



Protecting the Nation?

This MysteryQuest examines the conflict between the Chilcotin people and developers determined to access the rich resources in central British Columbia in 1864. Students learn to find evidence in primary documents of the Chilcotin motivations in the conflict.

A critical thinking challenge to accompany

Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History

***We Do Not Know His Name:
Klatsassin and the Chilcotin War***

<http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/17/indexen.html>

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based on an approach developed by The Critical Thinking Consortium (TC²)

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Ages

14-18

Courses

Canadian history, social studies, civics

Key Topics

- Chilcotin lands and culture in 19th century British Columbia
- settlement and resource development in 19th century British Columbia
- First Nation/European conflict
- concept of “nationhood”

Critical Challenge

Prepare a written statement explaining to what extent the Chilcotin War was about protecting a nation from an invader and in what sense of nation – as a state or as a people.

Broad Understanding

- Students will learn to find evidence in maps and other primary print sources.
- Students will learn about the attempts by the Chilcotin to assert their nationhood in the face of European colonization.

Requisite Tools



Background knowledge

- knowledge of geographic patterns of Chilcotin settlement in British Columbia
- knowledge of the events related to the Chilcotin War



Criteria for judgment

- criteria for nation as a community of people (e.g., has common or shared characteristics such as language or history; has traits that make the group exclusive from other groups; acknowledges a sharing of common identity; has a sense of belonging to a common community)
- criteria for nation as a state or territory (e.g., has organized political authority with which to govern itself; is recognized as sovereign and autonomous over its territory; has territory defined by boundaries; the people can be multicultural and multilingual)



Critical thinking vocabulary

- inference



Thinking strategies

- data chart
- T-chart
- maps



Habits of mind

- attention to detail

Independent Study

This lesson can be used as a self-directed activity by having students individually or in pairs work their way through the guided instructions and support material found at <http://www.mysteryquests.ca/quests/17/indexen.html>.

Whole Class Activities

On the following pages are suggested modifications of the self-guided procedures found on the MysteryQuest website for use with a class of students. For convenience, each support material and set of directions found on the website is reproduced next to the relevant suggestions for whole class instruction.

Suggested Activities

Introduce the Chilcotin War

- Using *Introduction* as a guide, explain to students the incident and the challenge that is the focus of their investigation.

- Using *The Task* as a guide, outline the activities that students will undertake.
- You may want to download and display pictures of colonial British Columbia and related events.

Clarify the meanings of “nation”

- Using *Step 1: Clarify the meanings of “nation”* as a guide, help students understand the two meanings of the concept.
- You may want to begin by presenting the two definitions to students — then ask them to work with a partner to think of examples of each definition. As a class, discuss their suggestions and explore the possible ramifications of the two meanings of the term. Students require a thorough understanding of the two uses of the term to succeed in the activities that follow.
- In a whole class discussion, ask students to suggest criteria for determining which definition is being used when people talk about a nation. On the chalkboard or an overhead transparency, draw a T-chart. On one side write “Nation as a community of people” and on the other “Nation as a state or territory.” Ask students to suggest criteria, eventually narrowing the list to include the following:

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1864 a series of killings sent a chill across Canada. The blood of 14 men, spilled into the Homathco River before dawn on the morning of April 29th, 1864, was only the beginning of this conflict. By the end of May, 19 road-builders, packers, and a farmer were dead. Within six weeks an army of over 100 men had arrived in the area to catch the killers.

The killings took place in a remote triangle in central British Columbia that, at the time, was inaccessible by road or even horse trail. The dead men had all been part of the teams trying to build a road from the Pacific coast to the recently discovered goldfields of the Cariboo.

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

Was this violent conflict an early attempt by First Nations in Canada to assert their legal right to their lands — to their nationhood? Did members of the Chilcotin First Nation kill 17 members of a British road-building crew moving through their territory in 1864 to protect the “national” sovereignty of the Chilcotin nation? Perhaps the motives were more cultural and less political: was it an attempt to protect the Chilcotin culture and way of life from outside forces? Or, as some historians have suggested, were the Chilcotin people lashing out against these non-Natives for reasons that had little to do with politics and cultural preservation?

THE TASK

In this MysteryQuest, you are asked to take on the role of an historian creating a public monument to commemorate the Chilcotin War of the 1860s. Your main task is to investigate to what extent this war was an attempt to protect a “nation” from invaders.

