoker he wouldn't have got into this accident.</i>	<i>This part of the highway had long been dangerous and despite warnings the authorities had failed to do anything about it.</i>
<i>John Smith didn't exercise enough caution when pulling his car out of his driveway and onto the highway.</i>	<i>The town council was biased against recommendations and complaints made by people in part of the town.</i>
<i>The roads were icy and difficult to drive on.</i>	<i>Liquor laws in the town are not faithfully enforced by the police.</i>
<i>John Smith's neighbour who crashed into him was driving while impaired from alcohol.</i>	
<i>John Smith's neighbour who crashed into him failed to consider the icy conditions on the road.</i>	

Factors in the Creation of the Colony of British Columbia

<p>Cause A: British government feared that the United States would annex the mainland</p>	<p>Explanation: Throughout the 19th century there was conflict between the British government and the American government over territorial claims in the Pacific Northwest. Both sides attempted to strengthen their claims to land by encouraging settlement and economic development. After the discovery of gold in the mainland of BC the British government was worried that an influx of American miners into British territory would lead the American government to try and annex [take] the land and combine it with the Oregon Territory. The British Government knew that unless they established a colony on the mainland there was a risk of losing the territory to the United States.</p>
<p>Cause B: British government wanted to protect gold resources on the mainland</p>	<p>Explanation: The Hudson's Bay Company was granted exclusive trading rights with the Aboriginals on the mainland in 1838, but had no other exclusive rights to the area. It had no authority to stop settlers from moving in, and it had no rights to form a government, or interfere with any commercial interests in the area other than the exclusive trade it had with Aboriginal peoples. If the British government wanted to protect its gold and other mineral resources, it had to replace the commercial interests of the HBC with a formal British colony that would make sure that miners were regulated, licensed and taxed.</p>
<p>Cause C: British government wanted to avoid conflict between Aboriginal people and miners</p>	<p>Explanation: When miners from the Oregon Territory began entering Aboriginal land on the mainland during the Gold Rush, it increased the possibility of serious conflict between miners and local Aboriginal groups who believed that the land and its resources belonged to them. The British Government felt that they needed to establish a formal British colony on the mainland that had the power and authority to defend Aboriginal Rights.</p>
<p>Cause D: British government wanted to end the Hudson's Bay Company trade monopoly and promote free trade</p>	<p>Explanation: The trade monopoly granted to the HBC west of the Rocky Mountains was due to expire on May 30, 1859 and many members of the British government opposed the monopoly because they believed that it was out of date and not as desirable as free trade. The British government decided to cancel the monopoly that was about to expire and established a colony in British Columbia, which it was fully entitled to do.</p>

Core Documents: What Were the Real Reasons for Creating the Colony of British Columbia?

Document #1

Douglas Francis, Richard Jones and Donald Smith are professors of history at Canadian universities. They have written a popular history of Canada:

Nevertheless, American president James Polk, who won the presidential election in December 1844 with the electoral slogan '54°40' or fight,' demanded all of 'Oregon,' up to the Russian border.

In his inaugural address in March, President Polk reaffirmed his position that the United States' title to Oregon was 'clear and unquestionable.' Great popular support existed for his stand. In the summer of 1845, the expansionist newspaper, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, introduced in an editorial the phrase, 'manifest destiny.' The paper argued that foreign governments were attempting to check 'the fulfillment of our manifest destiny [the belief that the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific Ocean] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.' Within months, the phrase became common usage throughout the United States.

Source: R. Douglas Francis, Richard Jones, and Donald B. Smith, eds., *Origins: Canadian History to Confederation*. Fifth edition. (Scarborough, ON: Nelson, 2004), p. 436.

Document #2

James Douglas, Governor of the nearby Colony of Vancouver Island, writes to his superior in the Colonial Office in London, England:

[T]here is much reason to fear that serious affrays [public fights] may take place between the natives and the motley [great diversity of a group] adventurers, who will be attracted by the reputed wealth of the country, from the United States possessions in Oregon, and may probably attempt to overpower the opposition of the natives by force of arms, and thus endanger the peace of the country.

I beg to submit, if in that case, it may not become a question whether the Natives are entitled to the protection of Her Majesty's Government; and if an officer invested with the requisite authority should not, without delay, be appointed for that purpose.

Source: Despatch to London, Douglas to Labouchere, 8657, CO 305/8, p. 108; received 18 September, No. 22, Victoria Vancouver's Island, 15th July 1857.

