NORTHWEST COAST INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE TO COLONIZATION

BY ZIG-ZAG

LINGIT ATTACK ON RUSSIAN FORT, SITKA 1802 G. HILL, KWAKWAKA’WAKW. 2004
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2. INTRODUCTION

“White academics, primarily historians and anthropologists, have owned the Indigenous past for too long. Although the military was the initial force that colonized Natives, the continuing psychological process of intellectual & cultural debilitation ensure their subjugated status. Therefore, it is from that base that Aboriginal de-colonization must begin.”


ANCESTRY

Like many of my people, I am a product of both European colonialism & Indigenous resistance. The story of my life is intertwined with that of this land & globalisation; my ancestry stretches back through thousands of years & across continents.

My father was Welsh & English, my mother was Kwakwaka’wakw. My great-great grandfather was George Hunt, and his father was Robert Hunt, a Scottish employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company stationed at Fort Rupert. George Hunt’s mother was Mary Ebbets (Anisilaga), a high-ranking Tongass Tlingit of the Raven clan. She had married Robert Hunt when he was stationed at Port Simpson.

George Hunt wasn’t Kwakiutl, but he married a few. He was a Scottish-Tlingit raised at Fort Rupert. He was fluent in Kwakwala and held many family crests (from marriage). He could also read & write English. He worked with Franz Boas (a famous German anthropologist) as an informant and a field worker, collecting myths and artifacts from the Kwakwaka’wakw and others.

At that time (late 1880s), it was widely believed that North American Indigenous culture was on the verge of extinction, and maybe it was. George Hunt devoted much of his life to this work, and it today remains as important sources of information and knowledge for today’s generations of Kwakwaka’wakw.

Today, the Hunt family is known world-wide as master carvers and artists of the Kwakiutl. Through Anisilaga, the Hunt’s have the right to wear the Chilkat blanket and to display her crests.

My mother Hilda was a Scow. The Scow family originates among the Kwicksutaineuk from Gilford Island (Gwa’xwadams). They became dispersed after a devastating attack by Nuxalk warriors in 1858. The survivors moved to Village Island and eventually to Alert Bay and other reserves. Today, most of my Kwakwaka’wakw family live in Alert Bay (named after the HMS Alert, a Royal Navy gunboat). It is also known as Y’alis.

I began my military training as a youth when I joined a cadet corp. It was a Scottish highland regiment. Later I joined the reserve unit of the regiment. We learned how to shoot, dig trenches, patrol, make shelters, etc. Most importantly, it taught us the discipline of the warrior. As for myself, it cannot be said that I have neglected my Scottish ancestry. For six years I wore the kilt, balmoral, & Glengarry as part of my military uniform (and we ate haggis, and carried sghin dus!).

After my military training, I came into contact with members of the resistance movement. From then on I have devoted myself to this struggle, in which I use all the skills & resources at my disposal. Although I disliked school, when I became involved with the resistance, I found that I wanted to learn. From this I began to study, take notes, to write, and then to share my writings with others. Now they tell me to write and, like a soldier, I obey.

HISTORY

The history of British colonization in the Northwest Coast, like Columbus’ “discovery” of the Americas, is a myth. It’s a myth disguised as truth. Like all colonial myths, it seeks to conceal genocide and legitimize colonialism.

The Northwest Coast version goes like this: on a mission of science and exploration, Capt. James Cook discovered Vancouver Island. He traded for some furs which made a huge profit in China, and this began the fur trade. The Indians were shrewd and clever traders who dominated the market. But then a lot of them died from diseases. The government was powerless to stop these epidemics. Those who survived were put on reservations. Their children were forced through residential schools, victims of a “well-intentioned, but misguided” policy of assimilation. And here we are today.

This is the standard colonial history promoted by schools, government, and the tourism industry. It avoids or minimizes Indigenous resistance, and never celebrates our ancestor’s victories. It avoids or minimizes the nature & extent of genocide. Today’s generations are left with a history that portrays their ancestors as weak, powerless, and completely overwhelmed by European civilization. But that is a colonial myth.
Ancestral History

When the first European recon missions arrived on the Northwest Coast, they encountered a proud and noble people living in complex, highly-organized, hunter-gatherer societies. A warrior people who actively sought to kill and enslave their enemies, while at the same time carrying out extensive trade and intermarriage. A spiritual people with highly-developed arts and crafts, who cut the heads off their enemies and displayed them as trophies.

Our ancestors welcomed the first Europeans with eagle down and songs, a common greeting for visitors, symbolizing peace and goodwill. That was how trade was established to begin with. But in the face of European provocation and aggression, our ancestors rightfully defended themselves and their territories. They did not willingly submit to colonialism, nor did they welcome oppression & genocide.

The history of the European colonization of the Northwest Coast did indeed involve contact, trade, diseases, and residential schools. But it also involved gunboats, genocide, and resistance. A resistance which demonstrates our ancestors were not passive victims to civilization's "progress," but active combatants who inflicted numerous military defeats against colonial forces. It is this history the government seeks to erase, for it is an example and an inspiration to today's generations of Northwest Coast Indigenous peoples, one which portrays our ancestors not as passive victims to "progress," but as warriors defending their people, territories, and way of life.

Zig-zag, 2004

3. NORTHWEST COAST: OVERVIEW

Geography

The Pacific Northwest Coast ranges from Alaska to northern California. It is a long, narrow section approximately 200 miles at its widest, and some 1,500 miles long. It is a temperate rainforest with the highest amount of rain in North America. The focus of this study is that region now called "British Columbia."

This area is bordered on the east by the Coast Mountain Range, which separates it from the interior plateau. The Coast Mountains are steep & jagged, with many glaciers and steep, fertile valleys. As clouds form over the Pacific Ocean & move inland, they hit the mountains and release rain (or snow at higher elevations). For this reason, the interior plateau region is one of the driest in North America.

The coastline has thousands of long narrow fiords and islands. Major river systems flow from the interior to the coast, including the Copper, Stikine, Nass, Skeena, Bella Coola, Fraser, Columbia, and Klamath Rivers.

Indigenous Peoples & Culture

In the Northwest Coast of BC the primary Indigenous nations are (from north to south): Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian (inc. Nisga’a & Gitxsan), Haí咎, Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Oweekeno, Kwakwaka’wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, & Coast Salish.

In Alaska, Northwest Coast Indigenous nations include the Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit. In Washington, the Makah are closely related to the Nuu-chah-nulth. Many others are Salish, including the Quinault, Clallam, Chimakua, and Twana. In Oregon, coastal nations include Tillamook, Alese, Siuslaw, Chinook, Coosan, and Tutumi. In northern California, the Tolowa, Karok, Shasta and Klamath.

What distinguishes the Northwest Coast region from others in the common culture these nations shared, including: the use of red cedar for clothing, tools, shelter; construction of longhouses (beams & posts covered over by planks); social rank & clan systems based on ancestry; reliance on salmon & other seafood; the use of dug-out cedar canoes; slavery; a common form of art & carving; and the potlatch.

The potlatch occurred in the fall & winter months, considered the most sacred and when the people moved to their winter villages. The potlatch consisted of feasts, songs, dances, stories. Through these, important cultural concepts were re-affirmed, including philosophy & history. Potlatches marked important occasions such as marriage, transfer of chieftainship, initiation into secret societies, memorials for the dead, etc. When a family held a potlatch, it displayed some of its crests through masks, dance, & song. These crests told how their ancestors came to acquire rights to fishing grounds, house locations, streams, berry patches, etc. It was through this system that the entire social organization of Northwest Coast tribal groups was based. Gifts were distributed as payment to those who attended and witnessed these crests.

Families & chiefs competed with one another on how much property they could give away (or even destroy). The more that was re-distributed to the people as a whole, the greater the status of the family lineage. The mark of a good chief was said to be his impoverishment from giving away so much.
The social structure of Northwest Coast nations was ranked according to one’s position in a family lineage. There was a nobility, a commoner class, and slaves. The highest ranking hereditary chiefs were said to be direct descendants of the first ancestors. They were raised from birth to be leaders and to reflect the values of their culture. Overall, the nobility were the largest class, as all villages & houses were based on family lineage. Commoners were those with no connections to a lineage and who therefore had very little rights. Slaves had no rights at all (see below).

**WARRIORS & WARFARE**

Tribal warfare was an ongoing activity, thousands of years old. Conflict was always possible, between any number of groups (nations, villages, families and clans). For this reason, our ancestors *had* to be warriors. It was a matter of life and death. In a sense, they were like wolves, who also have territories and defend them against other wolf packs. At the same time, there were well-developed methods of resolving disputes, including compensation, feasts, trade, internmarriage, etc.

The overall culture itself promoted and instilled a warrior spirit in the people as a whole. Stories, songs, & crests frequently contained references to war or ancient warriors & spirits. Even marriage could be portrayed as a form of warfare, as was the giving of feasts and potlatches. Many secret societies are believed to have had their origins in ancient warrior societies.

In the Kwakwaka’wakw winter ceremonies, the highest ranking dance society is the *Hamatsa* (or Cannibal). The Hamatsa is also the highest ranking warrior. A member had to have passed through other societies in order to be initiated. Initiation involved being removed from the village & isolated in some secret location. There, the initiate fasted & bathed in efforts to purify himself. He sought to become possessed by the man-eating spirit, *Bakbakwalanoockswe*. Membership was hereditary and considered a great honor.

Grizzly bear and the Fool dancer (*Nulaimal*) were the next highest-ranking warriors. Both served as enforcers during potlatches, punishing people who violated codes of behavior. Bear was highly regarded as a war spirit for his power and aggression, while the Fool dancer personified the filth, perversion and irrational violence of warfare.

After the Hamatsa, the second highest ranking dances were those brought by *Winagalalis*, the War Spirit. These included: *Tla’la’, a female war power who represented invulnerability & the ability to overcome death; Mamaqa, the Thrower, who threw a deadly sickness into his enemies, but who could also revive them; *Hawinalal*, the Warrior dancer, who was pierced through the back and hung from the roof beams; and the *A’mlala*, a warrior who carries a club with spikes on one end.

Through these, the warrior spirit of the people as a whole was reinforced. Even the very young were exposed to this culture, & boys were raised from early childhood to become warriors. The possibility of sudden, violent attacks by enemies made this a necessary way of life.

Military actions were mostly limited to small-scale raids and ambushes, using secrecy and surprise. Large-scale battles were less frequent, but could result in entire villages being destroyed (i.e., the Nuxalk attack on the Kwicksutaineuk at Gilford Island, 1858).

For this reason, some villages were fortified with stockades and located high on hills (i.e., the Gitksan village of Kitwang). Tunnels were dug leading out from under houses. Trenches were dug at the base of stockades. Some forts had heavy spiked logs secured by rope, held in place near the top of a stockade wall. When released, they rolled down into the attacking force.

The most common weapons used were the war club (carved from wood, antler, or whale bone), spears, stone daggers, and bow and arrow. When European iron was introduced, northern tribes quickly adapted it for fighting knives. Among the Tlingit, this knife was known as *chuck-har-nut*, “right by me, always ready” or “thing near the hand.”

Light body armor was used, made from thick leather hides (i.e., sea lion, moose, elk) or cedar rope. Among the northern tribes (Tlingit & Tsimshian), wooden armor was used for the head, upper body, and lower legs. After the introduction of firearms (the musket), metal plates began to be fastened to chest pieces.

Helmets consisted of two parts. The top piece sat on the head and was carved from tree knots, or roots, to represent animals or spirits (i.e., the Tlingit and Tsimshian). They were worn with a fur cap underneath (for comfort), and tied in place with a leather strap under the chin. Around the neck and lower head, up to eye level, a wooden collar was worn.

Both weapons & armor were carved and/or painted with the family crests of the warrior. As firearms became more common (and more deadly), armor was generally discarded, as were many hand-held weapons.

Warriors prepared for combat through ritual, including bathing and scrubbing their bodies with hemlock. They observed strict discipline for four days prior to setting out. When they set off for war, Kwakwaka’wakw warriors had their faces painted black. Tlingit warriors had their faces painted red. Eagle down was sprinkled in the hair, and
this was said to indicate the spiritual purpose of the warrior. Shamans also traveled with warriors to alter weather patterns, to see into the future, to throw sickness into the enemy, etc.

During raids on enemy villages, warriors would disembark and hide their canoes some distance away. They would conduct surveillance to determine the enemy’s strength, patterns of movement and security, etc.

During the attack, each warrior knew their task. Some were positioned at doorways, others snuck into the house, some carried the rope to bind prisoners, etc. Such attacks were usually carried out late at night.

When warriors killed an enemy, it was a common practice to cut their heads off. It was believed that the most important soul was in the head, and that decapitation prevented the dead person’s soul from seeking revenge on the killer. Heads were brought back after warfare and displayed outside the houses of their killers. Heads, scalps, and hands were often kept as trophies.

The main motive in war was to take prisoners & material goods (including crests), as well as to exact revenge or retaliation against enemies. Territorial expansion was also another factor. Feasts, trades & exchanges, and intermarriage, were common methods of ending hostilities.

Slavery arose from warfare, and slaves were in fact prisoners of war. They could be ransomed back to their communities, kept as slaves in a house, traded, or killed at any time. Most slaves are reported to have been women & children. Adult males were too difficult to control, unless they had been raised from birth as slaves, and were usually executed soon after their capture.

Slaves could only marry other slaves, and any children were born into slavery. Slaves worked for their owners, who were usually high-ranking chiefs & families. They gathered wood, fished, hunted, cooked, and cleaned. Some slaves went to war with their masters & fought for them. In many accounts, slaves lived with their owners’ family & ate their food.

Although some slaves were reportedly freed from bondage to become commoners, they could never have rights in a social system based on family lineage. For members of the nobility to be enslaved was a great disgrace, even if ransomed or traded back to their family. Overall, the life of the slave appears to have been one of harsh discipline, suffering, & uncertainty. Slavery was widespread throughout the Northwest Coast, and was targeted by colonial officials for its role in tribal warfare.

Population

When European vessels first arrived on the Northwest Coast, they encountered one of the most diverse and heavily populated regions in North America. One historian estimates this population to have been as many as 200,000 (or more). This large population was made possible by the abundance of food resources & mild climate:

"Before the arrival of Europeans in 1774 [Spanish] as many as 200,000 Native Americans inhabited the Northwest Coast... making it one of the most densely populated non-agricultural regions of the world. Within 100 years, the aboriginal population had declined by over 80%.”


* Today, there are approx. 170,000 Indigenous people in the province of BC, making up 5% of the total population. According to the 1991 government census, only one-quarter (or 40,000) lived on reserves.
* There are some 197 bands in BC, or approx. 33% of Canada’s 609 bands.
* There are 1,650 reserves in the province, or 72% of Canada’s 2,300 reserves. Many of these reserves are small and only one-quarter (approx. 400) were occupied in 1991.
* Reserve land in BC comprises some 3,440 square kilometers of land (or 0.36% of BC’s total land). Altogether, BC’s reserves comprise 13% of the total area of reserves in Canada.


4. CONTACT & CONFLICT

The Russians

As early as 1741, Russian recon forces had made contact with Indigenous nations in southern Alaska: the Aleut and northern Tlingit. That was the year Vitus Bering, a Russian naval officer, sailed into the Aleutian islands from Siberia. His voyage was one of the largest expeditions ever mounted, involving some 10,000 persons who crossed Siberia, established camps, and built ships at Kamchatka. These ships then crossed the north Pacific.