First, you will examine definitions of “nation” and learn about the two meanings of this term. Then, you will be introduced to the facts of the Chilcotin War. You will refer to an historical overview and maps to get a snapshot of the key events in the group's history and insight into the relationship between the Chilcotin people and developers who were determined to access the rich resources of the British Columbia interior. You will then examine a number of primary documents from the period, looking for evidence of the Chilcotin motivations for this conflict. Your final task is to prepare a statement on the extent to which this was a war for nationhood. Your ideas will be used by an historical panel investigating the causes of the Chilcotin War to create a plaque commemorating the event.

STEP 1: CLARIFY THE MEANINGS OF “NATION”

Your first task is to get clearer about a surprisingly difficult concept — the idea of a “nation.” The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines “nation” as “a **community of people** of mainly common descent, history, or language, forming a state or inhabiting a territory.” The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines a “state” as “an **organized political community** under one government; a nation.”

These definitions highlight two ways in which the term nation is used. In the first meaning, nation is defined as a “community of **people**” with a common history and language. When people speak of French-Canadians as a “nation” they are using this definition. French-Canadian people share a culture that has its roots in New France and they share a history and language. In the second meaning, state and nation focuses on “an organized **political** community.” This definition equates “state” with “nation.” So a nation in this sense is a country like Canada that may embrace many different cultural and linguistic communities. These are important distinctions. For example, recognition of Québec or of First Nation people as a “nation” may acknowledge a right to control their territory (become a separate state) or simply affirm their unique cultural identity (be a distinct society).

Since understanding the difference between these two senses of “nation” is key to understanding the motivations for the Chilcotin War, it will be helpful to clearly set out criteria for each term:

Nation as a community of people

- has common or shared characteristics such as language or history;
- has traits that make the group exclusive from other groups (e.g., unique cultural practices);
- acknowledges a sharing of common identity – a sense of solidarity;
- has a sense of belonging to a common community.

Nation as a state or territory

- has organized political authority with which to govern itself;
- is recognized as sovereign and autonomous over its territory;
- has territory defined by boundaries;
- the people can be multicultural and multilingual.

- You may want to create a class list or have students record the T-chart in their notebooks for future reference.

Learn about the historical context

- You may want to download and make an overhead transparency of the map entitled “The Chilcotin War in the Larger Context” to display while discussing the background to the events. Point out to students that this is a recent map rather than one drawn at the time.
- Using *Step 2: Learn about the historical context* as a guide, explain that as students begin their research it will be helpful to explore the background to the Chilcotin War. Guide students to the websites listed in the Background to the Chilcotin War section of *Evidence in the Case*. Remind students that the documents are secondary sources as they were written by historians, rather than people with first-hand knowledge of the events.
- Explain to students that they may find it helpful to download and print out two maps they can use for easy reference while doing their research. Guide students to the Maps section of *Evidence in the Case*. Point out that one map will indicate the proposed routes to the gold fields while the other shows the area in context.
- After completing the task, ask students to work in small groups to discuss the articles, then in a whole class discussion ask students to describe their reactions to the articles.

STEP 2: LEARN ABOUT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before looking at primary documents from the period, it will be helpful to explore the background to the Chilcotin War. The historians who created this website have prepared background information about the war. While reading the five documents listed in the Background to the Chilcotin War section of *Evidence in the Case*, consider whether any of these accounts suggest that the actions of the Chilcotin were about protecting a “people” or securing their “territory.”

You may also find it helpful to have geographic reference points to the events of the war. In the Maps section of *Evidence in the Case* are two maps to help you establish the “where” of the Chilcotin War of the 1860s. The first, a map of British Columbia, provides broader geographic reference points. The second focuses specifically on road construction and the different routes to the Cariboo gold — what the Chilcotin people viewed as threats. You may find it helpful to print out these maps for easy reference when doing your research.