Document #3

Margaret Ormsby, a University of British Columbia history professor, wrote a number of books, including a book commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Colony of British Columbia:

The gold excitement offered Lytton [British politician] the excuse for canceling the trading rights of the Hudson's Bay Company in the territory west of the Rocky Mountains. He decided to constitute [create] a new British colony, not because of his faith in the value of the new mineral resources or fear of American expansion, but because the moment was propitious [favorable] to open the area to free trade. He would have been more than a little surprised to learn that Chief Factor Douglas had already decided to announce to the Directors of the Hudson's Bay Company his considered opinion that the Gold Rush had spelled the doom of monopoly.

Source: Margaret Ormsby. *British Columbia: A History*. (Vancouver: MacMillan, 1958/1971), p. 150.

Document #4

James Douglas, Governor of the nearby Colony of Vancouver Island, writes to his superior in the Colonial Office in London, England:

The search for gold and "prospecting" of the country, had up to the last dates from the interior been carried on almost exclusively by the native Indian population, who have discovered the productive [gold] beds, and put out almost all the gold, about eight hundred ounces, which has been hitherto exported from the country; and who are moreover extremely jealous of the whites and strongly opposed to their digging the soil for gold . . .

Source: Despatch to London, Douglas to Labouchere, 5180, CO 305/9, p. 61; registered 29 May, No. 15, Victoria Vancouver's Island, 6 April 1858.

Document #5

James Douglas, Governor of the nearby Colony of Vancouver Island, writes to his superior in the Colonial Office in London, England:

I have as a preparatory [introductory] step, towards the proposed measures [steps] for the preservation of peace and order this day, issued a proclamation [official announcement] declaring the rights [ownership] of the crown in respect to gold found in its natural place of deposit within the limits of Fraser's River and Thompson's River Districts, within which are situated the "Couteau Mines," [mines on Thompson and Fraser Rivers] and forbidding all persons to dig or disturb the soil in search of Gold until authorized on that behalf by Her Majesty's Colonial Government.

Source: Despatch to London, Douglas to Labouchere, 2084, CO 305/8, p. 271; received 2 March 1858, No. 35, Victoria Vancouver's Island, 29th December 1857.

Document #6

A senior official in the Colonial Office in London, England, writes to James Douglas, Governor of the nearby Colony of Vancouver Island:

[Y]ou might find some one capable of . . . furnishing [providing] me, as early as possible, with a Report of the general capacities [capabilities] of the harbour of Vancouver—their advantages and defects—of the mouth of the Fraser's River, as the site of the Entry into British Columbia apart from the Island—of the probabilities of a Coal superior [better] for steam purposes to that of the Island, which may be found in the Main Land of British Columbia, and such other information as may guide the British Government to the best and readiest means [the best ways] of developing the various and the differing resources both of the Island and the mainland—resources which have so strangely been concealed [hidden] for ages, which are now so suddenly brought to light, and which may be destined to effect at no very distant period a marked [significant] and permanent change in the commerce and Navigation of the known world.

Source: Despatch from London, Lytton to Douglas, CO 410/1, p. 160, No. 8, 14 August 1858.

Document #7

James Douglas, Governor of the nearby Colony of Vancouver Island, writes to his superior in the Colonial Office in London, England:

Such being the purpose of the Natives; affrays [fights] and collisions with the whites will surely follow the accession [increase] of numbers, which the latter [Natives] are now receiving by the influx of adventurers from Vancouver's Island and the United States Territories in Oregon, and there is no doubt in my mind that sooner or later the intervention [involvement] of Her Majesty's Government will be required to restore and maintain the peace; up to the present time however, the country continues quiet; but simply I believe because the whites have not attempted to resist the impositions [laying out of conditions and demands] of the natives. I will however make it a part of my duty to keep you well informed in respect to the state [peace] of the gold country.

Source: Despatch to London, Douglas to Labouchere, 5180, CO 305/9, p. 61; registered 29 May, No. 15, Victoria Vancouver's Island, 6 April 1858.

