

# The Colonial Era in British Columbia

1849 – 1871

Part One

Chapter 5

BCFNS 12

# Important Events Prior to 1840

- A war between Britain and France ended in 1759 and Britain claimed all of France's territories
- Britain is the **colonial power** of what would become Canada
- In **1763**, they write the Royal Proclamation, which includes information on how Britain wanted to its people and governors to deal with First Nations across the continent

# The Royal Proclamation

- Royal, meaning from the Crown (King, Queen, Monarch of Britain)
- Proclamation, which means something that has been proclaimed or spoken by the Monarch – the highest law
- It stated that Indian Territories were “hunting grounds” for First Nations
- That **only the Crown** could negotiate for territory
- Settlement was not allowed
- That relationships were **nation to nation**



1840s



- During the fur trade, Europeans **did not** try to control the territory or put their own laws into place
- In the 1840s, the British **began to control** the territory and lives of First Nations in British Columbia

# 1849 – Colony of Vancouver Island at Fort Victoria created

- The Hudson's Bay had a fort at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River
- The Oregon Treaty made it American territory
- They moved their headquarters to **Fort Victoria** on the tip of Vancouver Island and made that area an official colony of Britain

# First Governor – James Douglas

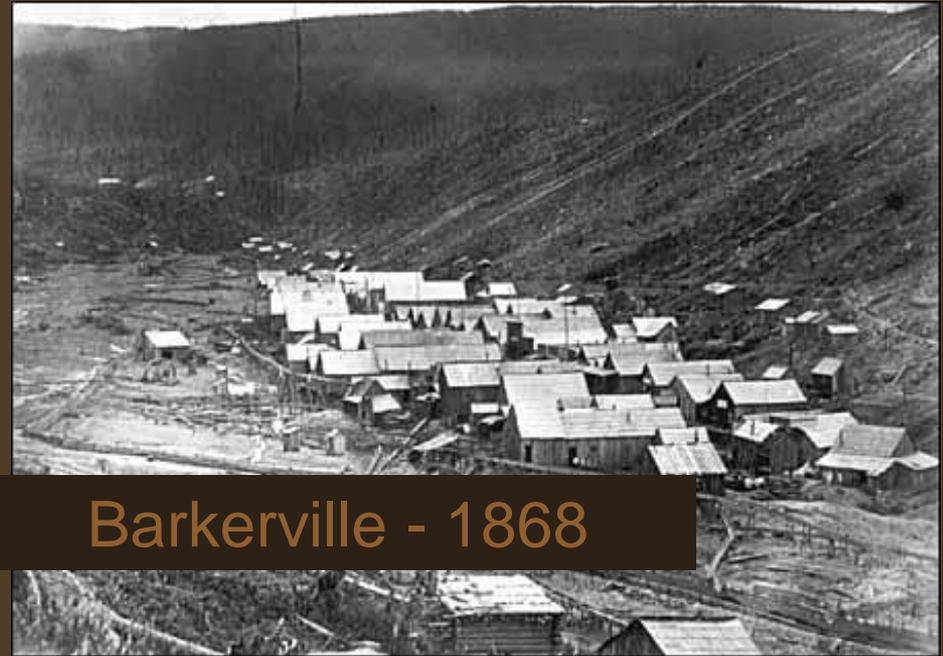


- The Colony at Victoria (1849) was created without negotiation with, or thought for, First Nations

# Gold Rush - 1858

- Lawlessness arrives with all those seeking gold, as 20 000 people flooded into what was then called New Caledonia
- Britain wants to control this, so they declare a colony called British Columbia in the same year

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9q6nSMF\\_eu0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9q6nSMF_eu0)



Barkerville - 1868

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmGqLiM3DEs&feature=related>

# James Douglas – Governor of both colonies 1851 - 1864

- Huge power over First Nations lives and territory
- He was ordered by the British to
  - Recognize title to the land
  - Negotiate treaties or settlement for the land from First Nations



# The Douglas Treaties – 1950-54

- These will be the only treaties negotiated in British Columbia until the Nisga'a Treaty of 1998
- 14 treaties on Vancouver Island around Victoria, Saanich, Sooke, Nanaimo, and Port Hardy
- Surrender the land, “entirely and forever”, in exchange for
  - Cash, clothing, or blankets
  - Chiefs and descendents kept existing village sites and fields for their use
  - The liberty to hunt over unoccupied lands, and the right to carry on ‘fishing as formerly’

# Douglas changes his mind

- Aboriginal people are the same as English immigrant settlers
- They have the same right to get land as any settler
  - Called **pre-empting land**
  - English settlers disagreed, not wanting any competition for good land or economic competition for products
- Based on the idea of the English country village
  - Started to create reserves
- First Nations will become assimilated
- Ignored the idea of Aboriginal title to the land as set out in the Royal Proclamation (and Aboriginal law)



# No other treaty was signed in BC

- James Douglas worked hard to protect First Nations rights – his wife was Métis
- But, it was from a colonial perspective
- He made the mistake of suggesting reserves should only be 10 acres per family, even though he himself had made bigger reserves

## Joseph Trutch – in charge of administration of First Nations after Douglas retired

- The First Nations of BC had never owned the land
- “The title of the Indians in the fee of the public lands, or any portion thereof, has never been acknowledged by Government, but on the contrary is distinctly denied.”



Despite the Royal Proclamation, the policy of the British Government, and the reason the Douglas Treaties had been written in the first place.

# Fit well with what the settlers wanted

- Land is empty and for the taking
- Aboriginal title never existed
- Reserves, then, are a gift
- Aboriginal people should be grateful

# Final Blow

- First Nations people were not allowed to pre-empt land like other immigrants
- Reserves were severely restricted to 10 acres/family
- Inequality is now a way of life
- A long way from the days prior to contact, and the early fur trade