Bering’s mission was to map the coast of northern N. America. He reached the Alaskan coast on July 15, 1741. Bering never returned home, however, and died that year on a small, desolate island when his ship became
stranded. Despite this setback, Bering's exploration opened up the north coast to Russian fur traders (today, the Bering Strait is named after him).

Shortly after Bering's doomed voyage, Russian fur traders descended on the region. They destroyed Aleut villages and killed thousands in massacres. Many Aleut were enslaved in the fur trade, hunting seals and other mammals for the Russians. When Aleuts revolted in the early 1760s and attacked a Russian ship, the crew destroyed several villages, killing their inhabitants.

The Tlingit, on the other hand, strongly resisted Russian colonialism all the way until 1867, when the US purchased Alaska. Decimated by disease at that point, the Tlingit were unable to fight US occupation.

**The Spanish**

The first European contact with the Northwest Coast of present-day BC occurred in 1774, when Spanish explorers arrived. Juan Perez, the expedition commander onboard the Santiago, sailed to Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte Islands) and then south to Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island. Perez was welcomed by the Haida with eagle down. He failed to land, however.

In 1775, a second Spanish expedition was sent to claim the land for Spain. This would result in the first documented attack on European colonial forces. When a boat detachment went ashore on the south west coast of Washington for fresh water and firewood, it was attacked by a large force of Quinahls:

"The surprise attack on the shore party of the Sonora during the 1775... expedition on the Washington coast came so suddenly that the crewmen had no chance to use their guns, and those left on the ship could only look on in horror as the shore party were overwhelmed."

*(Handbook of N. American Indians, Vol. 7, p. 127)*

**The British**

In the spring of 1778, Captain James Cook, in command of the Resolution & Discovery, sailed into Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island and claimed the land for Britain. (Also onboard was William Bligh, who later became infamous for the 'Mutiny on the Bounty'). Cook's voyage made contact with the Nuu-chah-nulth, who welcomed him with eagle down. Chisels and other pieces of iron were traded for various items, including fur pelts. Among the trade items brought by the Nuu-chah-nulth were dried human heads and hands. From this arose the theory that our ancestors were cannibals.

When Cook's expedition reached China, they made huge profits selling the furs. This began the maritime fur trade, which would continue until the 1820s, decimating the sea otter population. This trade extended throughout the entire Northwest Coast and involved hundreds of British, American, and Russian ships. The fur trade also increased European and American competition to gain control of the Northwest Coast. In February 1779, Cook was killed in Hawaii by Indigenous warriors.

**Early Fur Trade & Resistance**

Following these initial reconnaissance missions, more ships began to arrive on the Northwest coast. These British & American traders were referred to as "Iron Men," the primary trade item then sought by Indigenous peoples. With a small investment of $5,000 dollars, enough fur could be traded & sold in China to make $50,000—a huge amount at this time. Chisels, bracelet's, knives, pots, as well as blankets, clothing and food (i.e., molasses, rice, etc.) were common trade items. So too were guns:

"Guns and ammunition were highly prized items from the start. By 1792 everyone at Nootka was reported to have had muskets... Through the extensive network of intertribal trade, these items, like other trade goods, rapidly found their way into the hands of tribes who had yet to make direct contact with Europeans. Archibald Menzies found the Kwakiutl already had guns before his arrival in 1792... George Vancouver found the Skagit and Snohomish of Puget Sound with European weapons... By the beginning of the 19th century, virtually all Tlingits had guns..."

*(Handbook of N. American Indians, Vol. 7, p. 120-121)*

Although the fur-trade dominated early Indigenous & European relations, it was also marked by frequent conflicts and war. With the exception of the Russians, most early accounts note the welcoming given by Indigenous nations when foreign ships entered their territory.

These early traders and explorers were mostly British and American, with experience in other colonial regions (i.e., Africa, South America, Asia, New Zealand, Australia, etc.). Many were arrogant & convinced of their racial superiority.

Journals of early sailors are filled with descriptions of Indigenous people as "filthy, dirty, greasy savages," etc. In fact, it was the ships crews themselves who were filthy & dirty after 6 months in a boat. Many suffered from scurvy.
& other diseases. Early Europeans, in truth, had met a proud and noble warrior people, highly aware of their lineage and ancestral rights to territory & resources. They had fought & died defending these territories from other tribes for centuries before Europeans arrived.

When ship's crews took high-ranking chiefs hostage (a common tactic to prevent attacks, or to force trade), or accused them of lying or stealing, it was highly offensive. For a warrior people, such actions were not to be tolerated (even if they were true, sometimes... maybe)! John Jewitt, who was captured by the Nuu-chah-nulth and held as a slave for two years, later commented on the motive of Indigenous attacks on European ships involved in the fur trade, saying:

"I have no doubt that many of the... disasters have arisen from the... conduct of some of the captains and crews of the ships employed in this trade, in exasperating them by insulting, plundering and even killing them on slight grounds."

(The Adventures & Sufferings of John R. Jewitt, p. 22)

In 1786, the British trade ship Sea Otter, under the command of James Hanna, arrived in Nootka Sound. Here they traded with Nuu-chah-nulth, until they offended chief Maquinna by igniting fireworks under his chair. Warriors attempted to seize the vessel, but the crew were able to counter this attack with heavy musket fire. More than 50 Nuu-chah-nulth were killed, including women & children (Nuu-chah-nulth Voices, p. 72).

Despite this, Hanna was somehow able to resume trading and to acquire 560 skins. These sold in China for $20,600 Spanish dollars. His voyages are seen as the real beginnings of the commercial fur trade.

In 1787, the Imperial Eagle, a British trade ship (20 guns) had a boat crew killed when they went ashore to get firewood and water. The island was thereafter named Destruction Island, and is located in Quinault territory (on the south west Washington coast) (BC Coast Names, p. 33).

In July 1788, the British ship Felice (under Captain Meares) arrived. When Meares' expedition began trading, they found disturbing evidence of the previous year's attack:

"The presentation for trade of a dried human hand wearing a seal that was immediately identified as belonging to a Mr. Miller of the Imperial Eagle, who had been killed on the coast in 1787, reinforced this belief [that of cannibalism]."


Meares' crew were themselves attacked. When a boat was sent up the Strait of Juan de Fuca to map the area, it barely escaped after being attacked by Indigenous warriors. Several sailors were badly wounded (BC Coast Names, p. 386).

In August 1788, the Boston trader Lady Washington sailed along the Oregon coast. After a trade dispute and the deaths of some crewmen, the ship opened fire & destroyed a Tillamook village at Tillamook Bay.

In 1789, the Spanish established a fort at Yuquot on Vancouver Island. In July 1789, the Nuu-chah-nulth chief Callicum and 3 others were killed by the Spanish during a dispute. That same year, the Spanish seized 4 British vessels at Nootka Sound in an effort to assert control. In response, Britain prepared a large naval force to retake possession of the area. This tension was resolved in 1790 when Spain ceded the region to Britain. At this time, Spain was already a declining imperial power.

In 1791, the American trader Lady Washington was attacked by Haidas, who suffered heavy casualties, with as many as 60 dead. The attack occurred after a previous incident when the ship's captain had seized a Haida chief (Koyah), had him bound, his face painted, and his hair cut off. Over the years, the Haidas would capture and destroy many European ships.

In May 1792, the American ship Columbia attacked an Indigenous trading group at Nasapti Inlet on Vancouver Island. Seven Indigenous people were reported killed, and others wounded. The ship's crew "took by force all their furs which they had been unwilling to sell at the price offered" (BC Coast Names, p. 347).

In 1792, Capt. George Vancouver conducted another British recon mission, mapping out the coasts of Vancouver Island and Burrard inlet (now Vancouver), sailing as far north as present-day Alaska. In May 1792, at Behm's Canal (Alaska), a recon boat from Vancouver's expedition was attacked by Indigenous warriors.
In June 1792, Vancouver made contact with the Namgis on north Vancouver Island. That same month, the US vessel Columbia was attacked by Kwakiutl warriors near present-day Port Hardy in the Queen Charlotte Strait (Handbook of N. American Indians, Vol. 7, p. 126).

In 1793, Alexander Mackenzie (working for the Northwest Company) reached the Pacific Ocean in the first overland crossing of North America by European colonialists. He made contact with the Nuxalk at Bella Coola. After being welcomed & feasted, he continued to the coast but was deterred by Heiltsuk warriors (Mackenzie was killed in 1827, along with 4 Company employees, by Klallam warriors in Washington state).

In 1794, the American schooner Resolution was captured & destroyed by Haida warriors:
“The attack was so unexpected and so rapid that no resistance was offered. All the crew were killed, except one man, who hid in an empty water barrel” (Indian Wars, p. 52).

The survivor was enslaved and later ransomed.

In 1795, a British trading ship fired its cannons at a village in Haida Gwaii. The Haidas, who had captured a cannon from a previous attack (the Resolution?), returned fire!

In the far north, Russians had established their first colony in present-day Alaska in 1784, and in 1799 the Russian-American Company was formed to better organize the fur trade. The Company forced Aleuts to hunt and relocated their villages to Kodiak, Sitka, and other posts. They were unable to enslave the Tlingit, however:
“The strength of the Tlingit made it impossible for the Russians to employ the same techniques of forced labour... The Tlingit obtained firearms and ammunition from American traders and, armed not only with pistols & muskets but also heavy cannons, they were able to take a decidedly more aggressive stand against those they regarded as intruders... The Russians remained fearful of the Tlingit throughout most of the period and they had little control immediately outside their forts.”
(Handbook of N. American Indians, Vol. 7, p. 127-128)

In 1802, a large force of Tlingits (as many as 1,000 warriors, including over 60 canoes) attacked by land and sea and destroyed a Russian fort at Sitka (now Alaska). They were armed with pistols & muskets and had a small cannon. Khlebnikov, a Russian survivor, described the Tlingit warriors:
“[They were] armed with guns, spears, and daggers. Their faces were covered with masks, representing the heads of animals and smeared with red and other paint... Some of the masks were shaped in imitation of ferocious animals with gleaming teeth, and other monstrous beings. They were not observed until they were close to the barracks, which they quickly surrounded, and with wild cries, opened a heavy fire from their guns at the windows. [Their cries were] in imitation of the animals that were represented by their masks.”
(The Tlingit Indians, p. 327)

In 1803, the American vessel Boston was destroyed by Nuu-chah-nulth warriors who killed 25 of 27 crew members, cutting heads off and throwing their bodies into the sea. The severed heads were lined up on the ship's deck, and the two survivors forced to identify each one. They were held as slaves for two years, one of whom was John Jewitt (who later wrote of his experience in White Slaves of the Nootka). Jewitt was the prisoner of Maquinna, a Nuuchah-nulth chief. The attack, as documented by Jewitt, occurred after the captain had offended Maquinna.

Maquinna waited until the following day to retaliate, when he persuaded the captain to gather fish for their voyage. The captain sent a boat with 10 sailors out fishing, thereby dividing his forces. At a pre-arranged signal, both groups of sailors were attacked.

Jewitt was the ship's armourer who fixed muskets and made daggers, skills which made him a valued prisoner. He was also put to work cutting firewood & getting water. After over two years, the two white slaves were turned over to a visiting ship (probably so Maquinna could re-establish trade).

In 1804, four Russian ships returned to Sitka, led by the Imperial Navy's ship Neva. They found that the Tlingit had moved their village to a better defended site on top of a hill, and had built fortifications. The Russians attacked with bombardments and landing forces:
“Here, within strongly fortified walls, defended by several of the cannon previously captured, the Tlingit for 6 days withstood and repulsed the Russian attack with slight loss. After their supply of ammunition had given out, and they failed to receive the expected reinforcements from their neighbors, the Sitkans fled...”
The Russians destroyed the village and rebuilt their fort (in 1821, the Russians and Tlingit established an uneasy truce, and trade began again).

In June 1805, the Atahualpa, a US trade ship, was attacked by Heiltsuk warriors near Milbank Sound. The captain was killed along with several sailors. The crew, however, managed to force the warriors off the ship. One canoe full of warriors was seen trying to cut the anchor line. A cannon was fired which killed most of those in the canoe. Out of a crew of 23, ten were killed. The Heiltsuks lost an estimated 40 in the assault.

One survivor—Joel Richardson, an armourer onboard the ship, stated:
"Preparation was made during the conflict to have blown up the ship with all on board had the Indians obtained possession, preferring to die in that manner rather than fall into the hands of such merciless wretches"

(BC Coast Names, p. 155)

In an August 1805 attack, Tlingits killed most of the Russian settlers at Yakutat, a Russian trade fort.

In 1811, the American ship Tonguin was captured and nearly all its crew killed in Clayoquot Sound by Nuu-chah-nulth warriors. The captain had insulted a local chief during trading, rubbing a sea otter skin in his face. The next day a large group returned, apparently to continue trading. They boarded the ship in great numbers and then launched a surprise attack. A few survivors escaped in a small boat. One wounded sailor remained onboard & prepared explosive charges. The next day, as warriors climbed onboard to loot the ship, the explosives were detonated. The powerful blast killed as many as 100. The sailors who had escaped in the small boat were quickly caught & killed.

That same year, the American vessel Hamilton was attacked by Tsimshian warriors at the mouth of the Nass River, and the American ship Otter was attacked by Chilkat Tlingits near Haines, Alaska. The ship’s crew managed to fight them back, losing two dead & four wounded.

5. CORPORATE COLONIALISM: THE HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY

Beginning in the 1600’s, state-licensed companies began to take control of colonial trade & markets. These were the first modern corporations and included the Hudson’s Bay Company, the Dutch West India Company, the English Royal African Company, and the French Senegal Company.

These companies had both official military protection as well as their own security forces. In the colonial frontiers of Asia, Africa and the Americas, they were frequently the primary representatives of European colonial power. They exercised all the sovereignty & armed force which was necessary to gain access to resources. Their trading forts often became military bases when colonial policies expanded to include settlement.

On the Northwest Coast of BC, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was responsible for not only trade, but also immigration, settlement, and governance. Along with British naval forces, the company’s own ships (inc. the Beaver) acted as gun-boats along the coast, enforcing colonial law & economic trade conditions.

The HBC was first established in 1670 by Prince Rupert and other British lords. It is the oldest corporation in Canada (over 330 years old), and one of the oldest in the world. Its original title was The Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson’s Bay. It was given a royal charter (a license) by King Charles II, Prince Rupert’s cousin. This charter gave the HBC exclusive rights over trade and settlement in what would become Canada.

Hudson’s Bay was named after the commercial explorer Henry Hudson, whose voyages were funded by early corporations such as the British East India Co., the Virginia Co., etc. In 1610 he was exploring Hudson Bay and James Bay when his ship became trapped in ice. The crew moved ashore for the winter. When the spring thaw came in 1611, Hudson wanted to continue mapping, but his crew mutinied. They set Hudson, his son, and several other crew members, adrift in a small boat. They were never seen again!

During the 17th century, the French dominated the Canadian fur trade. However, two French traders defected & told the British of trading grounds on the north & west of Lake Superior. These could be reached from the north through Hudson Bay, instead of over land from New France (a French colony). The British sent a recon mission there in 1669, and the Hudson's Bay Company was incorporated on May 2, 1670.

In 1783, the North West Company was formed in Montreal and would engage in bitter competition with the HBC. This competition fueled early expeditions and recons into uncharted areas. These two corporations were the first to establish outposts and forts throughout Indigenous territories. Around these forts grew small settlements, which eventually became towns and cities (i.e., Fort Victoria). The forts also attracted Indigenous people eager to trade.
Some became hang-around-the-fort-Indians, attracted to the European way of life (i.e., liquor, prostitution, greed, and gluttony).