Document #8

Donald Hauka is a former Vancouver newspaper reporter who has written several books including a history of the conflict during the Fraser River Gold Rush:

Politically, Douglas's greatest fear was that the American government would use the massive immigration of Yankees as a pretext for seizing New Caledonia. Both Mexico and Britain had already been forced to give up vast chunks of territory after a flood of U.S. immigrants swarmed over the mountains and onto the Pacific Coast. With Britain and the U.S. embroiled in the boundary dispute over the 49th parallel, there were four hundred American troops sitting on what the Yankees proposed as their side of the line. Indeed, some of the Americans on the gold fields were U.S. army deserters. . . .

As for the number of U.S. citizens in the territory, Douglas knew they could be controlled if they remained fractious [unruly, stubborn and difficult] and he gave them no single grievance [problem] around which to unite. Since he could not prevent the torrent of newcomers from settling the mainland, he would throw the territory open to settlement – but under the rule of British law.

Source: Donald J. Hauka, *Ned McGowan's War: The Birth of Modern British Columbia on the Fraser River Gold Fields*. (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2003), pp. 41, 42-43.

Document #9

John Galbraith was a professor of history at University of California and considered to be a pre-eminent scholar of the history of the British Empire:

Throughout most of his political career [British opposition leader William E.] Gladstone was a bitter opponent of the Hudson's Bay Company. To him it was an anachronism [out of date, from an earlier time], a throwback to the days when restrictive trade practices [monopolies] had been accepted . . . The Hudson's Bay Company was a monopoly [had exclusive control of trade from Rupert's Land to the Pacific Coast], and to Gladstone monopolies were per se [by their nature] hostile to the public interest. . . .

[T]he impending termination of the license [expired April 30, 1859] for exclusive trade west of Rupert's Land, and the beginning of Canadian agitation [frequent and persistent urging for a political cause] for acquisition of the Company's chartered territory [HBC control of Rupert's Land], caused an over-all investigation of the Company's operations.

The select committee of the House of Commons, which met in 1857 to take testimony and to present recommendations, devoted relatively little attention to Vancouver Island, but most witnesses who presented evidence concerning the colony were unfavorable to the Company . . . The committee recommended termination of the Company's tenure on the island, and the Colonial Office soon resumed correspondence with the governor and committee to achieve that end.

The character of this negotiation was suddenly transformed by the discovery of gold on the Fraser River and the rush of miners, principally from western United States, to the gold fields.

Source: John S. Galbraith. *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869*. (New York: Octagon Books, 1957/1977), pp. 288, 303.

Document #: _____

#5

Reading Around a Document

	Response (What you think)	Evidence (Clues from the document)
Author: Report everything you can about the <i>author</i> of the document.		
Audience: Report everything you can about the intended <i>audience</i> for the document.		
Context: Report everything you can about <i>where</i> and <i>when</i> the document was created.		
Type of document: Report on the kind of document it is (diary? personal letter? legal document?).		
Purpose: Report everything you can about the likely reason for creating the document.		
Credibility: Report everything you can about whether the information in the document is reliable or not.		

Sample: Reading Around a Document

	Response (What you think)	Evidence (Clues from the document)
Author: Report everything you can about the <i>author</i> of the document.	<i>A respected historian</i>	<i>Sounds like the title of a history book Written in the third person Is described as a professor of history at University of California and considered to be a pre-eminent scholar</i>
Audience: Report everything you can about the intended <i>audience</i> for the document.	<i>People interested in understanding the history of HBC in great detail</i>	<i>The title of the book suggests it is devoted exclusively to the HBC</i>
Context: Report everything you can about <i>where</i> and <i>when</i> the document was created.	<i>Written initially in 1957 and reprinted in 1977</i>	<i>Bibliographic information</i>
Type of document: Report on the kind of document it is (diary? personal letter? legal document?).	<i>Secondary historical account; a scholarly text</i>	<i>The title states it covers a period from 1821-1869, but it was published in 1957.</i>
Purpose: Report everything you can about the likely reason for creating the document.	<i>To provide a scholarly account of the events impacting the HBC</i>	<i>Opinions are supported with historical evidence</i>
Credibility: Report everything you can about whether the information in the document is reliable or not.	<i>Seems very reliable; the author is a university professor and is especially known for his work in this area. Offers specific comments supported with evidence</i>	<i>Is called "a pre-eminent scholar" Refers to primary source documents such as Gladstone's remarks and a select committee of Parliament. Written long after the event when an overview of many factors would be known.</i>

Name: _____

#7

Identifying Evidence about Causes

For each potential cause, look for evidence in the document about the following:

- Evidence that the cause was consistent or inconsistent with the broader values, ambitions and desires of key individuals and groups.
- Directly stated evidence of group or individual support or opposition to the cause.
- Indications that the cause made creation of the Colony more likely or unlikely.