EVIDENCE IN THE CASE

Secondary documents

Background to the Chilcotin War

- Welcome
- Context
- Fur Trade Culture
- Road Building Culture
- Smallpox Culture

Maps

- Stuart Daniel, *The Chilcotin War in the Larger Context*, 2004
- Stuart Daniel and John Lutz, *Roads to Gold*, 2005

Primary documents

Newspaper articles

- “An Indian War Impending”, *The British Colonist*, August 30, 1862
- “The Bute Inlet Massacre and Its Causes”, *The Victoria Colonist*, June 13, 1864
- “Waddington and Bute Inlet”, *The British Columbian*, June 18, 1864

Colonial correspondence

- Frederick Seymour, “Letter to Newcastle, No. 7” – May 20, 1864

Court testimony

- Testimony of Ach-pic-er-mous, May 31, 1865

Anthropologist's stories

- James Teit, “Subsistence” in *The Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History*, Franz Boas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1909), 779-782.
- James Teit, “Travel and Trade” in *The Jesup North Pacific Expedition, Memoir of the American Museum of Natural History*, Franz Boas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1909), 782-784.

Memorial

- Provincial Government of B.C. and the Tsilhqot'in National Government, 1864
- Tsilhqot'in Chiefs Memorial

Look for underlying causes

- Using *Step 3: Look for underlying causes* as a guide, explain to students that they will need to read primary documents — documents written at or near the time of the event — to discover evidence of the underlying causes of the war.
- Depending on the ability of your students to understand historical documents, you may choose to use a jigsaw strategy for this activity. Divide students into groups of eight — this will be their home group. Group members will number off and each will take responsibility for reading one of the eight documents. When completed, members will join with others who have read the same document for discussion and clarification. Returning to their home group, students will share what they have learned so that all students have a clear understanding of the documents.
- You may want to download and distribute copies of *Causal Explanations in History* to help students understand the role of underlying causes in attempts to explain historical events.
- Duplicate and distribute to students copies of *Causes of the War* to record their evidence. Ask students to note that there are two columns in which to record evidence of “nation” — one that uses the term to mean a community of people and the other for a state. In addition, there is a column in which to record evidence that suggests the war had nothing to do with safeguarding a nation but was motivated by other factors, such as personal greed or revenge.

STEP 3: LOOK FOR UNDERLYING CAUSES

You have thought about what happened and where. To answer “why” you will need to read material created at the time of the war. In the “Primary documents” section of *Evidence in the Case* are eight historical sources drawn from newspaper articles, government correspondence, and court testimony. Working alone, or with a partner, search these sources for evidence of the underlying causes of the war. Refer to the previously listed criteria for each definition of “nation” and record evidence from the documents that suggest the role of nationhood — in the sense of either a community of people or as a state — in bringing about the war. There is an additional column for evidence you might find which suggests that the war had nothing to do with safeguarding a nation, but was motivated by other factors, such as personal greed or revenge. Record your findings in the appropriate column on the chart *Causes of the War*.

You may want to read *Causal Explanations in History* for information about the role of underlying causes in attempts to explain historical events.

CAUSAL EXPLANATIONS IN HISTORY

Historians are interested in explaining the past. More than simply recount a sequence of events, historians strive to explain why events happened as they did.

Historians’ causal explanations differ from most of our everyday explanations. Historians do not have a time machine, and so cannot simply go back in time and ask for answers in the way that you might do when you ask your sister, “Why did you borrow my car without asking?” But even if historians could go back in time, the kinds of explanations that they would look for are not generally the kind that the testimony of a single “eyewitness” could provide. Historical questions such as, “What caused the First World War?” or “Did increased use of birth control affect women’s status in society?” are not answerable by reference to a single individual’s experience or knowledge.

Historians generally explain the past with reference to broader social influences rather than rely only on a personal statement of preference or on happenstance. For example, if a historian wants to know why Irish people immigrated to Canada, he or she will look beyond personal explanations (**direct causes**) in diaries such as “because we are tired of life in Ireland” or “because we wanted our children to have more to eat,” even though these thoughts quite likely crossed the minds of Irish immigrants as they contemplated their options. Historians would want to examine the root causes of poverty in Ireland and why poor people had worse health than wealthy people and shorter life spans.

The broader social and political influences are often referred to as **underlying causes**. These are explanatory and descriptive concepts that relate to society more generally. Historians might use such factors as ethnic inequality, oppression, religious conflict, class, gender, and/or political and economic power to explain Irish immigration to Canada. For example, they might conclude that many moved to Canada to escape the poverty, inequality, and political oppression that Catholics experienced in Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and to realize the opportunity to live without landlords, on land they themselves owned.

In finding causal explanations for events, beliefs, and actions in history, historians look beyond individual’s testimony about personal experience, and make generalizations rooted in underlying social and political factors that place the individual within their broader society and times.