In 1805, Fort St. John in northern BC was established by the Northwest Company, followed in 1806 with Fort St. James (Simon Fraser's expedition). In 1812, the Northwest Company also established a post at Kamloops.

At this time, competition between the two companies had resulted in armed attacks on one another's boats, forts, and employees. In 1816, an HBC governor and 20 employees were killed in a battle with Nor'westers in southern Manitoba (this conflict is seen as the birth of the Metis nation).

Despite this, the ability of the North West Company to conduct extensive exploration (i.e., Simon Fraser, Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson & Duncan McGilvery were all employees of the North West Company), it was unable to compete against the vast resources and imperial support given to the HBC.

In 1821, the Northwest Company was merged with the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1826, Fort Vancouver was established in present-day Washington state by the HBC, followed the next year with Fort Langley.

In 1827, Alexander Mackenzie and four HBC employees were killed by Klallam warriors in Washington state. The next year, the company organized a military expedition and attacked a Klallam village at Dungeness. The village was shelled by a Company gunboat, and the landing force included a 63-man militia, along with Indigenous mercenaries. The village was destroyed.

In 1830, the first Chilkoot post was established by the HBC. In 1835, coal deposits were discovered on north Vancouver Island.

In 1843, Fort Victoria was established by the HBC. It would quickly become the primary center for trade and colonial government.

In 1849, Vancouver Island was officially made a British colony, and the HBC was given a 10-year royal license, placing it in charge of immigration and settlement. That same year, Fort Rupert was established on north Vancouver Island to access the coal found in 1835.

Part of the HBC's work was to sell land, and portions of this money were to be spent on improvement of the colony (i.e., making trails, roads, ports, buildings, etc.). Many HBC officials were themselves wealthy businessmen, aristocrats, naval officers, and government officers. They established their own private businesses such as mines, sawmills, canneries, etc., and actively directed colonial settlement.

The first governor of the Vancouver Island colony was Richard Blanshard, a wealthy lawyer appointed by the British government. The HBC had hoped that James Douglas, Chief Factor for the HBC on Vancouver Island, would be named governor. When Blanshard arrived in May 1850, the HBC made life unbearable for him and he left in September 1851. In fact, Blanshard was a mere figurehead, as all power resided in the HBC. In his place, the British submitted to the HBC's demands and appointed Douglas as governor in October 1851.

**Governor James Douglas**

"It may be said that it was from the wisdom and firmness of his administration as chief factor of the HBC, & subsequently as governor of the colony, that the rapid growth of later years became possible..."

*(BC Coast Names, p. 149)*

James Douglas is often regarded as the founding father of British Columbia. He had a long history of colonial trade and business. He was born in British Guiana (Guyana), the son of a Scottish merchant and a free coloured woman. At 16 he was apprenticed to the North West Company and entered the HBC when the two merged in 1921. Douglas was first stationed at Fort St. James, where he was described as ill-tempered and violent.

In 1828 Douglas was involved in the killing of a Carrier (Dalkelh) Indian accuse in the death of a settler. Chief Quah (or Kwah) later entered Fort St. James with a force of warriors demanding compensation for the dead man's family. These and other incitement led to Douglas' transfer, and he was stationed at Fort Vancouver (in Washington) in 1830.

At Ft. Vancouver, Douglas became Chief Trader, and in 1839 was appointed Chief Factor.

Joseph McKay, an HBC employee who later became a chief factor himself, described the position:

"This exalted functionary was lord paramount; his word was law... He was dressed everyday in a suit of black or dark blue, white shirt... When traveling in a canoe or boat he was lifted in and out of the craft by the crew... In camp his tent was pitched apart from the shelter given his crew. Salutes were fired on his departure from the fort and on his return..."

*(BC Coast Names, p 330)*
This was believed to impress upon Indigenous peoples, and company employees alike, the importance of the chief factor's rank. During his rule, Douglas would order numerous attacks on Indigenous peoples, from naval bombardments of villages to the public executions of chiefs & warriors.

In 1842-43, Douglas supervised construction of Fort Victoria.

In 1844, a force of Songhees & Cowichans attacked the new fort after a dispute over the killing of oxen owned by settlers. Residents of the fort retreated to a bastion and later opened fire with a cannon, destroying a chief's lodge.

By 1849, Ft. Victoria had become the main HBC port for trade and commerce (the HBC had anticipated the formal establishment of the US-Canada border, a move which cut off the former center of Ft. Vancouver in Washington state). Hundreds and then thousands of Europeans and Indigenous people gathered at Ft. Victoria. Conflicts between & among Indigenous peoples were frequent, many resulting from age-old hostilities, drunken brawls and murders.

In August, 1848, 250 sailors and Royal Marines were deployed after shots were fired between two groups of Coast Salish.

**Douglas Treaties, 1850-54**

Following British colonial policy (i.e., 1763 Royal Proclamation) Douglas began negotiating a series of treaties, known today as the Douglas Treaties. Altogether, 14 such treaties were made, all on Vancouver Island:

- Victoria (9 in 1850)
- Fort Rupert (2 in 1851)
- Saanich (2 in 1852)
- Nanaimo (1 in 1854).

These treaties were outright purchases of land. The total land to which aboriginal title had been officially extinguished was 358 square kilometers. Indigenous people retained possession of areas around their village sites, along with hunting and fishing rights.

Aside from a small portion of Treaty 8, which extends from Alberta into the north-east corner of the province, these are the only treaties made in the colonial formation of BC. Today, this lack of treaties forms the basis of the Indigenous legal-political struggle in BC (see Chapter 11: By Their Own Laws).

**Gold Rush, 1858**

In 1858, gold deposits were found in the Fraser Valley. Thousands of Americans crossed the border by land & sea. The frenzy was fueled by corporate media reporting. To keep control, the mainland was made a colony and named British Columbia. Douglas was appointed governor for the new colony. At the same time, he resigned from the HBC.

The following year (1859), the HBC's 10-year license expired, ending the monopoly of corporate-government power held by the company. Nevertheless, Douglas continued to serve the interests of corporate power, especially the mining industry (both gold and coal). Until his retirement in 1864, Douglas' government dumped large amounts of money into building roads into the interior, to better exploit the gold fields. At the same time, he claimed there wasn't enough money to make any more treaties.

In 1859, an est. 30,000 miners and settlers from the US had arrived, seeking fame and fortune in the Fraser Valley gold rush. Many passed through Ft. Victoria, adding to its growth as a 'boom town'. The arrival of so many settlers into the Fraser Valley and southern interior had a devastating impact on Indigenous peoples in those regions, including dislocation, massacres, whiskey, missionaries, and disease epidemics. The main concern for colonial authorities, however, was the invasion of so many Americans into 'British territory'. Governor Douglas was alarmed and requested more police and military forces from England, including more gunboats.

When Vancouver Island became a British colony in 1849, Royal Navy gunboats were immediately stationed on the Northwest Coast, beginning with the *HMS America*, which arrived that year. At times, as many as six warships were on station & patrolling the coastline. Now that colonization was moving to a phase of settlement, the British required a military force to assert its sovereignty & control over Indigenous peoples, settlers, and competing nation-states (i.e., the US).
6. GUNBOAT FRONTIER

In the colonial history of BC, the Royal Navy is largely a background prop, mentioned only in passing. Like the extent of Indigenous military resistance, the role of gunboats is minimized in order to portray colonization as largely peaceful. In fact, for over 3 decades (1849-1883) Royal Navy gunboats were the primary tools of colonial counter-insurgency, at a time of increased settlement.

Royal Navy gunboats, such as the HMS (Her Majesty's Ship) Grappler, Forward, Driver, Boxer, Alert, Devastation, and many others which patrolled the coast, were armed with cannons and rockets. The HMS Constance, for example, had 50 cannons mounted. In addition, detachments of Royal Marines were also carried. During raids on villages, howitzers were brought by troops into the field whenever practical. Royal Navy gunboats were stationed at Esquimalt. As noted, the Hudson's Bay Company also had its own gunboats (i.e., the Beaver & Otter) and private security forces.

These vessels were among the most powerful weaponry ever used against Indigenous peoples in the 19th century. A similar comparison might be made of today's military gunships such as the AC-130 Spectre, a large cargo plane mounted with cannons and rockets. Although not as accurate or deadly as modern guns, 19th century gunboats still had immense firepower. Numerous villages were destroyed by naval bombardments, especially from the mid-1800s on, as the Royal Navy became increasingly used to counter Indigenous resistance.

The Royal Navy had various roles:
- to protect settlers and overall colonial interests.
- to destroy Indigenous military resistance.
- to impose colonial authority and assert British sovereignty in the region (over both Indigenous and settler populations, as well as against other nation-states such as the USA and Russia)
- to impose colonial law and order, and to identify and punish offenders.

Another important function of the Royal Navy (as well as Hudson's Bay Company) ships was to map and survey the coast. For this reason, BC coast place names are primarily those of naval officers, HBC employees, and British royalty (beginning with Cook and Vancouver, both officers in the Royal Navy).

Royal Navy gunboats were also sent to assist Russian forces (1862 on Sitkine River) and Americans (“The Battle of Seattle” in 1856, and Sitka, 1879) when they were threatened by Indigenous military attack. These incidents reveal that, against Indigenous resistance, all colonial nations were united.

As noted, beginning in the 1850s, expansion of settlements was promoted as official colonial policy. Ongoing Indigenous resistance was seen as a major deterrent to European settlement, which at this time was less than 500.

According to Walbran, writing in 1909,

"It was the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company, and afterwards of the Colonial government, never to allow the murder of a white man to go unpunished, if possible, & neither time nor money were spared in effecting this object. When a murder was heard of, war vessels from Esquimalt were sent up the coast, and if the transgressors were not secured --as sometimes happened-- the village and property of the offenders were destroyed. The good effect of this policy, the certainty of punishment, had at last its due weight on the savage mind, & the utter lawlessness to a great extent ceased. It is now only a matter of history" (BC Coast Names, p. 117).

In October, 1850, the HMS Daedalus (42 guns), with Governor Blanshard onboard, was sent to the Fort Rupert area, searching for members of the Newitti (Tlataskwala of the Kwakwaka'wakw) accused of killing settlers. When they arrived at a Newitti village & demanded the surrender of the suspect, the chiefs declined & instead offered compensation (a common practise). Blanshard refused, and the next day armed boat detachments were sent ashore. They found the village abandoned and burned it.

The next year, July 1851, the HMS Daphne arrived in a second attempt to capture the warriors. The Newitti were found in a new, stronger defensive position. As the ship approached, warriors opened fire and the ship's cannons began to bombard the village. The Newitti went into the forest and a landing party of sailors & marines entered the village. They burned the houses and canoes, while Newitti warriors continued to shoot, wounding two sailors.

Following this, the Newitti handed over three dead, claiming them to be the accused the British were after, at Fort Rupert. In a letter dated August 15, 1851, Douglas stated: "It is to be regretted that the Indians were not more severely punished, but I trust they have had a lesson they will not soon forget" (Gunboat Frontier, p. 47).

In 1850, gold deposits were found on Haida Gwaii. The following year the Hudson's Bay Co. ship Una sailed there, trading for gold. Douglas also sent gunboats to the islands.
In 1851, Tlingits attacked the Russian Fort Nulato on the Yukon River, killing nearly all the inhabitants. (The trading post had been first built in 1838, then burned, and rebuilt again in 1842).

In November 1851, the Gaorgina ran aground at Haida Gwaii. The ship was looted and its crew ransomed.

In 1852, the Haida prevented the HBC ship *Recovery* from taking gold. That same year, the Company ship *Eagle* was lost and plundered at Clayoquot Sound by Nuu-chah-nulth warriors.

In 1852, a Russian outpost was attacked & burned by Stikine Tlingit, south of Sitka.

In October 1852, the *Susan Sturgis*, a US vessel trading for gold, was captured, looted, and destroyed by Haidas near Masset. The crew were saved when a Haida chief intervened on their behalf.

The Cowichans, a large and powerful Coast Salish tribe located north of Fort Victoria, were seen as threatening and dangerous by early officials. The Cowichans were actually an alliance of several groups: the Saanich, Someries, Quamichan, Koksiiyah, Chemainus, Lemalchi, and Penelakut. With the arrival of Royal Navy gunboats, Douglas moved to bring them under control.

During the winter of 1852-53, the 'Cowichan Crisis' occurred after the killing of a Scottish settler. The *HMS Thetis*, along with two Company boats (the *Recovery* and *Beaver*) were sent to Cowichan Bay. They arrived in January 1853 and were deployed first at Cowichan Bay, and then Nanaimo. The landing party consisted of 130 Royal Marines. At Nanaimo, the force took control of the village and imprisoned a high-ranking chief. Two persons were eventually turned over to the Royal Navy.

On January 17, 1853, the first trial by jury in the colony occurred onboard the *Beaver*. A jury of naval officers found the two accused guilty, and they were hung on Protection Island outside of Nanaimo harbour. The spot is today known as Gallows Point. It was common practise for such executions to be carried out in view of the entire village.

On January 26, 1856, Seattle was attacked by a force of some 800 indigenous warriors under Owhi and Quilquiton. They were betrayed by collaborators, however, and retreated under naval bombardment from the *USS Decatur*. Houses and barns were burned, and this incident is referred to as the "Battle of Seattle." Throughout this time, Indigenous peoples in Washington & Oregon faced ongoing military attack by US forces.

In September 1856, a settler was shot & killed on southern Vancouver Island, allegedly by a Cowichan. The *HMS Trincomalee* -heavily armed and towed by the Company ship *Outer*, with Governor Douglas in command-- was sent to Cowichan Bay. Nearly 500 sailors and marines, along with two cannons, were sent ashore. Although the Cowichan were reported as armed and painted for war, the large British force captured a suspect, and he was hung the next day in front of the village.

In 1858, the *Blue Wing* and *Ellen Maria* -- two American traders-- were attacked and destroyed by Haidas in Haida Gwaii.

In 1859, the American ship *Swiss Boy* landed in Barkley Sound (Vancouver Island) for repairs. It was looted and destroyed by Nuu-chah-nulth warriors on February 1/59, and its crew saved by an intervening chief.

In 1860, *HMS Forward* was deployed to Cape Mudge (on Quadra Island) as a show of force against the Lekwiltok, a Kwawak'awakw group seen as war-like for their expansion & raiding into Comox and other Salish territories. The Lekwiltok are reported to have opened fire on the ship, but its side-armour protected the vessel and its crew. The *Forward* used its cannons to bombard the village, destroying houses and canoes.

In May 1861, a large group of Haidas returning north were reportedly carrying out raids, and the *Forward* was sent to protect settlers at Salt Spring Island and Nanaimo. The ship continued its search for the Haidas, and located them on shore, just south of Cape Mudge. They opened fire, killing four and destroying some canoes. Five chiefs were taken prisoner. According to Walbran:

"... on the 17 May 1861, an attack was made near Cape Mudge, on a large encampment of marauding Haida Indians who were on their way home in about 30 canoes, laden with goods, stolen from Victoria, settlers on Salt Spring Island, the schooner Laurel and other vessels. The Forward had to fire on the encampment with her big guns before the Haidas would come to terms regarding the restitution of the stolen property... The Indians replied to the fire and one of the crew was wounded. After 4 of the Indians had been killed and several mortally wounded, five of the Haida chiefs were secured as prisoners, and all the stolen property given up. The plunder consisted of goods of all descriptions, many articles not being of the slightest use to the thieves, such as a quadrant, theodolite, hydrometer, and writing case, also saws, planes, hammer, and other tools sufficient to set up several carpenter's shops, and a quantity of rum, flour, calico, blankets, cotton and silk."