Rate the importance of each potential cause using the following scale

3	2	1	0
Major contributing factor	Fairly important factor	Very little importance	No indication of its importance

Document # _____

Potential causes	Rating	Evidence of importance as a factor in creating the Colony
Cause A: Fear of US annexation	3 2 1 0	
Cause B: Protection of gold	3 2 1 0	
Cause C: Avoid conflict between Aboriginal people and miners	3 2 1 0	
Cause D: End monopolies and promote free trade	3 2 1 0	

Sample: Identifying Evidence about Causes

Rate the importance of each potential cause using the following scale

3	2	1	0
Major contributing factor	Fairly important factor	Very little importance	No indication of its importance

Document # 9

Potential causes	Rating	Evidence of importance as a factor in creating the Colony
Cause A: Fear of US annexation	3 2 1 0	<p><i>The sudden rush of miners from the western United States to the region is likely to have raised fears of annexation and increased desire in British Columbia for protection and stability</i></p> <p><i>If not for the Gold Rush, some other event might have confirmed fear of annexation but Gold Rush was particularly dramatic because of scale in such a short time that it probably made colonization more likely</i></p>
Cause B: Protection of gold	3 2 1 0	<i>No evidence in the document</i>
Cause C: Avoid conflict between Aboriginal people and miners	3 2 1 0	<i>No evidence in the document</i>
Cause D: End monopolies and promote free trade	3 2 1 0	<p><i>As Prime Minister, Gladstone's comments would likely carry some weight. His comments that monopoly is outdated and hostile to public interest is consistent with testimony at the House of Commons committee.</i></p> <p><i>The attitudes towards the HBC seem to be supported by many sources and seem to reflect strongly held beliefs.</i></p>

Name: _____

#9

Relative Importance of the Causes

Causes	Justification of Rankings or Assigned Percentage (Include evidence and explanation)
Cause A: Fear of US annexation Assigned rank or %: _____ _____	
Cause B: Protection of gold Assigned rank or %: _____ _____	
Cause C: Avoid conflict between Aboriginal people and miners Assigned rank or %: _____ _____	

Name: _____

#9

**Cause D: End monopolies and
promote free trade**

Assigned rank or %: _____

Name: _____

#10

Assessing the Importance of the Causes

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Offers plausible rankings/assigned percentage of the causes of the event	The rankings or assigned percentages are highly plausible and highly justifiable in light of the evidence and explanations provided.	The rankings or assigned percentages are clearly plausible and justifiable in light of the evidence and explanation provided.	The rankings or assigned percentages are plausible and somewhat justifiable in light of the evidence and explanations provided.	The rankings or assigned percentages are plausible but are barely justifiable given the evidence and explanations provided.	The rankings or assigned percentages are implausible and not justifiable given the evidence and explanations provided.
Comments/Explanation:					

Writing a Despatch to the Colonial Office

You are to assume the role of Governor of Vancouver Island and write a despatch (letter) to the British Colonial Office in December 1857 that attempts to convince the British officials of the important reasons why another colony should be established on the mainland of British Columbia.

Background Information About the Colonial Despatches

The Colonial Despatches are the complete correspondence (letters, reports, documents) exchanged between the British Colonial Office in London and the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia. The history of these colonies from 1846 to 1871 is included in the Colonial Despatches, in the words of those directly involved in the governance and development of the land, its resources, and its population. The British Colonial Office would send instructions to the governors of the Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, and the governors would report on important happenings and developments in their colonies. Because of the slow rate of communication, a letter from the colonies would not be received in London for three months, and the response would take another three months to arrive in the colonies. The long delay in correspondences caused many difficulties for both the Colonial Office and the Colonial Government. As a result, Governors were often required to make decisions and take action without any advice from the Colonial Office.

Format

Use the format below to write your Colonial Despatch.



Victoria, Colony of Vancouver's Island

*Despatch to London British Colonial Office
From (Your Name) to The Right Hon^{ble} Henry Labouchere
Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State
For the Colonial Department*

December 4, 1857

Sir,

These are the important reasons why another colony should be established on the mainland of British Columbia.

