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History 1120

Chicoltin War Analysis

It was evident that the retaliation by the Indigenous peoples was brought on by the disagreement of the ownership of territory in that area. They looked for revenge by attacking camps occupied by Europeans along Bute Inlet. The main targets of the Chilcotins were three men that were given high authority in the building of the Cariboo road to the goldfields in the Cariboo area: Mr. Waddington, Mr. Brewster, and Governor Douglas.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, in the process of seeking out these three people, they were also responsible for the murder of many other European road-builders. After the event, European authorities acted to seek justice for the 16 Chilcotin people involved in the massacre[[2]](#footnote-2). The fact that the Europeans only went after those specific people and not the entire Chilcotin population disproves the idea that this was a war between the Europeans and Chilcotins. A letter between two European authorities states that they were preparing themselves for a war against the Chilcotin people. Since the populations differed so much in the favour of the Indigenous people, the Europeans had a plan to “invite every white man to shoot each Indian he may meet.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Since this was not the case and they did not have to follow through with these plans, it is clear that no war took place. We believe that the Chilcotin War was not truly a war, but a retaliation of the Chilcotin tribe against the Europeans. We believe this because there was no official declaration of war, the Europeans claimed to be making an attempt to find justice, and the Europeans only sought after the murderers – not the entire Chilcotin tribe.

We chose our sources based on the arguments that we were proving, as well as the people that these documents came from. We wrote our paper based on letters written in that time and avoided newspaper articles. Seeing as neither of us knew anything about this event, our knowledge is based solely on the information on this website. Our view of the past has been changed in the sense that we now know of a whole knew incident regarding the rivalry between Europeans and Indigenous peoples during the settlement era. We do not have any questions as the research we have done answered them for us. In hindsight, we would have worked quicker to find documents and organize our arguments.

1. “Origin of the Massacre,” *Daily Chronicle,* May 29, 1864. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Great Britain Public Record Office, Colonial Office Records, CO 60/19, p. 298, 10955, Frederick Seymour, Letter to Cardwell, No. 56, sent October 4, 1864, received November 29, 1864. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)