*(BC Coast Names, p. 186)*
In 1862, a devastating disease epidemic began in Fort Victoria. Colonial authorities forcibly evacuated Indigenous people. Many returned to their villages along the coast and spread the disease. An estimated 1 out of three Indigenous people died as a result:

"When the epidemic started, there were about 60,000 Indians in BC. When it had burned itself out 2 or 3 years later there were about 40,000" (Indian History of BC, p. 60).

In June 1862, the HMS _Forward_ escorted a flotilla of Tsimshian canoes out of Victoria as part of the evacuation. As it passed Ganges Harbour on Salt Spring Island, Cowichans opened fire on the canoes. The _Forward_ sent armed boat crews on shore who seized several prisoners. They were placed on board the ship and each given 3 dozen lashes.

In August 1862, the HBC steamer _Labouchere_ was seized by Tlingit warriors north of the Stikine river (present-day Alaska) and later released (reported in _Colonist_, Aug. 23, 1862).

In 1863, the _Trader_ was seized, looted and destroyed in the Clayoquot Sound area. Also that year, the schooner _Thornaby_ was attacked near Knox Bay, Johnstone Strait.

In April, 1863, two settlers were killed near Salt Spring Island. The _HMS Forward_ was deployed to capture and punish the killers. On April 25, the gunboat arrived at Kuper Island, north of Salt Spring Island. The Lemalchi (part of the Cowichan) refused to surrender any suspects, and the ship opened fire. The Lemalchi returned fire, killing one sailor and forcing the ship to retreat. The village was then subjected to heavy bombardment, although the Lemalchi escaped. According to Walbran, prisoners were taken at Chemainus, and 3 young men were tried, convicted and hung at Victoria on May 23, 1863.

The next month, four gunboats were deployed against the Lemalchi (the _Cameleon, Forward, Devastation, and Grappler_) in one of the largest naval operations on the coast. Scores of armed marines searched several islands, destroying canoes and taking prisoners. In July 1863, four persons were tried, convicted, and executed.

In September 1863, the _HMS Devastation_ was sent to Fort Simpson in northern BC after settlers had been killed. A Tsimshian village was surrounded and 8 chiefs taken prisoner. The ship then proceeded to Dundas Island. On September 18, fifteen canoes were sighted and the ship chased them. The canoes went ashore and the people took refuge in the forest. The enemy now had important captives and their canoes. The suspects were surrendered.

In 1864, the trade ship _Kingfisher_ was captured, looted and destroyed in Clayoquot Sound. Its crew was also killed, their bodies sunk with stones.

In response to this attack, the Ahousat (part of the Nuu-chah-nulth) were targeted for collective punishment. The _HMS Devastation_ and _Sutlej_ were deployed in October 1864. Using cannons and rockets, nine Ahousat villages were destroyed. At Cypress Bay a landing force was sent in. At least 15 Indigenous were killed, and the Ahousat were dispersed to other villages. This expedition was led by Joseph Denman, a British Admiral.

That same year (1864) the Chilcotin uprising occurred in the central interior. It is most often described as the 'Chilcotin War', "the only conflict ever fought by BC natives in defense of their territorial sovereignty." This is incorrect, however, as Indigenous peoples on the coast fought numerous battles with European colonial forces.

At this time, the Tsilhqot'in had already suffered from settler invasion, including the establishment of Fort Chilcotin, & at least two smallpox epidemics. As many as 66% of their population had been lost. Alfred Waddington, a member of the Victoria legislature and a businessman, wanted to build a road from Bute Inlet (on the coast) into the interior, in order to access the gold fields.

In April 1864, Lhataas'in (Klatassinie, "nobody-knows-who-he-is"), a Tsilhqot'in chief, led other chiefs & warriors in an attack on the road-building camp. 14 crewmen were killed. Another 5-6 settlers were also killed in a subsequent attack on a pack train, and others wounded. These actions created a huge public outcry throughout the settler population, and eventually two separate forces were organized to punish the Tsilhqot'in.

One was a military expedition led by then-governor Frederick Seymour, whose force was brought to Bella Coola onboard the _HMS Sutilaj_. Seymour had just become governor that month (replacing Douglas). He had been a governor in British Honduras for 16 years, and prior to that a colonial secretary in Tasmania (in 1869, onboard the _HMS Sparrowhawk_, Seymour became ill & was brought to Bella Coola, where he died).

The second expedition was comprised of vigilante miners & employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, led by a gold commissioner.
After a lengthy search, the Tsilhqot'in warriors were eventually tricked into negotiations, where they were captured (thanks to the betrayal of Chief Alexis). The group was placed on trial in Quesnel, north of Williams Lake. Judge Matthew Begbie, who hanged 27 men during his career (22 of whom were native), sentenced five of the chiefs to death. Lhatsas'in's final words were "We meant war, not murder." Two of the accused became informants for the Crown, and another was sentenced to life in prison (he escaped while being transferred to New Westminster).

Chief William was a Secwepemc chief of the Sugar Cane reserve, for whom Williams Lake is named. He discouraged others in the area from joining the Tsilhqot'in resistance. In 1999, at a 125th anniversary gathering in Quesnel, the five chiefs were pardoned by the provincial government, which recognized that they were in fact defending their land.

In 1865, a colonial customs official -- DB Oglivie-- was killed onboard the schooner Langley, near Bella Coola (Colonist, May 24, 1865).

From November to December 1865, the HMS Clio (22 guns) patrolled from Esquimalt north to Port Simpson, raiding villages allegedly searching for illegal whiskey (an early "War on Drugs"-in 1854 the colonial government had made it illegal to give or sell liquor to Indigenous people. Despite this, the illegal trade in whiskey flourished).

At this time, the Fort Rupert Kwakiutl were considered especially war-like & dangerous. They had continued raiding, and war canoes frequently returned to their village at Ft. Rupert with heads, slaves, and loot goods.

In December, 1865, the HMS Clio arrived and demanded the surrender of 3 Kwakiutl accused of killing a Newiti man, and to search the village for whiskey. The Kwakiutl refused, and in response the gunboat opened fire, destroying the houses along with 50-60 canoes. 10 people were taken prisoner.

In 1867, Alaska was purchased from the Russians for $7 million. The Tlingits, who had continued over a century of resistance to Russian forces, were still hostile at the time of the Alaska purchase. The US Navy was soon used to dampen this fighting spirit, and Alaska remained under direct military rule long after.

In early 1868, Owikeeno warriors attacked a trade ship, killing its captain (Jack Night) and two others, looting and burning the ship (BC Coast Names, p. 368-369).

On June 13, 1868, the British trade ship Thornton was attacked by Nakwaxda'xw warriors near the Storm islands, Queen Charlotte sound (north Vancouver Island). They were repelled by the crew, who were armed with a new type of repeating rifle. A reported 15 warriors were killed (BC Coast Names, p. 347).

In 1869, a US gunboat (the USS Saginaw) shelled Tlingit villages at Kake and Wrangell (Alaska), destroying over 30 houses as well as canoes.

In May 1869, the John Bright —laden with lumber— was shipwrecked on Vancouver Island's west coast (near Hesquiat harbour). There were no survivors, and the Hesquit (Nuu-chah-nulth) were suspected of having killed the survivors after headless bodies were found on shore. The HMS Sparrowhawk was later despatched to the harbour and 7 Hesquits taken prisoner. In Victoria, two were convicted of taking part in the killings and sentenced to death. They were brought back to Hesquiat and hung in front of the assembled village.

In 1872, the Gitxsan village of Gitsegukla was destroyed when settlers failed to put out a camp fire. Twelve longhouses were burnt, and the chiefs demanded compensation. The Gitxsan blockaded the Skeena River, preventing settlers and supplies from moving. In response, the BC government despatched two gunboats, the HMS Scout and HMS Boxer. A meeting was held at Metlakatla, where Lt-Governor Joseph Trutch provided a cash settlement and show of force to resolve the conflict.

In 1873, Owikeeno warriors attacked and destroyed the George S. Wright, near River's Inlet.

In 1877, one of the last major gunboat actions was carried out against Kimsquit, a Nuxalk village. In 1873, the American ship George S. Wright had disappeared, but officials didn't know what had happened. Five years later, new information had emerged that Owikeeno warriors had killed the survivors of the wreck and looted its supplies. The HMS Rocket was deployed. It travelled to River's Inlet and took 3 prisoners. Two more suspects were identified as Nuxalk, living at Kimsquit (George Hunt served as a translator on this mission).

The Rocket then proceeded to Kimsquit, where the Nuxalk refused to surrender any prisoners. They escaped into the forest as the gunboat opened fire, leaving their village in burning ruins.

In 1882 the Tlingit village of Angoon (Alaska) was destroyed by US naval bombardment in an act of collective punishment for the killing of a settler.
In 1888, the 'Skeena Uprising' occurred at Hazelton. That year, Kamalmuk - a Gitskan - had killed another Gitskan. Although he had compensated the family in accordance with Gitskan tradition, the authorities sought to impose colonial law and order. In an attempt to capture Kamalmuk, a constable had shot him in the back. The Gitskan were very angry, and local settlers were terrified they would retaliate. The HMS Caroline and detachments of police & militia (with over 80 soldiers) were deployed after local officials reported that the Gitskan were armed and aggressive.

This was the last use of naval power against Indigenous peoples in coastal BC, although ships continued to patrol the coast.

7. BIOLOGICAL WARFARE: DISEASE AND DEPOPULATION

The deadly effects of European-introduced diseases are generally acknowledged in colonial history. Disease epidemics are in fact commonly associated with the European invasion of the Americas, beginning with the Spanish conquistadors. They are included in history because of their great impact on Indigenous populations (which cannot be denied) and because they provide an easy answer to the question: What happened to all the Indians?

Although European diseases were the primary cause of depopulation, these occurred most often under conditions of genocidal war involving massacres, scorched earth policies, forced relocation, starvation, etc. Under such conditions, there is little doubt that European military commanders welcomed the effects of disease on hostile Indigenous populations. Nor would they have been ignorant to the concept of biological warfare itself.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY OF BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

At least as far back as the 14th century, the use of biological warfare had been introduced to Europe. At that time, the Tartars laid siege to the walled city of Kaffa along the Black Sea. A bubonic plague outbreak occurred among the invaders. They used catapults to fling corpses of plague victims over the walls. An epidemic then occurred within the city. Those who escaped returned to Italy, where they spread the disease into Europe. This resulted in the Black Death, in which millions eventually died.

If you find it difficult to conceive of military commanders resorting to biological warfare, then recall how Europeans felt about Indigenous peoples. To many, our ancestors were non-Christian "heathens & infidels," savages, cannibals, subhumans lacking in souls. They were more like animals, and it was the duty of Christians (white Europeans, that is) to take their land, enslave them, and even exterminate them.

This was the official response of the church to Columbus' 1492 "discovery" of the Americas, which provided legal and moral sanction to genocide. By the 1700s, this attitude had not changed. Colonial settlers were still engaged in a life and death struggle with Indigenous peoples, who were still seen as an inferior race of dirty savages. The call to exterminate the Indians was widespread throughout colonial North America.

Sir Jeffrey Amherst was a British military commander who fought many battles against the French and their Indigenous allies. While he saw the French as 'worthy enemies', he hated the Indigenous people. Today, he provides the best documented cases of the use of biological warfare in North America against Indigenous peoples.

According to the US Center for Disease Control (CDC):

"Before the discovery of the smallpox vaccine, smallpox was in fact used as a weapon. One of the best documented examples of this occurred during the French & Indian War. The British had been defeated in their attempt to conquer Fort Carrillon on Lake Champlain. So Sir Jeffrey Amherst, commander of the British forces, met with Indians who were sympathetic to the French. Under the pretense of friendship, he deliberately offered them blankets previously used by smallpox victims. The Indians, who lacked immunity to smallpox, suffered a devastating outbreak of the disease. The English were then able to successfully attack the fort..."

Joanne Cono, MD, Centres for Disease Control & Prevention,
(in the CDC video The History of Bioterrorism, 1999).

Fort Carillon was taken by the British in 1759. A far better documented use of biological warfare occurred in 1763, during Pontiac's rebellion. At this time, the French had been defeated and Amherst was commander-in-chief of all British forces in N. America. An Indigenous insurgency had captured several forts, and Fort Pitt (Pittsburg) was under siege:

"... Captain Simeon Ecuyer had bought time by sending smallpox-infected blankets and handkerchiefs to the Indians surrounding the fort --an early example of biological warfare-- which started an epidemic among them. Amherst himself had encouraged this tactic in a letter to Ecuyer"


In a letter reportedly written by Amherst himself, he appeals to Colonel Henry Bouquet:
"Could it not be contrived to send the small pox among those disaffected tribes of Indians? We must on this occasion use every stratagem in our power to reduce them."

(quoted in The Conspiracy of Pontiac and the Indian War, p. 39)

Shortly after, a smallpox epidemic broke out among the Delawares and the insurgency was eventually defeated. Amherst is the most well-documented example of bio-warfare, but some scholars assert that it was far more common:

"Our preoccupation with Amherst has kept us from recognizing that accusations of what we now call biological warfare—the military use of smallpox in particular—arose frequently in 18th-century America. Native Americans, moreover, were not the only accusers... Seen in this light, the Amherst affair becomes not so much an aberration [an unusual exception] as part of a larger continuum in which accusations and discussions of biological warfare were common, and actual incidents may have occurred more frequently than scholars have previously acknowledged"


Another incident in which it is believed that the British used biological warfare was during the American Revolutionary War. During the winter of 1775-76, American forces were attempting to take Quebec from British control. They captured Montreal. But in December 1775, the British fort commander reportedly infected the Americans, causing massive casualties. The American forces retreated after burying their dead in mass graves.

"[Historical events and records] suggest that the use of smallpox as a weapon may have been widely entertained by British military commanders, and may have been employed without scruple when opportunity offered, possibly on a number of occasions"

(Wheelis, "Biological warfare before 1914," Biological and Toxin Weapons, p. 29).

A smallpox vaccine was developed in 1796, and it was nearly eradicated around the world by 1980. As a result, vaccination has not been continued. Due to concerns of bio-terrorism, however, the US has stockpiled smallpox vaccines, and it is still listed as a category A disease by the CDC. This list also includes anthrax, botulism, and the plague. The CDC website states "If these germs [type A] were used to intentionally infect people, they would cause the most illness and death." This tells us that smallpox is a highly contagious & deadly disease.

**Impact of Disease on Northwest Coast**

The earliest epidemics on the Northwest Coast are believed to have occurred in the early 1770s and to have caused large numbers of deaths. This time period coincided with the arrival of the first Spanish ships (1774), although scholars believe the epidemic was spread through intertribal trade to the south. Whatever the case, disease epidemics were still having a devastating effect in the 1780s and 90s.

The 1788 journal of James Colnett refers to Kildidt Sound and describes an empty village and many corpses. Likewise, Capt. Vancouver noted seeing hundreds of dead at one village, in 1792.

Epidemics would continue throughout the coast into the 1880s, and included smallpox, measles, influenza, syphilis, and others. Within a century of contact (1774-1874), the Indigenous population on the Northwest Coast is estimated to have declined by a minimum of 80% (from 200,000 to 35,000).

**Smallpox**

Smallpox caused the greatest number of deaths on the Northwest Coast. Boyd identifies three major smallpox epidemics; one in the 1770s, one in 1836, and another in 1862, with mortalities ranging from one-third to two-thirds of the population (Spirit of Pestilence, p. 204). Recall that smallpox is classified as a type A biological weapon by the US Centre for Disease Control.