*I have the honor to be Sir
Your most obedient humble Servant
(Your Name)
Governor of Vancouver's Island*

Colonial British Columbia Timeline

- 1774 Captain Juan José Pérez Hernández drops anchor off the Queen Charlotte Islands, and at Nootka Sound, trading with Haida and Nuuchahnulth who canoed out to his vessel.
- 1775 Spanish captains Quadra and Hezeta land at 57 degrees north (midway up the Alaska Panhandle) and erect a cross, which they saw as a way of claiming territory.
- 1778 British Captain James Cook visits Nootka Sound looking for a Northwest Passage from the west. The crew repairs the ships and trades for furs. Cook's ships travel to Macao where furs are traded for a high price.
- 1785 to 1825 Height of the maritime trade for sea otter pelts on the Northwest Coast.
- 1789 Looking for a route to the Pacific Ocean to transport furs, North West Company (NWCo) explorer Alexander Mackenzie follows the Mackenzie River to the Arctic Ocean.
- 1790 Spain and Britain sign the Nootka Convention, agreeing that both countries have the right to trade for furs on the Pacific Northwest.
- 1792-94 George Vancouver maps the western coastline, proving there was no Northwest Passage.
- 1793 Alexander Mackenzie is guided along an aboriginal trading trail to the Pacific at Bella Coola.
- 1805 American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark reach the mouth of the Columbia River.
- 1805 Explorer Simon Fraser of the NWCo sets up fur trade posts at Fort St. James at Stuart Lake in New Caledonia.
- 1808 Simon Fraser (NWCo) travels down the river named after him. Rapids make this river unsuitable for transporting furs.
- 1811 David Thompson (NWCo) reaches the Pacific Ocean at the mouth of the Columbia River. Americans have already established a settlement at Astoria in the Oregon Territory.
- 1818 Great Britain and the United States sign an agreement to jointly occupy the region around Astoria in the Oregon territory.
- 1821 NWCo merges into the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).
- 1824 HBC establishes Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River, in the Oregon Territory.
- 1825 Russia's boundaries settled along Alaskan "panhandle", down to 54 degrees 40'.
- 1828 HBC establishes Fort Langley at the mouth of Fraser River as a supply post.
- 1831 HBC establishes Fort Simpson at the mouth of the Nass River on north coast below Alaska.
- 1830s Increasing American settlement in the Oregon Territory.
- 1839 Puget's Sound Agricultural Company, a subsidiary of the HBC, sets up operations at Fort Nisqually, to provide food for the HBC and for exports.
- 1841 The steamship *Beaver* begins transporting furs along the coast for the HBC.
- 1843 HBC establishes Fort Victoria on southern Vancouver Island on Lekwungen lands. Lekwungen people sell food to the HBC and work on agricultural development.
- 1843-44 Lekwungen leave their village sites in Esquimalt Harbour and Cadboro Bay and move to a site next to the newly created Fort Victoria.
- 1843-45 Hundreds of settlers travel to the Oregon Territory. US politicians campaign on the slogan, 54°40' or fight (the Alaskan Panhandle). The US has its eyes on territory as far north as Alaska.

1844 Wood behind the Lekwungen village catches fire, giving HBC trader Roderick Finlayson an excuse to force the Lekwungen to move across the harbour. It was from this point that they tried to control the trade of other First Nations with Fort Victoria.

1846 In April, the United States goes to war with Mexico over the American annexation of Texas.

1846 British Navy establishes a presence at Esquimalt Harbour near Fort Victoria.

1846 Britain and the United States sign the Treaty of Washington, setting the international boundary at the 49th parallel, and through the Juan de Fuca Strait.

1848 By the end of the war, the United States has annexed about half of Mexico's territory, including New Mexico and California.

1849 California gold rush.

1849 Britain establishes the colony of Vancouver Island, to be managed by the HBC, with a governor appointed by the British Colonial Office.

1849 Richard Blanshard is appointed the first governor of Vancouver Island. Because of conflicts with James Douglas and a lack of real authority, he resigns in September 1851.

1850-54 Douglas signs 14 treaties, or agreements, with bands in Victoria, Saanich, Sooke, Metchosin, and at the north end of Vancouver Island.

1850 Haida people bring gold from the Queen Charlotte Islands to the HBC. Rumours of this gold get out and American miners sail up the Queen Charlotte Islands trying to mine but are turned away by local people.