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Support Materials 1 (Activity Sheet)

Causes of the War

Document	Evidence that the war was a defense of a community of a people	Evidence that the war was a defense of a state or a territory	Evidence of some other purpose for the war
“An Indian War Impending”			
“The Bute Inlet Massacre and Its Causes”			
“Waddington and Bute Inlet”			

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- Remind students to refer to the list of criteria for each definition to help them record their evidence in the correct column.

Prepare your conclusions

- Before students prepare their written statements you may want to ask them to share their findings with a partner or a small group.
- Using *Step 4: Prepare your conclusions* as a guide, remind students of their final task. Explain that their statement is to be presented to an historical panel investigating the causes of the Chilcotin War. The statement needs to explain the extent to which the incident was a war about protecting a nation from an invader. And in what sense of nation — as a state or as a people? The statement should be 300-350 words and include specific references to findings from the analysis of the primary documents and to the criteria for distinguishing the two meanings of nationhood.
- Suggest that students may wish to end the statement with the wording they would suggest for the plaque about the underlying causes of the Chilcotin War. You may choose to have students create a plaque with the wording they suggest and display the completed plaques. As a class, discuss how the wording on the plaques creates an impression of the event for those who have no knowledge of it.

STEP 4: PREPARE YOUR CONCLUSIONS

Your final task is to prepare a written statement to an historical panel investigating the causes of the Chilcotin War. They will use your statement to create a plaque commemorating the event. You are asked to explain to the panel the extent to which the incident was a war about protecting a nation from an invader. Consider in what sense you use the word "nation" — as a state or as a people? Your statement should be 300-350 words and include specific references to findings from your analysis of the primary documents and to the criteria for distinguishing the two meanings of nationhood. You may wish to end your statement with the wording you would suggest for the plaque about the underlying causes of the Chilcotin War.

Evaluation

- Use the rubric *Assessing the Importance and Relevance of Evidence* to evaluate how well students were able to identify important statements from historical documents. Use the rubric *Assessing Historical Conclusions* to assess students' success in presenting plausible conclusions about the extent to which the incident was a war about protecting a nation from invaders.



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Evaluation Materials 1 (Rubric)

Assessing the Importance and Relevance of Evidence

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Identifies important evidence and shows relevance to the issue	Identifies the most important information in the documents and correctly shows the relevance of each to the issue.	Identifies most of the important statements in the documents and correctly shows the relevance of most of these to the issue.	Identifies some statements in the documents, but important ones are omitted and the relevance is not always correctly identified.	Identifies some statements in the documents, but few of the important ones are included and the relevance is not always correctly identified.	Identifies few or no statements in the documents.



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Evaluation Materials 2 (Rubric)

Assessing Historical Conclusions

	Outstanding	Very good	Competent	Satisfactory	In-progress
Clearly explains the important evidence	Identifies and very clearly explains the most important evidence for the conclusion.	Identifies and clearly explains most of the important evidence for the conclusion.	Identifies some relevant and important evidence for the conclusion; explanations are generally quite clear.	Identifies very little relevant evidence for the conclusion; explanations are only occasionally clear.	Identifies no relevant evidence for the conclusion; none of the explanations are clear.
Offers plausible conclusion	The conclusion is highly plausible and highly justifiable in light of the evidence provided.	The conclusion is clearly plausible and justifiable in light of the evidence provided.	The conclusion is plausible and adequately justifiable in light of the evidence provided.	The conclusion is plausible but barely justifiable given the evidence provided.	The conclusion is implausible and not justifiable given the evidence provided.

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Extension

- Invite students to work individually or as a class to pursue the suggested activities listed in *Extension*.

EXTENSION

Examine additional evidence

Consult the Canadian Mysteries site and delve into the treatment of the accused after the attack on the road crews, reading the Introduction to the Aftermath section of the website and the newspaper articles listed in The Trials. Were the Chilcotin treated as a “nation” in the judicial proceedings, according to these newspaper articles?

The legacy today

Read a selection of the documents found in The Chilcotin War Today section of the main website and identify the issues that keep the incident alive for the Chilcotin peoples. Using the criteria for the two definitions of “nation” — as a people and as a state — determine whether their claim to “nation” status is stronger or weaker at the beginning of the 21st century than it was in 1860.