Smallpox is a highly infectious disease in which the victim suffers high fevers, aches, rashes, and small raised bumps over the skin. Transmission is through prolonged face-to-face contact, and direct contact with infected body fluids or contaminated objects such as bedding or clothing.

The first symptoms are red spots on the tongue and inside the mouth. These turn into sores that break open and spread large amounts of the virus into the mouth and throat. The victims get a rash on the skin, which starts in the face. This rash turns into small bumps, which become hard and then scab.

For Indigenous peoples with no immunity, smallpox was a terrifying and painful form of death, on a scale never seen before. In 1796, a vaccination for smallpox was first developed by Dr. Edward Jenner in England. As early as 1802, US Army doctors began vaccination of Indigenous camps located around Army forts in an effort to stop
epidemics. The first large scale smallpox vaccination of Indigenous people was authorized by the US Congress in 1832.

1862 Smallpox Epidemic

The worst smallpox epidemic on the Northwest Coast occurred in 1862, following the discovery of gold in the Fraser Canyon in 1858. After this, thousands of settlers began to arrive. Fort Victoria grew from a couple hundred to several thousand. Indigenous people would also gather around the fort, where different nations soon had camps set up to trade.

In late March, 1862, the first case of smallpox infection was reported in a local Victoria newspaper. It is believed to have been introduced by a prospector who arrived from San Francisco. As infections increased, authorities initially began inoculation shots. Several hundred Indigenous people were in fact immunized with smallpox vaccine.

Within a month of the outbreak, however, the northern tribes were given one day to leave and threatened with gunboats (April 28, 1862). On May 11, the HMS Grappler and Forward escorted 26 canoes out of the harbor. Two days later, police destroyed all lodges at the camps of northern tribes, leaving hundreds without shelter:

"Alarmed, the authorities burned the camps and forced the Indians to leave. They started up the coast for home, taking the disease with them, leaving the infection at every place they touched. The epidemic spread like a forest fire up the coast and into the interior" (The Indian History of BC, p. 59).

David Walker, a naval surgeon stationed on the coast at this time, commented on government policies in regards to disease, stating:

"If it were intended to exterminate the natives of this coast no means could be devised more certain than that of permitting these miserable wretches to return home in a state of sickness and disease; wives, husbands and children become contaminated, and that too in places beyond medical aid, unchecked in its ravages this disease cuts off the prime of the population, and leaves the remainder physically unsuited to continue the habits and pursuits of their forefathers"

(quoted in Gunboat Frontier, p. 80-81).

And yet, colonial authorities not only "permitted" infected persons to return to their villages, they forced them to, knowing full well the devastating effects of European disease. Commenting on the 1862 smallpox epidemic, Boyd states:

"... this epidemic might have been avoided, and the whites knew it. Vaccine was available... and the efficacy of quarantine was understood."

(Spirit of Pestilence, p. 172)

At this time, the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia were beginning their expansion of settlements. Fertile land was being identified and taken for farming, in order to feed this growing population. All types of business opportunities were being encouraged: logging, sawmills, fishing, canneries, mines, stores, schools, building construction, etc.

The Hudson's Bay Company, which retained control of the colonies until 1859, had been instructed to sell land and to use part of this profit to improve infrastructure (i.e., roads, bridges). In 1854, the HBC published a pamphlet in England entitled "Colonization of Vancouver's Island" to raise awareness of the colony. Ads were also placed in English newspapers to attract settlers.

Settlement was greatly stimulated by the 1858 gold rush in the Fraser Valley and southern interior, which brought as many as 30,000 prospectors from the US in the first 2-3 years. The gold rush was big news, and the lure of quick & easy money was widely promoted. Most 'prospectors' arrived at Fort Victoria. A huge service industry emerged just to feed, transport, house and re-supply these trails and camps. Prostitution and whiskey also flourished in the 'boom towns'.

The establishment of the colony of British Columbia (the mainland) in 1858 --the year of the gold rush-- was necessary for the government to keep control of the area, and to limit any American influence across the border.

Nevertheless, the problem of every colonial occupation & settlement is what to do with the Indigenous people. Throughout the 1850s, the HBC government had had to contend with an ongoing Indigenous insurgency. Despite the bombings of villages, raids, and public executions of chiefs & warriors, attacks had continued. Settlers were still being killed, and ships were still being destroyed on the coast.

These activities created the first period of 'economic uncertainty', and for this reason the government sought to quickly & immediately pacify the Indigenous population. As noted previously, the government devoted great resources to punishing any Indigenous resistance that resulted in deaths or injuries to settlers. It had to show that it could impose control over Indigenous people, thereby protecting the lives & property of settlers.
For colonial authorities & businessmen, the smallpox epidemic of 1862 could not have occurred at a more ideal time. It dampened indigenous resistance throughout the region and drastically reduced the population, just as settlement was officially promoted. Some estimate that 20,000 died within 1 year of the initial outbreak at Fort Victoria.

As noted, authorities knew the proper procedures for dealing with smallpox epidemics (inc. vaccination & quarantine); a vaccine had been developed in 1796, and even the US Army vaccinated indigenous people gathered around its forts. The precedent for biological warfare using smallpox had already been set by Amherst, in 1763. Amherst, recall, was the commander of all British military forces in N. America. Colonial authorities at Ft. Victoria could not have been ignorant to the consequences of their actions, which actively promoted the spread of smallpox throughout the entire coastal region, causing tens of thousands of deaths.

Measles, Influenza, Tuberculosis, and Syphilis

Other diseases which also caused extensive deaths were measles, influenza, tuberculosis, and syphilis. Measles is an infectious disease in which the victim suffers high fevers and red spots on the skin. In 1868, a measles epidemic spread through the Heilsuk, Haisla, Tsimshian, and Tlingit.

Influenza is the flu, a respiratory disease which causes fevers, aching cramps, and coughs. Some strains of influenza are deadly; after World War I a global flu epidemic killed some 25 million people, more than those killed during the entire war. For indigenous people, influenza was also deadly.

Tuberculosis is another respiratory disease. In the early 1900s, tuberculosis epidemics were a major cause of death among indigenous peoples. This has been attributed to, "Confinement in reserves & overcrowded European-style housing of the lowest quality [which] provided fertile ground with malnutrition, lack of sanitation, despair, alcoholism... from which the infection ran its mortal course through communities.

The impact of tuberculosis, statistically expressed, was out of all proportion to the size of the Aboriginal population. A study by [DIA medical inspector, Dr.] Bryce revealed that the rate of tubercular infection for Indians was one in seven and the death rates in several large bands 81.8, 81.2, and in a third 86.1 per thousand. The ordinary death rate for... the city of Hamilton was 10.6 in 1921."

(A National Crime, pp. 83-84)

After contact with Cook's 1778 expedition, syphilis was most likely introduced by sailors who had sex with prostituted female slaves, provided by the Nuu-chah-nulth. Syphilis is a sexually-transmitted disease (STD) that can lead to heart & brain damage, birth defects & still-born babies. In the European middle-ages, syphilis killed millions of people. In the early 20th century, anti-biotics were developed to treat syphilis.

In 1997, Vancouver saw a rapid growth in syphilis infection, especially among prostitutes in the Downtown Eastside. By 2003, news headlines proclaimed Vancouver as home to one of the "world's largest outbreaks of syphilis."

Today, indigenous peoples in general have much higher rates of infection for diseases such as hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV AIDS, diabetes, and cancer. Some of these diseases are infectious (hepatitis, AIDS, and tuberculosis) but all of them result from the inferior living conditions experienced by today's generations of indigenous people. These conditions are the direct result of colonization & genocide.

Impact of Genocide

From an original population of some 200,000 in 1770, a century later indigenous peoples would number some 40,000. Within a span of 2-3 years, some 20,000 had also just died (1862 smallpox epidemic). Entire villages disappeared as survivors grouped together (i.e., among the Haida, the villages of Masset and Skidegate became centers of survival). Family lineages, upon which all social organization was based, fragmented and broke apart.

Under these conditions, indigenous nations began to suffer from a total social breakdown. Vast amounts of indigenous culture was lost at this time, including history, philosophy, and organization. Many survivors, suffering from trauma and dislocation, abandoned their culture and sought salvation in European ways of life.

Missionaries found fertile ground for their message of Christianity, and they worked constantly to gain converts to their 'flocks'. They built churches & schools, translated hymns & bible stories into indigenous languages, and even established their own Christian model towns (i.e., Metlakatla). At the same time, alcohol and prostitution flourished, adding to the breakdown of indigenous society.

By this point, the military strength of the Northwest Coast indigenous nations was completely broken, and many had already resigned themselves to reservation life and assimilation.
One historian described the effects of disease epidemics on the Yup'ik, a group of Inuit in western Alaska:

"Compared to the span of life of a culture, the Great Death was instantaneous. The Yup'ik world was turned upside down, literally overnight. Out of the suffering, confusion, desperation, heartbreak and trauma was born a generation of Yup'ik people. They were born into shock. They woke to a world in shambles, many of their people and their beliefs strewn around them, dead. In their minds they had been overcome by evil. Their medicines and their medicine men and women had proven useless. Everything they had believed in had failed. Their ancient world had collapsed.

"The survivors taught almost nothing about the old culture to their children. It was as if they were ashamed of it, and this shame they passed on to their children. The survivors also gave up all governing power of the villages to the missionaries and school teachers, whoever was most aggressive. There was no one to contest them. In some villages the priest had displaced the angalkuq. In some villages there was theocracy under the benevolent dictatorship of a missionary. The old [shamans], on the other hand, had fallen into disgrace. They had become a source of shame to the village, not only because their medicine had failed, but also because the missionaries now openly accused them of being agents of the devil himself and of having led their people into disaster."

(Yuysaraq: the Way of the Human Being, pp. 11-14).

These first generations of 'modern' Indigenous people had different responses to colonialism, differences which still exist to this day. Some embraced assimilation, becoming hardcore Christians and businessmen. Many were also devoted to the British Crown and royal family. Their response to genocide (a survival reflex) was to become model Christians and loyal subjects of the empire.

This describes a great number of our elders; our grandparents and great-grandparents. This is why they had ornaments, paintings, decorated plates, etc., emblazoned with portraits of British Kings & Queens. This is also why so many Indigenous men volunteered for military service in World Wars 1 and 2.

Those who kept their culture and traditional views were impoverished and marginalized by the 'modernized' Indians placed in control. They were also subject to punishment after the 1884 Indian Act amendment that banned the potlatch and other ceremonies (i.e., the plains sundance).

8. INDIGENOUS INSURGENCY DEFEATED

In the period after the 1862 smallpox epidemic, Indigenous armed resistance to colonization began to decline. Thereafter, they were unable to stop the continued expansion of settlements & resource exploitation. By 1871, there were some 10,000 European settlers in the colony of BC. Ten years later (1881), this had increased to 23,000 settlers, with approx. 25,000 Indigenous people.

The last recorded attack on a European vessel was in 1873 by Owikeeno warriors; the last use of naval firepower to destroy a village was at Kitimtuk, 1877. Without the depopulation caused by disease, and in particular the 1862 epidemic, this resistance would have been more active and prolonged.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that this initial phase of resistance had some big obstacles. The major factors limiting this insurgency were:

- Ongoing tribal warfare (lack of unity and coordination).
- Reliance on seashore & riverside village locations, thereby reducing mobility & exposing village to naval bombardment.
- Depopulation through disease epidemics, which also had a demoralizing effect.

Tribal warfare was the greatest obstacle to any coordinated resistance in the region. This warfare continued into the 1870's when the last reported battles occurred (Haida & Tsimshian). In fact, there do not appear to be any attempts to unify & coordinate anti-colonial resistance on the Northwest Coast (unlike the legacy of Tecumseh, Pontiac, and others in the east who organized large alliances to attack colonial forces). Raiding & killing between coastal Indigenous nations made unity unlikely (if not impossible) and diverted critical resources away from anti-colonial resistance.

Even the federal Indian superintendent, Israel Wood Powell (1870s), observed that there was not more resistance 'not because there has been no injustice to the Indians, but because the Indians have not been sufficiently united' (quoted in Contact & Conflict, p. 186).

By relying on seashore or river-side village locations, Indigenous peoples were vulnerable to Royal Navy cannons & rockets. When houses, supplies, and canoes were destroyed by fire or bombardments, village members were forced to disperse and go to neighboring villages. The loss of shelter, canoes, food, clothing, and equipment, meant that many could no longer be engaged in resistance, but were now a burden on those that were.
By dispersing into smaller forces and staying mobile, Indigenous peoples could have then neutralized ship's cannons. Even so, bombardment did not inflict great human casualties, as most villages were quickly evacuated when gunboats were sighted (especially under conditions of war).

The impact of disease, as mentioned, was the greatest cause of depopulation and the defeat of Indigenous resistance. Disease not only killed tens of thousands within a 100 year period, it also demoralized the survivors and destroyed their will to resist. Assimilation and collaboration with colonial settlers was widely promoted by survivors.

With the defeat of Indigenous resistance, the people were then brought under the direct control of colonial authorities, beginning with the missionaries.

9. CHRISTIAN COLONIZATION

MISSIONARIES

"It is the earnest desire of her Majesty's Government that your early attention should be given to the best means of diffusing the blessings of the Christian religion and civilization among the Natives."

Sir Edward Lytton, colonial secretary, instructions to Governor Douglas, 1858
(quoted in Aboriginal Peoples & Politics, p. 27),

The role of Christian missionaries is often overlooked or downplayed in colonial history. In fact, they played a crucial role in colonization. Missionaries & Christianity itself were the primary means by which European ideology were imposed on Indigenous peoples. They were frequently imbedded among Indigenous communities, had learnt the languages, translated hymns and sections of the bible, established schools & businesses. Missionaries even organized the first band councils (comprised of Christian Natives, and especially converted chiefs).

Missionaries assisted in colonial policy, including the reserve & residential school systems and 1884 Anti-Potlatch ban. They were themselves a recognized colonial authority, with the support and sanction of government. This included establishing Christian Native towns, where missionaries enforced strict codes of behavior, including banning all traditional culture & language. Along with village councils, there were also Native police to enforce the rules (and a network of spies & informants).

Missionaries were sponsored by governments, corporations, and churches, which included Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterian, and others. One of the largest Anglican missionary organizations was the Church Missionary Society of England. It had recruited, trained, and dispatched missionaries to Africa, Asia and the Americas since 1799.

Although there was resistance & hostility to missionaries, increasing numbers of Indigenous people became Christians. Some areas had more extensive missionary activity than others, but by the early 1900s, most Indigenous people belonged to one church group or another.

On the Northwest Coast, Christian missionary operations really began in the late 1850s. During this period, settlement was also being promoted by the Hudson's Bay Company. As one historian noted,

"[T]he years that saw the permanent establishment of settlement, also marked the beginning of effective missionary work among the Indians... It was no accident that the establishment of effective missions to the Indians coincided with the beginning of settlement"

(Contact & Conflict, p.124).

In 1857, the Church Missionary Society, and other organizations, began sending missionaries along the coast. In some communities, missionaries gained large followings and built churches, which also served as schools, workplaces, and jails. They were the center of every Christianized village. Missionaries also traveled extensively to other villages in their 'zone of operations'.

As part of their indoctrination, Christian Natives were also trained in European forms of political organization. These were the first 'band councils', usually under the direct control of the missionary:

"Control of each village was in the hands of a few "chiefs," often appointed by the missionaries. Other Indians were designated to police the rules of the community. These "watchmen" reported on the conduct of the village people..."