1851 Douglas, an HBC chief factor, becomes governor of Vancouver Island.

1854 The wheat crop of Victoria is enough to feed the local population, for the first and last time.

1850s Colonists coming to Vancouver Island are required to pay for land. Large landowners are expected to bring their own labourers. Voting rights are based on land ownership. This system models the British class system that requires citizens to pay for local public works. At this time, in the United States, land was free for settlers.

1850s The HBC purchases gold dust from Sto:lo and Nlaka'pamux people who collect it from the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. The HBC hoped to keep this trade quiet, to keep its monopoly over gold. Douglas let local people collect the gold as they had trapped the furs, but HBC sends it to London and makes a large profit. American miners from California move to Oregon and Washington, organizing themselves to fight wars against Indigenous people.

1851-58 Settlement on Vancouver Island: 180 settlers bought land in the southern part of the Island. The HBC sent out 641 immigrants from Britain to the island between 1848 and 1854 to work as agricultural labourers or coal miners. Some did not survive the voyage, or deserted to the United States. They agreed to work for 5 years in the colony, at the end of which they received 25 to 50 acres of land. About 400 of these immigrants stayed in the colony.

1854 Settler population of Vancouver Island is 774 (up from 30, 6 years earlier). People had settled in Victoria, Esquimalt, Sooke, Metchosin, San Juan Island, Nanaimo, Fort Rupert.

1855 A General Assembly is established that is elected by colonists with voting rights. Only 43 settlers had enough land to qualify them to vote (20 acres). They elected 7 members, 5 of whom had strong ties to the HBC. Even though the colony had representative government, the HBC maintained power.

1856 Indigenous population of Vancouver Island is 25,873.

1857 Nlaka'pamux people, on the mainland, expel American gold miners from their territories.

1858 Word of the gold gets out. In April, 400 miners arrive in Victoria on their way to look for gold in the Fraser River goldfields. Over the next decade, about 30,000 mostly male miners trek through British Columbia with gold fever. Most came via the United States, although many were originally from China, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

To regulate the miners, Douglas proclaimed that all gold on the mainland was the property of the British Crown. If someone wanted to mine, they had to obtain a license in Victoria. Douglas appoints gold commissioners. The digging for placer gold started in June of 1858, about 3 miles south of Fort Hope.

In Victoria, a tent city sprang up overnight. Merchants from San Francisco set up shops to supply the miners. About 200 buildings, most of them stores, went up in about 6 weeks. Town lots that had previously cost \$50 or \$75, would now sell for \$1500 to \$3000.

1858 Fraser River War breaks out between invading miners and local Indigenous people. Conflict is resolved by peace treaties, followed by the arrival of Douglas and the Royal Engineers.

1858 Britain establishes the colony of British Columbia on the mainland. Douglas becomes governor of both Vancouver Island and British Columbia, but gives up his position with HBC.

1859-61 Settlers could pre-empt 160 acres of unsurveyed land for free. Before they could purchase the land, they had to "improve" it by clearing the land for crops or animals, building a house, and putting up fences. The resident could then apply for a certificate of improvement, the land was surveyed, and the resident could purchase the land for a dollar an acre. When the policy was first introduced, Indigenous people also had the right to pre-empt land.

1858-64 Douglas instructed the gold commissioners to lay out reserves in the interior of the colony of British Columbia. Reserves are supposed to be placed where local Indigenous people request them, but the reserves are often too small.

1862-63 An estimated 20,000 Indigenous people died from smallpox in British Columbia during this epidemic, including 14,000 people along the coast. In Victoria, approximately 1000 - 1200 Indigenous people died from the disease.

1864 Douglas leaves office, and is replaced by governors Arthur Kennedy on the Island and Frederick Seymour on Mainland British Columbia. Commissioner Trutch downsizes reserves.

1866 Union of the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia.

1866 Indigenous people lose the right to pre-empt land in British Columbia.

1867 Canadian Confederation.

1871 British Columbia joins Confederation with promise of transcontinental railway. The federal government takes control of Indian affairs, but land remains under provincial control.

Colonial British Columbia Before the Gold Rush

The area that became the city of Victoria, British Columbia experienced dramatic changes between 1840 and 1860. This area is the traditional home of the Lekwungen people, who are members of the Coast Salish-speaking language group. Up until the 1830's they lived in villages made up of large lodges that held extended families. They hunted for deer and other animals, fished for salmon, and cultivated a root vegetable (like a potato).

