

**Date Reviewed**

January 2021

**Course**

[Social Studies 4](#)

**Topic**

Gold Rush

**Big Idea**

The pursuit of valuable natural resources has played a key role in changing the land, people, and communities of Canada.

**Essential Question**

How did gold rushes affect the population of British Columbia?

**Content**

Students are expected to know the following:

- economic and political factors that influenced the colonization of British Columbia and its entry into Confederation
  - gold rush population boom and bust

**Curricular Competencies:**

*Students are expected to be able to do the following:*

- Construct arguments defending the significance of individuals/groups, places, events, or developments (significance)

**Core Competencies**

[Communication](#) - I can explain how gold attracted people to BC.

[Thinking](#) – I can analyze the impact of gold rushes on the people, environment, economy, and politics of BC.

[Personal and Social](#) – I can share my ideas about how gold rushes impacted First Peoples and increased the diversity of people in our province.

**First People's Principles of Learning**

Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.

## Introduction

- Project or provide students with the images on the handout “Gold!”.
- Ask: What do you know about gold? What do people use it for? Why is it important?
- Encourage students to think about all the ways that gold is used today (*eg. money, jewelry, science & technology, awards...*).

## Pre-Assessment

- Using a [Think Pair Share](#) strategy, have student discuss:
  - What do you know about gold rushes?
  - Who came to BC to try to find gold?
  - Where did they come from?
  - What happened if they didn't find any gold?
  - What happened to the people and places after miners stopped finding gold?"

## Interactive Learning Activities

### Part 1: Fraser River Gold Rush

- Explain that when gold was discovered in the Fraser River in 1858, over 30,000 people came to BC from around the world in search for gold. Population boomed and the area became the colony of British Columbia.
- Show the short video [1858 Fraser River Gold Rush](#) (2:12).
- Provide students with the handout “Video--Fraser River Goldrush” and show the video again, stopping to allow students to record answers to each question.
- Ask: Why would people get so excited about gold? Why would people want to keep gold to themselves? Why would people in BC worry about so many Americans coming to the area?
- Provide students with the handout “Reading—Fraser River Gold Rush”. Either read aloud or have students work in pairs to read.
- Have students use the chart on the bottom of the handout to record the affects of the gold rush on the population, environment, economy, and politics of BC.

### Part 2: The Cariboo Gold Rush

- Explain that the gold rush extended hundreds of kilometers north along the Fraser River into the Cariboo. Miners travelled north along the Cariboo wagon road with mules, horses and even camels. At times, the treacherous road was just two metres wide on the edge of cliffs above a raging river.
- Point out that a gold-seeker's life was tough: they lived tents, worked from dawn to dusk, and had limited supplies because prices in the small mining towns were extremely high.
- Read the [BC Archives Time Machine: The Cariboo Gold Rush](#) as a class or have students read with a partner.
- Have students create [brochures](#) to attract people to come to the Cariboo region to find gold. Students should use the handout “Cariboo Gold Rush Brochure” to plan their brochure and organize their information.

### Part 3: Chinese and the Gold Rush

- Explain that gold caused the first large scale immigration to BC. People had a chance to seek

their fortune or try to live a better life than they had before.

- Show the video [Gold Mountain: The True Story of the BC Gold Rush](#) (13:08).
- Have students imagine that they have heard news that gold has been found halfway across the world, in a place where they've never been to and where they don't know anyone. Ask:
  - Would you risk everything you have for a chance to become rich or have a better life?
  - How would it feel if you didn't speak the same language as people there?
  - What would happen if you didn't find any gold?

#### Part 4: First Nations and the Gold Rush

- Explain that immigrants arriving to the gold rush didn't encounter an empty land. In BC, First Nations civilizations were thousands of years old. Europeans and First Nations built fur-trading partnerships in the territory. However, these relationships became strained as miners began to be violent and disrespectful to the First Nations people they encountered. Mining often left Indigenous communities displaced, environments ruined, and resources depleted.
- Have students imagine how they would feel if people started to come to their community because they heard gold was buried there. They set up camps, cut down trees, dug up the ground and used local watersheds to help wash dirt away from the rocks they found.
  - What would you do?
  - What if you didn't speak the same language as them?"