(Contact & Conflict, p. 139).

The officials, elected or appointed by the priest, were those men seen as models of Christian Natives. These were the one's who had attended the Church schools, learned to read & write English, and who could therefore be trained in European organization.
Although missionaries actively worked to suppress Indigenous culture, they also exploited it to meet their objectives. While the hereditary & clan systems were renounced, missionaries targeted chiefs & high-ranking persons for conversion. The logic was simple and an old-one: decapitation (or, in this case, a lobotomy). Converted chiefs were often able to influence their families & clans, to organize their resources, to gain recruits, and to lend legitimacy to colonization:

"The conversion of chiefs was obviously desirable to the missionary... Chiefs played a major part in facilitating the work of evangelization among the Nisga'a and their neighbors"  
(Kincolith's First Decade).

These new assimilated Natives, often hereditary chiefs, were also the most successful in new commercial activities that began in the 1870's (i.e., fishing & logging). Not only could they communicate better, they were better connected to businesses through the missionary. By the early 1900's, many Christianized chiefs were highly successful fishermen, who owned their own boats and employed other band members to work for them.

It was these first 'modern' Natives—the most assimilated—who occupied the first band councils. They were the first to acquire wealth & status in the new corporate economy. Today, many of these same families have maintained their political & economic positions over several generations (i.e., the Gosnels, Calders, Georiges, etc.).

[Our view that there is a new 'aboriginal business elite' is not entirely correct, it is approx. 130 years old in some communities. Today, their descendants continue to wield political and economic power, through both band councils & Native corporations. What has changed is the sheer scale; today's aboriginal corporate officers handle multi-million dollar budgets for band incorporated businesses, including regional airlines, oil & gas production, luxury resorts & casinos, logging, sawmills, aquaculture, gravel quarries, garbage dumps, etc.]

**Model Christian Communities**

The Church Missionary Society had stations among the Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Gitksan, and Haida. These included the villages of Aiyansh, Hazleton, Kincolith, Kitlakatla, Kitwanga, Masset, & Metlakatla.

Some communities, in fact, were established by missionaries as model Christian towns. These are referred to as Christian 'utopias', and were most successful among the Nisga'a & Tsimshian. These included Metlakatla, Ayansh, Greenville, & Kincolith. The two best known examples are Metlakatla and Kincolith.

**Metlakatla**

Metlakatla was established as a Christian Tsimshian village. It was well known throughout the British empire; it was widely publicized in the CMS newsletter (the *Church Missionary Intelligencer*), and corporate media (Victoria's *Colonist*). Government officials studied it, helped fund it, and granted land to it. It served as a model & inspiration for other missionaries.

Metlakatla was established in 1862 & ruled by the Anglican missionary, William Duncan. He had been recruited by the CMS in England, after a request by Admiral Prevost of the Royal Navy. Prevost had just returned from the Northwest Coast, and strongly supported missionary work. William Duncan was a store clerk, not a priest, but he was a Christian soldier. He was transported to Victoria onboard the *HMS Satellite* in 1857. In June of that year, he arrived at Fort Simpson.

Duncan was assisted by Philip Cah, a Christianized Tsimshian. Through his informant, Duncan began to learn the Tsimshian language. He translated hymns and parts of the bible, and was eventually able to preach in Tsimshian. He also opened a school.

"As in most CMS missions, Duncan's school at Fort Simpson was an important agent of acculturation; it gave the missionary daily opportunity to teach the Indians systematically about the new way of life he hoped to introduce among them..."  
*(Contact & Conflict, p. 129)*

Despite some success, Duncan felt that Fort Simpson offered too many 'distractions' and bad influences (i.e., friends & family). In 1862, he and 50 converts relocated, establishing Metlakatla as a Native Christian town. Shortly after, the Tsimshian were devastated by the 1862 smallpox epidemic. Because of its isolation, Metlakatla was largely unaffected. Its population grew to 800-1,000 as survivors resettled.

Here, Duncan was able to enforce a strict code of Christianity & assimilation. All citizens had to be Christians and renounce their Indigenous language & culture. European-style one family houses were built, with gardens & fences. A brass band was organized and performed songs such as "God Save the Queen" and "Onward Christian Soldiers" for visiting officials & tourists.

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"Metlakatla was a model of Victorian order... Dominating the village was the massive church [the largest church north of San Francisco] ...Law & order was maintained by a group of 20 uniformed [Native] constables... Discipline at Metlakatla was strict & rigorously administered... The government of village affairs was nominally in the hands of a native council of 12, but effectively Duncan was the ruler."

(Contact & Conflict, pp. 133-134)

"The executive power was exercised by the village council with the help of 10 "companies" overseeing the general population. Each company was made up of 2 councillors, 2 Native constables... the constabulary not only enforced public order but respect for morality as well, their mandate embraced the village's work habits, conjugal lives, and religious practice."

(Without Surrender, Without Consent, pp. 44-46)

Duncan also oversaw several commercial businesses, including logging, a sawmill, furs, fishing, a cannery, and a small crafts shop. His authority was increased even more in 1863 when he was made a justice of the peace. Metlakatla itself was given official recognition as a reserve:

"As far back as 1864, Duncan had secured a reserve within a radius of 1 mile around the Metlakatla mission from his friend & admirer, Governor Douglas, in order to forestall a challenge to the Christian presence by the Pagan Tsimshian."

(Without Surrender, Without Consent, p. 83)

In addition, two acres in the village itself were granted to the CMS for its buildings. Due to differences with Anglican church officials, however, Duncan was expelled from the CMS in 1881. The Anglican church then claimed this land, and sent surveyors. Duncan and the Christian Tsimshians, however, wouldn't allow it. In 1885, while Duncan was in England, surveyors were again sent. This time, the Tsimshian confiscated their equipment and expelled them.

Following this incident, the gunboat H.M.S Cormoran was sent with a small police force. 8 Metlakatians were arrested and the survey completed. After gathering enough money from wealthy US sponsors, Duncan and 600 followers split from Metlakatla (BC), crossed the border, and set up New Metlakatla (Alaska) in 1887. In 1905, New Metlakatla was ravaged by fire and many of its buildings burned.

At its peak (1880s), Metlakatla is estimated to have had a population of 800-1,000. At that time, the coast Tsimshian population itself was approx. 1,900 (Without Surrender, Without Consent, p. 45, Spirit of Pestilence, Table 3). That means that at some point, at least half of all Tsimshian lived at Metlakatla.

**KINCOLITH**

Kincolith was founded in 1867 by the Anglican Rev. Tomlinson & his flock of Nisga'a Christians. Located along the Nass River, the site had been used as a village before and its name means "place of skulls." This site had been disputed by the Tsimshian before, and in 1868 there was war between Tsimshian & Nisga'a. Kincolith itself was threatened with attack.

In 1870, Governor Seymour onboard the H.M.S Sparrowhawk arrived to impose colonial law & order. After a request from Tomlinson, Kincolith was made a reserve by Land & Works Commissioner Joseph Trutch that same year.

Missionary work among the Nisga'a had first begun with visits by Duncan up the Nass River in 1860. Most of the early residents of Kincolith came from other Nisga'a villages, but also included Gitxsan and Tsimshian (the three are closely related). These would eventually include many high-ranking chiefs.

Tomlinson had been to Metlakatla and copied Duncan's methods. A sawmill and animal farm were set up. By 1879, there were 11 Euro-style houses built, as well as a community fishing boat (the Kingfisher).

Like other missionaries, Tomlinson was also involved in the 'land question' and government allocation of reserves. He petitioned the government to make Kincolith a reserve, including 4 acres for his church property. Kincolith was made a reserve in 1870. In 1888, George Kinzadah was elected Chief Councilor under the Indian Advancement Act.

**OTHER NISGA'A CHRISTIAN VILLAGES**

Aiyansh is a Nisga'a village on the Nass River. In 1875, the missionary Rev. Tomlinson arrived at the village of Gitlakdamix. Shortly after, he built a church a short distance away, but was then transferred to the Skeena region & the Gitxsan. In 1883, the CMS appointed James McCullagh as missionary for the upper Nass Valley. McCullagh was a former military officer.
When he arrived at Aiyansh, he began to learn Nisga'a through a Christian Native. In 1885, he organized a Red Cross Society for preaching the gospel; it had 12 members led by a Captain. Soon, he had converted the head chief. By 1895 there was a missionary school, staffed by two Christian Natives with 20 children and 32 adults attending. The church itself had 125 members and a choir.

Eventually, Aiyansh had a sawmill, printing press, roads, boardwalks, and single family cottages. A local government was also set up by McCullagh:

"Aiyansh was administered politically by a parish council composed of 7 chiefs; the council has considerable power, and their authority is enforced by a force of five constables. Curfew is sounded at 10 PM, no one is supposed to be out of doors after that hour."

(Without Surrender, Without Consent, p. 71).

Greenville was a Christian Nisga’a village established by the Methodist missionaries Thomas Crosby & Alfred Green, in 1877. It was established on the site of a village abandoned after a smallpox epidemic (Lakalzap). Crosby had arrived at Fort Simpson in 1874, and was assisted in his work by William Pierce, a Tsimshian-Scottish Christian. (Today it’s known as Lakalzap again, and is one of the four remaining Nisga’a villages).

Other Anglican missionaries on the coast included Rev. WH Collison among the Haida at Masset, 1876; Rev. AJ Hall among the Kwakwaka’wakw at Ft. Rupert & Alert Bay; and Rev. JB Good among the Coast Salish at Nanaimo & Yale.

"For men like McCullagh, Tomlinson, & Duncan, Christianity was a global system that encompassed not only going to church on Sundays and reading the Bible, but also washing with soap, working six days out of 7, and eating with one's feet under a table."

(Without Surrender, Without Consent, p. 72)

"[T]he effect of the missionary presence was to divide the Indians into pro- and anti-missionary factions. The consequent hostilities between the 2 groups produced further fragmentation in Indian society."

(Contact & Conflict, p. 141)

10. Residential Schools

"Children who went to residential school suffered a loss of culture, identity, family and more. Their only models on how to live, and have relationships, came in the form of institutional rules & school staff..."

(Indian Residential School Survivors Society, website 2004)

In BC, the first Christian schools were established by early missionaries, beginning in the 1860s. In the Fraser Valley, Roman Catholic missionaries had set up boarding schools, to isolate Native children from their families & community. The first of these was St. Mary's Mission, est. in 1861 in present-day Mission (for which the town is named).

As part of a national policy of assimilation, the federal government contracted churches to establish & administer residential schools. The Department of Indian Affairs provided land, buildings, and funding.

In 1884, the Indian Act was amended to make attendance mandatory for status Indians under age 16. The first major expansion of residential schools in BC occurred in 1890. That year, schools at Kuper Island, Kamloops, & Williams Lake were opened. Amendments in 1894 gave powers to arrest, transport and detain Indigenous children at residential schools.

By 1898, there were 54 residential schools across the country. At its peak, in 1946, there were 76 schools. Of these, 25 were located in BC (the most per province).

By the mid-1970s, most residential schools had been closed and all Indigenous children were attending government-run public schools. Today, many bands now administer their own schools, funded & supervised by government authorities. The last residential school to close in BC was St. Mary's in Mission (1984).

From 1890 to the 1970s, residential schools indoctrinated entire generations of Indigenous children & youth. Most people in their 40’s (2004) are likely to have attended residential school. The scale is massive, involving tens of thousands of Indigenous persons (from 100,000 to 150,000) in a span of 80 years.
Under the residential school system, children from ages 7-15 were removed from their families & communities. For ten months out of a year, they lived in the school and generally had no contact with their family. Brothers and sisters were separated. Upon their arrival, new students would have their hair cut off, would be deloused, and issued school uniforms. Their days consisted of religious indoctrination & work.

Girls were trained in domestic skills, such as sewing, laundry, cleaning, and cooking. Boys were trained in agriculture, carpentry, shoemaking, and blacksmithing. These trades were part of their assimilation into Canadian society. Besides learning basic English, math, etc., education was minimal. Speaking their Indigenous language, or displaying any of their culture (i.e., dances), was forbidden.

**Residential Schools in BC, 1861-1984**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Denomination</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahousat</td>
<td>1903-1907</td>
<td>Ahousat Boarding School</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert Bay</td>
<td>1929-1975</td>
<td>St. Michael's</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alert Bay</td>
<td>1888-1905</td>
<td>Girl's Home</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilliwack</td>
<td>1861-1940</td>
<td>Coqualeetza Industrial</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranbrook</td>
<td>1898-1970</td>
<td>St. Eugene's</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamloops</td>
<td>1890-1978</td>
<td>Kamloops Indian RS</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitamaat</td>
<td>1922-????</td>
<td>E. Long Memorial</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuper Island</td>
<td>1890-1975</td>
<td>Kuper Island Industrial</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lytton</td>
<td>1901-1979</td>
<td>St. George's</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metlakatla</td>
<td>1873-1908</td>
<td>Metlakatla Industrial</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission</td>
<td>1861-1984</td>
<td>St. Mary's</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Vancouver</td>
<td>1898-1959</td>
<td>Squamish Boarding</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Alberni</td>
<td>1909-1973</td>
<td>Port Alberni Boarding School</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Simpson</td>
<td>1893-1920</td>
<td>Port Simpson Boys/Girls</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sechelt</td>
<td>1912-1975</td>
<td>Sechelt Residential School</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart Lake</td>
<td>1910-1976</td>
<td>Lejac Residential School</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tofino</td>
<td>1900-1983</td>
<td>Bishop Christie RS</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams Lake</td>
<td>1890-1953</td>
<td>Cariboo Residential</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>1889-1918</td>
<td>All Hallow's (girls)</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Sources: Colonizing Bodies, p. 60, and Indian Residential School Survivors Society)

**Systematic Abuse**

Run under the strict discipline of priests, nuns, and former military officers, residential schools were also characterized by widespread physical, sexual and psychological abuse. By their very nature, the schools attracted the most violent and sexually deviant priests, nuns and staff. Beatings, rape, torture, and the systematic humiliation of ‘problem students’ was routine. Medical experiments and sterilization were also conducted. The school staff were accountable to no one and had total control.

The case of Willie Blackwater, a Gitxsan, is but one example. In the fall of 1964 government agents took Willie away from his family at Kistpiox in northern BC. He was sent on a 1,600 km bus ride to the Port Alberni residential school on Vancouver Island. In his first week there, he was singled out by a sadistic dormitory supervisor named Arthur Henry Plint.

Late at night, Plint told Blackwater there was a phone call from his father. He led the boy to his office and forced him to perform oral sex. Several days later, Plint raped him. This began a routine of sexual & physical abuse.

“Blackwater was 10 years old. He had never been away from his friends or his village... he barely knew English. In his isolation, the slight boy made 3 cries for help. The first two landed him in Plint’s backroom for a beating. Then during the summer he told his father what was happening. When Plint found that out in the fall of ’65, he beat the boy so violently that he ended up in the infirmary. That shut Blackwater up for 3 decades” (“A Shameful History,” Steven Frank, *Time*, July 28, 2003).

Today, thousands of former residential school students have filed lawsuits against both the churches and government, claiming millions of dollars in compensation for physical & sexual abuse. Faced with an estimated 12,000
lawsuits (and growing), the federal government established the Indian Residential School Resolution Canada in 2001 as a new department to handle court cases.