Maritime fur traders from Britain, Spain and the Eastern United States purchased sea otter pelts from Nuuchahnulth people on the West Coast of Vancouver Island since the 1780s, and the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and North West Company (NWC) had traded for furs on the mainland since the early 1800s. In the 1840's both British and American companies had rights to trade for furs in the Oregon Territory, the area of land that extended from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean and included most of what has become British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and Idaho.



Fort Vancouver, a HBC fort built at the mouth of the Columbia River in the Oregon Territory, was difficult to sail into and out of because of dangerous sandbars. As a result the HBC instructed James Douglas to find a better location. In 1843 he started building Fort Victoria where Victoria sits today.

The Lekwungen people sold wooden stakes to the British government

to build the walls of the fort. In 1843-44, the Lekwungen moved closer to the

new fort. When wood behind the Native village caught fire in 1844, HBC trader Roderick Finlayson used it as an excuse to force the Lekwungen to move across the harbour where they were able to control the trade of other Indigenous people with Fort Victoria.

The HBC relied on the Lekwungen (by this point they had become known as the Songhees) people for their labour. Men helped clear land to grow vegetables and grain, worked as dairymen and sheep shearers, in house construction, and they relayed messages to the mainland by canoe. Lekwungen people provided most of the food for the fort, including salmon, potatoes, clams and oysters.

Conflict between Britain and the United States over control of the Oregon Territory increased as more and more Americans moved west to settle in the area. Rather than go to war, Britain and the United States signed the Treaty of Washington in 1846, where they agreed to divide the Oregon Territory in half at the 49th parallel. Vancouver Island remained under British control despite the fact that its southern tip sits below the 49th parallel. Neither government were concerned about the rights of Indigenous people to govern these territories, despite the fact that they were the majority population in the area, and had lived there for thousands of years.

The HBC hoped to gain exclusive trading rights on Vancouver Island. In 1849, the British government created the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island to maintain control over the Pacific Northwest. The HBC was given the exclusive rights to trade with Indigenous people if they agreed to colonize the island with British settlers, and the British government retained the right to appoint the governor.

The first governor, Richard Blanshard, was not very successful since the HBC, headed by James Douglas, controlled the settlers, most of whom worked for the company. After Blanshard resigned and left in 1851, the Colonial Office appointed James Douglas as the new governor of Vancouver Island.

The British Colonial Office directed Douglas to sign treaties with local Indigenous people that would extinguish their title [remove any claim] to the land. Between 1850 and 1854, Douglas negotiated 14 treaties on Vancouver Island. In the treaties, Indigenous people agreed to give up all land except for their village sites and gardens in exchange for blankets, and the right to hunt and

fish in unoccupied areas. These treaties were arranged through interpreters, so neither party may have fully understood the other.

As part of their agreement with the British government, the HBC advertised for settlers in Britain and brought out several hundred colonists on sailing vessels in the 1850s. In a census taken in 1854, the total European population of Vancouver Island was 774 (including 562 in Victoria). Many of these settlers worked at farms owned by the Puget's Sound Agricultural Company. One of their farms, Craigflower, grew wheat, milled it, and baked it into long-lasting biscuits for the British navy, which had ships stationed at Esquimalt Harbour beginning in 1846.

Gold was discovered on the Queen Charlotte Islands in the early 1850s, but the Haida rejected attempts by outsiders to mine it. Around the same time, Nlaka'pamux people were mining for gold on the Thompson and Fraser rivers and selling it to the HBC. Miners moving north from the California gold rush of 1849 found out about the Fraser Canyon gold by 1857. In April 1858, a boat carrying four hundred miners arrived in Victoria, and the rush was on.

The British government worried that the influx of American miners into their territory would lead the American government to take control of it. To maintain its control, the British government created the Crown Colony of British Columbia in the fall of 1858. This time the HBC was not allowed to run the mainland colony. Britain appointed Douglas as governor of British Columbia in addition to his position as governor of Vancouver Island, but he was forced to resign from the HBC.

The Fraser River gold rush brought changes to the Colony of Vancouver Island. Because Douglas required miners to purchase a licence in Victoria, thousands of men travelled from the western United States to Victoria before heading to the gold fields on the mainland. Victoria experienced a building boom as shopkeepers hoping to profit from the miners set up stores. Shortly after the gold rush "boom" in the summer of 1858, miners who had not found enough gold or who could not afford to wait out the winter, left, and Victoria's booming economy declined sharply.