#### Part 5: Legacy of the Gold Rush

- Explain that BC was created by the gold rush, when people came from all over the world to seek fortune and a chance for a better life. The gold rush led to co-operation, competition, and sometimes even conflict between individuals and communities.
- Show the video [British Columbia's Gold Rush Legacy](#) (6:36).
- Ask:
  - How did the gold rush make BC a diverse, multicultural province?
  - What impact did the gold rush have on the First Peoples of BC?
  - What happened when people stopped finding gold in BC?
- Explain that when gold became scarce on the Fraser and in the Cariboo by the mid-1860s, some prospectors returned home or looked for gold elsewhere. But many miners stayed to log, fish, farm or ranch in BC.

#### Post-Assessment

- Divide students into groups of 4 or 5 and have them use a [Placemat Strategy](#) to respond to the following question:
  - How did the gold rush impact the population of BC?

#### Extension Activities

- Have students play the [Cariboo Gold Rush Adventure Game](#).

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## Materials and Resources

(see next pages)

## Gold!

What do you know about gold? What do people use it for? Why is it important?



**How Much Gold  
is in a Cell Phone?**



## Video--Fraser River Gold Rush

1. Who lived in BC first?
2. What first attracted the Europeans to BC?
3. Who was the first to discover gold in BC?
4. Who was James Douglas?
5. Who were the First Nations peoples unhappy with? Why?
6. How did the Fraser River Gold Rush lead to the creation of BC?

## Answer Key: Video--Fraser River Gold Rush

1. Who lived in BC first?
  - First Nations
2. What first attracted the Europeans to BC?
  - Fur trade
3. Who was the first to discover gold in BC?
  - First Nations people
4. Who was James Douglas?
  - Head of Hudson's Bay Company in region and governor of Vancouver Island
5. Who were the First Nations peoples unhappy with? Why?
  - American miners came and tried to take over area
6. How did the Fraser River Gold Rush lead to the creation of BC?
  - Established colony of BC to prevent Americans from taking over

## Reading—Fraser River Gold Rush

Gold was first discovered on the Fraser River by First Nations people in 1857. In 1858, news of this discovery spread, resulting in a population explosion in the new settlement of B.C. Public announcements of the finds changed Fort Victoria and B.C. The estimated settler population in Victoria in 1858 was approximately 500, but news of the gold quickly spread and within two months, more than 30 000 gold miners descended upon the Fraser Valley through Victoria. Miners had to first get a mining license from Victoria before heading to the mainland. Many of the miners came from the United States, where they had participated in the California gold rush of 1848. Others were from Britain, Canada, and other parts of Europe.

30 000 gold seekers moved into the Fraser River area between 1858 and 1870, and the impact on the local First Nations was huge. Salmon stocks were depleted by new settlers fishing for food. Mining led to road building, and the construction of boom towns. A boom town is a community that has a fast increase in population. This fast growth damaged the quality of water and animal habitats.

Not only did the gold rush on the Fraser River replace the fur trade as the dominant B.C. industry, it brought secondary industries with it that caused further changes in the region. The secondary industries were coal mining, forestry, and fishing. These boom-economy changes resulted in a short period of prosperity, but by the middle of the 1860s the colonies were in financial trouble.

Aware of the lawlessness and exploitation of minority groups during the California gold rush, Governor Douglas was determined not to have the same thing happen in British Territory. Another of Douglas's concerns was that the influx of mostly American miners would result in a large "anti-British element" in the area and that this would lead to annexation of the mainland to the United States. To prevent this from happening, a second crown colony was created on the mainland in 1858, the colony of British Columbia.

(adapted from Open School BC, 2008)

*What were the effects of the gold rush?*

<b>Population</b>	<b>Environment</b>
<b>Economy</b>	<b>Politics</b>



## Cariboo Gold Rush Brochure

Create a tri-fold brochure with six panels. Use the boxes below to plan your brochure and organize your information.

<p>Inside Flap: Top 5 reasons to be a prospector</p>	<p>Back: Map of Cariboo Region</p>	<p>Front: Title and picture</p>
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<p>Inside Left: Success stories such as Billy Barker</p>	<p>Inside Middle: Food &amp; Accommodations</p>	<p>Inside Right: 10 items a prospector will need</p>
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