Mortality Rates at Residential Schools

Throughout the history of the residential schools, an unknown number of Indigenous children & youth died. Many school records were lost or never existed. High death rates would indicate thousands, ever tens of thousands, died as a result of conditions at residential schools. Most died from tuberculosis, an infectious respiratory illness. In crowded dormitories with poor air circulation, this disease spread rapidly.

"Physical and sanitary conditions in schools all across the country were terrible... Schools began to report death rates of 11% as in the case of [Port Alberni] to 17% in Saskatchewan's Crowstand school, to an average of 24% in fifteen prairie schools... At the File Hills industrial school in Saskatchewan, 69% of students died of tuberculosis during 1 decade. At Kuper Island [BC], the Indian Affairs department's own files estimate that up to 40% of the students died before they could return home."

(Stolen from Our Embrace, pp. 57-58).

As early as 1907, a medical inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs had reported death rates at residential schools as being as high as 35 per cent. Dr. Peter Bryce’s report on health conditions for Indigenous children in residential schools made headlines in the nation’s capital:

“I believe the conditions are being deliberately created in our Indian schools to spread infectious disease. The mortality rate among students often exceeds 50%. This is a national crime... It suffices for us to know... that of a total 1,687 pupils reported upon, nearly 25% are dead, at one school with an absolutely accurate statement, 69% of ex-pupils are dead, and that everywhere the almost invariable cause of death given is tuberculosis”


The DIA Superintendent, Duncan Scott, rejected Bryce’s report and no serious effort was made to implement any changes in Residential school conditions. In 1919, the position of medical inspector itself was abolished.

An unknown number of children were most certainly murdered by school staff. Young women impregnated by staff were forced to have abortions, or their newborn babies were taken & killed. Others died trying to escape, drowning or freezing to death.

Impact of Residential Schools

Residential schools have had a profound, extensive, and ongoing impact on Indigenous people, contributing to loss of culture (including language), family breakdown, mental health problems (i.e., post-traumatic stress disorder, including depression & anxiety), high rates of alcohol & drug addiction, and overall social dysfunction.

Many of those who were sexually & physically abused at residential school also began to abuse their own family members, so that the effects of abuse extended throughout the community and over many generations. In addition, many Indigenous children fostered out to non-Native families also suffered sexual, physical & psychological abuse. During the 1960’s, tens of thousands of Native children were fostered out to non-Native families, known as the “Sixties Scoop.”

Today, rates of sexual abuse among Indigenous people are extremely high. Every Indigenous community and family has experience with sexual abuse. Canim Lake, BC, and Hollow Water, Manitoba, are two communities that did a survey to determine the extent of sexual abuse:

"[They] found that a remarkable 75 to 85% of people reported they had endured unwanted sexual contact as a child. And almost 35% of respondents to the 1991 Stats Can Aboriginal People's Survey named sexual abuse as the most serious problem in their community... Behind the statistics lies the daily horror of sexual abuse, the shame and sorrow of children sexually victimized by the only people they may ever love or trust."

(Stolen from Our Embrace, p. 118)

One of the reasons sexual abuse has such a profound effect is that sexuality comprises one's entire personality, including one's concept of personal identity and self-esteem. As a specific type of violation, most often by people the victim knew and even trusted, sexual abuse can create strong feelings of mistrust, fear, and betrayal. As mentioned, there are also intense feelings of shame and guilt. In addition,

"Children subjected to this kind of treatment came to believe they were only sexual objects, a devastating blow to their self-esteem expressed later in their lives through compulsive sexual behavior, promiscuity... prostitution and an inability to found relationships on love rather than lust."

(Stolen from our Embrace, pp. 118, 121)
For survivors of sexual abuse, feelings of intimacy and even love can become associated with sex. Sexual promiscuity is used to fulfill these desires (intimacy & love). Eating disorders are also common, especially among women, in an effort to stay thin & therefore desirable/wanted. Survivors of sexual & physical abuse also suffer from high levels of suicide, mental health problems, imprisonment, alcoholism and drug addiction.

Compounded by conditions of poverty & oppression, this social dysfunction also has a negative impact on Indigenous resistance. This is due to the poisonous effects on relationships, organization, morale, and fighting spirit.

11. No Justice on Stolen Land

BACKGROUND

British Columbia is unique in Canada in that virtually all of the land remains unceded/non-surrendered Indigenous territories, according to Canada's own laws, including the 1763 Royal Proclamation. As a result, the only treaties made are the Douglas Treaties (1850s) and a portion of north-east BC under Treaty 8 (1899).

The Royal Proclamation is often used in aboriginal rights and title cases, especially in BC, where it is argued that BC failed to legally extinguish aboriginal land title (i.e., by not making treaties).

The primary legal defense used by BC & Canada is that the Proclamation was never intended to include this region. In 1763, it is argued, the British had not made official contact with any nation in the borders of present-day BC. Not until 1778 did Capt. Cook arrive on the coast & officially claim the land for Britain. Therefore, the Proclamation was not legally binding on the province and it was not required to extinguish aboriginal title.

In Deigamuskw, 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized aboriginal title, but also maintained that the Proclamation was never intended to apply to BC. In essence, it stated that there is aboriginal title, but it was displaced by the assertion of British sovereignty (beginning in 1849 when Vancouver Island was made a colony). Like the 1973 Nisga’a case, the court urged the parties to negotiate the nature and extent of what aboriginal title remains.

Although courts have ruled that the Proclamation was never intended to apply to BC, it was the legal basis upon which colonial officials made treaties throughout the 1800’s & 1900’s. In fact, in 1875, the federal government sought to disallow the BC Lands Act due to the lack of any legal surrender of Indigenous territory.

Indigenous peoples in BC have long been aware of this and have struggled since the 1870s to hold the provincial and federal government’s accountable to this historical fact.

When the Indian Act was amended in 1927 to criminalize land-claim’s organizing, it was in direct response to Indigenous nations in BC who continued to protest the theft of their ancestral territories.

The BC treaty process, begun in the early 1990s, is an attempt to finally close this legal argument (while imposing self-government).

Elements of both the resistance and Aboriginal political leaders make use of the legal strategy. For government chiefs & councils, the intent is to gain political & economic power through aboriginal & treaty rights. As a result, they devote great amounts of resources to court cases.

For the resistance, the legal argument is used to reveal the lack of both legal & moral authority by which the government rules. It is therefore primarily psychological. The resistance movement does not engage in the legal system (unless forced to), and views it as illogical to seek justice in the courts of your oppressor (No Justice on Stolen Land).

1763 Royal Proclamation

The Proclamation was issued by King George III in 1763. It established boundaries and regulations for all British colonies in N. America. This was necessary after the defeat of France and the surrender of several French colonies, including present-day Quebec (Treaty of Paris, 1763). Victory over France meant that Britain now had vast new territories under its control, with populations of hostile French settlers and Indigenous peoples.

While the French surrendered, Indigenous military resistance against the British continued. An alliance led by Pontiac, an Ottawa, began a renewed insurgency in 1763. Several British forts were destroyed, and Fort Detroit was put under siege for months. Although this campaign was defeated (in part by the use of biological warfare), the British moved to re-establish diplomatic relations with Indigenous nations while re-organizing their colonial system.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 did all of this. It gained the allegiance of French settler authorities (i.e., church officials & nobility) by retaining French civil laws and property rights (which kept them in power). It restricted colonial expansion by setting western limits to the frontier, and by strictly limiting any settlement or even trade beyond this frontier to the Crown (the British government).
This section recognized Indigenous peoples as nations and their territories as sovereign, in which only the Crown could negotiate for the surrender of land. It also legally bound the Crown to defend Indigenous peoples should they ever be attacked or molested in any way. In regards to Indigenous people, the proclamation was essentially a statement of alliance & diplomacy.

This allowed the British to consolidate their forces and avoid over-extension. It also brought French settlers under control, and dampened Indigenous resistance with its apparent recognition of territorial sovereignty.

For colonial settlers in the original 13 colonies, however, the Proclamation was yet another oppressive act from the British. Along with new taxes & trade laws, the Royal Proclamation helped ignite the American Revolution of 1776-1782.

Despite losing its American colonies, Britain followed the policies of the 1763 Royal Proclamation in its expansion across present-day Canada. While British (and later, Canadian) officials completed treaties and the formal surrender of land across the prairies (i.e., the Numbered Treaties), this process was never completed in BC. Instead, a small portion of the north-east corner of the province falls into Treaty 8, while a series of small treaties were made on Vancouver Island.

1875 Duty of Disallowance

The process of establishing reserves had first begun with the Douglas Treaties of 1850-54. These were in accordance with British law, and in particular the Royal Proclamation of 1763. As noted, this law forbid all trade & settlement in Indigenous territories without the legal surrender of aboriginal title, which could only be surrendered to the British Crown.

With the exception of the Douglas Treaties, colonial officials in BC disregarded the Proclamation after 1854, and began asserting legal authority over unceded Indigenous territory. The HBC began selling land to settlers, followed by successive colonial governments. In the 1860s, reserves began to be surveyed and allocated to Indigenous nations.

In 1864, Joseph Trutch was appointed as BC's Chief Commissioner of Lands. Trutch was an extreme racist who did not believe Indigenous peoples had any rights or title to land, and his views reflected those of the provincial government as a whole. Under his direction, original reserve sizes were drastically reduced.

In 1866, the colonies of Vancouver Island and the lower mainland were united into a single colony: British Columbia. The next year, Canada was established as a country under the British North America Act, 1867 (Canada's first constitution—the highest law of a nation-state). Under this act of confederation, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario were joined to create Canada.

Under Section 91 of the BNA, the federal government gave itself authority "to make laws for the Peace, Order, and good Government of Canada," including laws about "Indians and lands reserved for Indians."

In 1871, the colony of BC was made a province within Canada. The terms of union stated that the federal government would assume responsibility for Indigenous peoples, and BC would retain authority over land & resources.

In 1874 the provincial government passed the BC Land Act, a law aimed at increasing settlement by opening up Crown land to settlers. This was similar to the federal Free Homestead Act of 1874, which provided for selling land at $1.00 per acre for all settlers willing to clear, fence and reside on land within a 3-year time limit.

In 1875, however, the federal Justice Department felt compelled to issue a duty of disallowance, striking down the BC Land Act because of its failure to legally extinguish Indigenous title. The Deputy Minister of Justice for Canada stated in his report:

"... with one slight exception as to land in Vancouver Island surrendered to the Hudson's Bay Company [i.e., the Douglas Treaties], which makes the absence of others the more remarkable, no surrenders of land in that province have ever been obtained from the Indian tribes inhabiting it, and that any reservations which have been made, have been arbitrary on the part of the Government and without the assent of the Indians themselves...

"There is not a shadow of doubt that, from earliest times, England has always felt it imperative to meet the Indians in Council and to obtain surrenders of tracts of Canada...

"The Undersigned, therefore, feels it incumbent upon him to recommend that this Act should be disallowed... "
(Official Report in Council, January 23, 1875, this report was also signed by the Justice minister and endorsed by Lord Dufferin, then Governor-General of Canada).

In response to the federal Justice department's duty of disallowance, BC threatened to withdraw from Canada, and the province's illegal occupation of Indigenous territory was allowed to stand.
12. LEGAL & POLITICAL STRUGGLE, 1871-1927

“It was in the late 1880s that a new level of political awareness and organization began to emerge and with it a very specific set of Indian political demands for recognition of aboriginal title, for treaties, and for self-government.”

(Aboriginal Peoples and Politics, p. 53)

Following the defeat of Indigenous military resistance, new legal & political forms of struggle emerged among Indigenous people. These reflected the increasing assimilation of Indigenous peoples into a European way of life. The primary participants were the most Christianized and assimilated segments of the population (i.e., chiefs & councilors). This early movement was sponsored by missionaries & Churches, who promoted the reserve system as part of their efforts to convert Indigenous communities into Christian townships (and get land in the process). Such a project required land for farming and industry as the means to self-sufficiency. Some of the earliest reserves, in fact, were those made at the request of missionaries (i.e., Metlakatla 1864, Kincolith 1870).

All of this reflected official colonial strategies (which remain essentially the same today):

“[Governor] Douglas intended to make the new villages self-supporting, relying on “labour or money of the natives themselves... & the proceeds of the sale or lease of a part of the land reserved, which might be used for the expenses of the settlement.” Douglas was especially concerned that individual Indians “be trained to habits of self-government & self-reliance.”

(Aboriginal People & Politics, p. 28, a letter by Douglas, March 1859, is quoted).

“Essential to the [reserve] system, then, was getting the Indians off the reserves and into the colonial society”

(Aboriginal Peoples & Politics, p. 30).

As a result of the influence and control by Christianized Natives, missionaries, & churches, these early legal-political struggles focused almost exclusively on expanding the size of reserves and compensation for lost territory. Despite such minor requests, the legal argument itself revolved around concepts such as title & sovereignty (i.e., the 1763 Royal Proclamation).

This legal argument provided strongly worded letters and manifestos from chiefs, but little actual progress after 55 years of lobbying. Instead, the movement completely collapsed after being criminalized. Little was said about the anti-Potlach law or residential schools, as many Christian Natives were in favor of both. In contrast, traditional Natives continued to Potlach long after the 1884 ban, even after scores were arrested & imprisoned (i.e., among the Kwakwaka'wakw in 1920 & 1922).

Today, this political movement is portrayed in colonial history as being at the forefront of the Indigenous struggle for land. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. The movement did not oppose colonialism, but actively promoted assimilation. In fact, this was the only way for the new political class of chiefs & councilors to gain power.

The early phase of the legal-political struggle began ca. 1870 and lasted until 1927. As noted, its main focus was on land, and it came to be known as the “Land Question.” Despite this vague title, it was really about allocation of reserves and their boundaries.

The first reserves in BC were established through the Douglas Treaties (1850-54) on Vancouver Island. Beginning in the 1860s, the government began to survey and assign reservations throughout the province. This prompted widespread complaints by Indigenous people: the reserves were too small, their own requests were ignored, and white settlers continually violated reserve boundaries. In the early 1870’s, Rev. CJ Grandidiere, a missionary stationed at Kamloops, wrote:

“The whites came, took land, fenced it in, and little by little hemmed the Indians in their small reservations... Many of these reservations have been surveyed without their consent... Their reserves have been repeatedly cut off smaller for the benefit of the whites, and the best and most useful part of them taken... “

(quoted in Contact & Conflict, p. 185).

By 1877, Indigenous people in the southern interior were advocating armed resistance as necessary to defend their last remaining land-bases:

“Growing dissatisfaction about land certainly reached a peak among the Shuswap & Okanagan during 1877. In their exasperation some Indians argued to councils that armed force was the only way to extract concessions from an unresponsive government”

(Contact & Conflict, p. 191).
Instead, a pseudo-movement for land & rights was created, comprised of Christianized chiefs & sponsored by the churches. It was given official recognition by colonial authorities, and widely promoted by corporate media. Ultimately, the movement failed to have any substantial effect on land or reserve size.

Far from advocating resistance, Christianized chiefs preached submission & assimilation. Instead of organizing their people, they attached themselves to white lawyers, academics, churches, and government bureaucrats.

The main strategy of this movement was to appeal to colonial authorities while carrying out public relations campaigns. Hi-profile petitions and delegations were sent to Victoria, Ottawa, and Britain; chiefs met with government officials and the King. Protests were organized, and eventually Indigenous political organizations were formed.

In 1881, a Nisga’a delegation traveled to Victoria to petition the government in regards to the land question. The delegation included Chief Mountain & the Methodist missionaries Rev. Crosby & Rev. Green (Without Surrender, Without Consent, p. 80).

In 1885 a Tsimshian delegation traveled to Ottawa (chiefs John Tait, Ed Mathers and Herbert Wallace, accompanied by William Duncan, the Anglican missionary of Metlakatla).

In 1887 a joint Nisga’a-Tsimshian delegation went to Victoria. At this time, the Nisga’a Land Committee was formed by 3 Christianized chiefs, influenced in part by Rev. Green (The Native Brotherhoods, p. 89; Without Surrender, Without Consent, p. 132). The demands of the Nisga’a were for reserves to be expanded to 160 acres of land per family (as opposed to government policy of 80 acres/per family, and often less than that).

In 1906 a delegation of BC chiefs met with King Edward. In 1909 the Indian Rights Association (to 1916) was formed, as well as the Interior Tribes of BC. However,

“What the Indians vitally needed was legal advice. At this point [1909-1910] there arrived on the scene Arthur O’Meara... Until 1927 he was virtually the sole legal adviser to the Indian leaders. Upon his arrival he formed the Society of the Friends of the Indians of BC, composed mainly, it would appear, of Anglican churchgoers. The society raised money for Indian political activity and sponsored public talks, usually by O’Meara, on the land question” (Aboriginal Peoples and Politics, pp. 87-88).

In 1910-1911, there were several gatherings, declarations, and meetings with government officials, including the 1911 Lillooet Declaration.

In 1912, a delegation of interior nations traveled to Ottawa and met with the Prime Minister. That year, a Royal Commission was established to examine the land question in BC, and to review the reserve system.

In 1916, the report of the Royal Commission was completed (known as the McKenna-McBride report). Far from settling the land question, the report recommended cutting valuable land from existing reserves.

That same year, the Allied Tribes of BC was formed in response to the McKenna-McBride report. Its primary purpose was to continue to appeal to the government for compensation & larger reserves, based on the legal concept of aboriginal title.

Drucker, a strong supporter of such organizations, describes the Allied Tribes: “The organization of the Allied Tribes was peculiar, its uppermost [level] was organized in a very formal fashion, its local grassroots level appears to have been most casually organized, in fact, lacked formal organization altogether. At the top, there was a permanent Executive Committee, which elected its officers [i.e., chairman, etc.] from its own members... On the village level there was no permanent formal organization.” (The Native Brotherhoods, p. 96)

This form of organization, of course, is not so odd after all; here, Drucker describes a typical corporate style of organizing. The grassroots “appear” to be disorganized because they don’t exist.

At this time, the Allied Tribes was dominated by Andrew Paul, “a devout Squamish Catholic, and Peter Kelly, an ordained Methodist” (An Iron Hand Upon the People, p. 135). The level of control exercised by Christianized Natives on the Allied Tribes was clearly seen in its position concerning the anti-potlach law of 1884.
In 1920, seven Kwakwaka'wakw had been charged with violating the potlatch ban and sentenced to two months in prison. In 1922, 58 Kwakwaka'wakw were charged, with 22 being sentenced to jail terms ranging from 2-6 months. In both cases, masks and regalia had been confiscated and sold to museums.

In July 1922, a large Kwakwaka'wakw delegation went to Vancouver for a meeting of the Allied Tribes of BC, whose main agenda was the land question. The Kwakwaka'wakw had a resolution against the potlatch law, backed by most delegates. But this resolution was blocked by Reverend Kelly, a Haida, and others connected with missionary work. They threatened to leave the Allied Tribes if the resolution was passed (it wasn't).

In 1926, the Allied Tribes succeeded in making a presentation to a special government committee in regards to the "Land Question." The response came in 1927. While rejecting the idea of rights and title, the government offered a significant pay off:

"The principal findings of the committee were that there was no... aboriginal right in BC; and that, while no compensation was required to extinguish title, it was true that they received no annuities as other Canadian Indians did [i.e., treaty money]. Hence, it was recommended $100,000 per annum... be provided the Indian Department..." (The Native Brotherhoods, p. 101)

That same year (1927), the Indian Act was amended to outlaw raising funds or hiring lawyers to pursue land claims. This legislation effectively ended the first phase of legal-political organizing by Indigenous peoples in the province of BC.

In 1951, the ban on land claims activities was lifted and a new phase of legal-political struggle began. In the meantime, chiefs & councilors turned their attention to economic interests. On the coast, this meant the commercial fishery and the creation of a new legal-political organization to promote these interests.

The Native Brotherhoods

Following the ban on land claims activities in 1927, organizations and committees devoted to the "Land Question" disappeared. Consequently, a new intertribal political organization emerged, comprised once again of the most Christianized and assimilated elements: the chiefs and councilors. This organization was the Native Brotherhood.

The Native Brotherhood of BC was formed in 1931 in Port Simpson. One of its founding members was the Rev. Alfred Adams, an Anglican priest & a Haida. He was elected president at the 2nd convention, & re-elected until his death in 1944. It became one of the largest intertribal political organizations on the coast.

The Brotherhood was primarily involved in the commercial fisheries, and it lobbied government officials for greater access. Nearly all the original founding members were chiefs & commercial fishermen, who owned their own boats. For this reason, the Native Brotherhood was comprised primarily of coastal Indigenous peoples:

"Many interior Indians regarded the organization as nothing but a fishermen's union which has nothing to offer them, since they do no commercial fishing..." (The Native Brotherhoods, p. 122).

Politically, the Brotherhood promoted assimilation and capitalist ideology:

"The founding meeting [1931] approved a petition... that included requests for better schooling, for increased recognition of aboriginal rights in hunting, fishing, trapping, and timber-harvesting in off-reserve traditional lands, and for a meeting with Ottawa officials."

(Aboriginal Peoples & Politics, p. 116)

Although the Brotherhood petitioned to have residential schools closed (they advocated day schools), they neglected any mention of the anti-potlatch law (even when led by the Kwakwaka'wakw chief Bill Scow). They also avoided discussion of the "Land Question."

The Brotherhood was recognized by government officials and participated in several federal conferences on fisheries, as well as a 1947 parliamentary committee on amendments to the Indian Act. As a fishermen's union, the Brotherhood served as an organizer for Indigenous labor in the fisheries industry. With its official role as arbiter, the Brotherhood had considerable influence throughout the coast, with many chapters & members.

The Native Brotherhood of BC was greatly influenced by the Alaskan Native Brotherhood, formed in 1912 by southern Alaska Tlingit & Haida:

"The Alaska Native Brotherhood was founded in 1912 by a group of highly acculturated individuals, most of whom were town dwellers who had attended the Sitka Training School and who were inclined toward adoption of white standards and values. The ANB's structure rested on local village branches called camps, and its style resembled that of white fraternal orders and similar groups. Many ANB members were commercial fishermen and the
organization's journal was called the *Alaska Fisherman*. During its first decade the organization worked toward full citizenship rights (including the right to vote, which was attained), better education, and abolition of aboriginal customs...

(*Aboriginal People & Politics*, p. 115)

The Native Brotherhood of BC remained a large organization until the 1970s, when its membership drastically declined (along with the commercial fishery).

### 13. ASSIMILATION & RESISTANCE

**Land Claims Revived, 1950's**

The current phase of Indigenous legal-political struggle can be traced to 1951, when the *Indian Act* was amended to once again permit land claims (& potlatches). In 1949, the provincial government had also granted Indigenous people the right to vote in provincial elections. That year, Frank Calder, a Nisga’a, was the first Indigenous collaborator elected into the colonial government.

In 1955, Calder reorganized the Land Committee into the Nisga’a Tribal Council (the first tribal council in the province):

> “The emphasis this time was on resources—fish, timber, minerals—as well as the land itself” (*Without Surrender, Without Consent*, p. 146).

As a child, Frank Calder had been sent to residential school in Chilliwack by his parents. There he endured 13 years of indoctrination. This was followed by university (UBC), and Calder graduated from the Anglican Theological College in 1946. Calder’s assimilation was deliberately promoted by his family to prepare him for his political career. It worked amazingly well.

In May 1960, a joint senate-House of Commons joint committee on Indian Affairs was held. In response to questions by MPs as to the aim of the Nisga’a land claims, Calder meekly replied:

> “We are not claiming the land back. We want recognition that we do have rights... by the government... We know we will never get it back... We only want our title recognized and compensation paid.”

(*Without Surrender, Without Consent*, pp. 147-48)

Even the demand for larger reserves was no longer an issue. Despite this, the Nisga’a continued to be promoted as defenders of Indigenous sovereignty and land.

**Aboriginal Rights & Resistance, 1960-1990’s**

In 1965, two Nanaimo Indians arrested for illegal hunting went to court. In their case, they argued it was a treaty right contained in the Douglas Treaty, signed in the early 1850’s. BC argued it was not a treaty but an “agreement.” The Supreme Court of Canada disagreed, and aboriginal rights became a serious legal issue, prompting many more legal challenges.

In BC, because of the lack of treaties, these legal challenges broadened to include the issue of aboriginal title. The Nisga’a were the first to take such a case to court (1968, Calder), seeking recognition of their unextinguished aboriginal title and compensation.

At this time, an Indigenous resistance movement was beginning to emerge, including the American Indian Movement, Mohawk Warrior Societies, and Red Power. What united this movement was its strong anti-colonial focus, including rejection of government-imposed band councils. In contrast to the band councils, this was a genuine grassroots peoples’ movement which mobilized thousands of Indigenous people into the resistance.

In 1969, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) was formed to proceed with a land claim on behalf of all BC status Indians. It continues to exist as a political organization, comprised mostly of interior band councils.

In 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Nisga’a did have aboriginal title prior to colonization, but were split evenly on the question of the continuing existence of their title. That is, what remained of aboriginal title after the assertion of British sovereignty?
In 1974, Canada began negotiations with the Nisga’a to resolve this question, a process that transformed into the first modern-day treaty (Nisga’a Treaty, 1996). It was not a part of the BC treaty process, but is seen as a model upon which the process is based.

Under the conditions of the treaty, the Nisga’a are no longer administered under the Indian Act but are now a self-governing corporate municipality (their constitution and by-laws are basically the same as those under the Indian Act).

In 1984, the Gitksan & Wet’suwet’en filed suit against BC, claiming title to 57,000 square km of traditional territories. This case is known as Delgamuukw, after one of the hereditary chiefs named in the lawsuit. Like the Nisga’a case, Delgamuukw would take years to go through the courts.

In 1990, the Oka Crisis occurred near Montreal, Quebec. This was a 77-day armed standoff between Mohawk warriors and government forces. One police officer was shot & killed in an initial fire-fight, July 11. Eventually, 4,500 Canadian soldiers were deployed to the Mohawk territories of Kanestake & Kahnawake. This crisis was sparked by the town of Oka’s attempt to expand a settlement & golf course into Mohawk land.

The Oka Crisis created widespread solidarity across Canada; Indigenous peoples blockaded roads, occupied buildings, and sabotaged rail-lines & electrical pylons. It is referred to as a crisis because Canada was on the verge of an Indigenous uprising.

The most active & sustained blockades occurred in BC, including those of the St’atl’imx around Mt. Currie & Lilloet. These actions were not only in solidarity with the Mohawks, but were part of a continuum of resistance which had begun in the 1968 period.

For the provincial government, Oka was dangerous because if it ignited an Indigenous insurgency, the hardest hit would be BC, the one region in all the country where the land has been so blatantly stolen & illegally occupied.

In December 1990, less than three months after Oka—and one month after a large RCMP operation to dismantle a roadblock at Mt. Currie—the BC Claims Task Force was established. Its purpose was to neutralize any potential Indigenous resistance emerging from the legal-political struggle (while furthering the strategy of assimilation).

In 1991, the Task Force recommended that a six-stage BC Treaty Process be set up, and outlined how this was to be done. In 1992, the BC Treaty Commission was established to accept applications for treaties, coordinate negotiations between band councils, BC, & Canada, and to distribute funding to the bands.

In the summer of 1995, Secwepemc rebels in the BC southern interior made an armed stand against their eviction from a sundance camp at Gustafsen Lake (Ts’Petén). A primary demand of the rebels was for an international court to hear their legal arguments against Canada & BC. Like the officially sanctioned legal-political campaign, these arguments were based on the 1763 Royal Proclamation, constitutional law, as well as international law.

The rebels rejected the BC treaty process as well the Indian Act band council system. The Caribou Tribal Council and local band chiefs denounced the rebels & collaborated with the government throughout the siege.

The response from provincial authorities was to deploy over 450 heavily-armed RCMP officers in the largest police operation in Canadian history. Along with 24-hour hi-altitude surveillance, helicopters, & .50-cal. sniper rifles, the RCMP also had 8 Bison armored personnel carriers on loan from the Canadian Forces. Despite police firing thousands of rounds, only one rebel was injured and one dog killed.

At this time, the Native Youth Movement began to form in Vancouver. It was influenced by the year-long Gustafsen Lake trials. Among its first activities was an anti-treaty campaign, including 3 occupations of the BC Treaty Commission (1997 & ’98) and an interior band office (Westbank, 1998). These were the first public actions against treaties in the province.

On December 11, 1997, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the case of Delgamuukw. Like the Nisga’a decision in 1973, the court recognized that aboriginal title existed prior to colonization, but did not rule on how much of this survived the onset of British sovereignty. As in the Nisga’a case, it urged the parties to negotiate on the nature & extent of aboriginal title.

Today, the Indigenous legal & political struggle now incorporates Delgamuukw, constitutional law, and other case law developed over the years. As a result, it has become a specialized body of law requiring expensive, professional legal teams. Land claims & aboriginal rights cases are now a multi-million dollar industry.
14. CONCLUSION

In looking at the history of the Northwest Coast, it is clear that there was widespread resistance & genocide. A life & death struggle in which our ancestors did not willingly submit. Colonial history aims at further confusing Indigenous people by portraying the most assimilated political movements (i.e., band councils, land claims) as carrying on a legacy of Indigenous resistance. In truth, their only legacy has been one of assimilation for over 130 years.

The chiefs & other collaborators have achieved nothing in the way of land or territory. Instead, many now stand poised to legally extinguish aboriginal title as defined by colonial law & order.

Today, the ideology of Christianity has been replaced by that of capitalism (which is why Christmas is all about shopping). The extent to which chiefs & councilors are assimilated is no longer marked by their adherence to Christianity, but in their promotion of economic development as the key to salvation. One difference between these two ideologies is that Christians believe in something, while capitalists believe in nothing. For this reason, they will exploit their own culture for commercial interests.

Although it does not mobilize large numbers of Indigenous people, and instead relies mostly on white lawyers, academics, etc., the legal strategy is still promoted as the primary (if not only) form of Indigenous struggle. Not surprisingly, it has from the start been officially sanctioned & funded by the government. Its primary purpose is to divert people away from resistance & re-affirm the state’s legitimacy as a “neutral arbiter” in society (and, by extension, its courts). This is clearly false, as history shows us.

The primary division which exists today among Indigenous peoples is that of assimilation vs. resistance. On the Northwest Coast, this division dates back to the introduction of Christianity in the 1860s. Religious indoctrination was only possible, in fact, after Indigenous resistance was defeated (largely through biological warfare). Not until the 1960s, a century later, did a resistance movement re-emerge reflecting the true warrior spirit of Indigenous peoples & culture.

It is this spirit which is vital to our survival as Indigenous peoples, without which we can lack the will to resist. Lacking in resolve, we become vulnerable to the ideology of our enemy. At a time of ever-greater uncertainty, social decline & conflict, this is a great danger. For these reasons, the warrior spirit must be strengthened and promoted among Indigenous peoples. It is towards this objective that this history has been published.

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