

- 1848 – the British government created the Crown colony of Vancouver Island & gave a trade monopoly to the Hudson's Bay Company.
- **James Douglas** was appointed governor & he was also chief factor of Fort Victoria. Douglas wanted to encourage settlement, so he suggested that free land be offered to colonists.
- The British government decided to charge for land at a rate of about \$5 per acre, with a minimum purchase of 20 acres.
- 1850s – the economy of the Vancouver Island colony grew rapidly. Coal was discovered & mines were developed on Vancouver Island.
- Douglas convinced the British to put a naval base near Fort Victoria, with nearby coal as a fuel supply for the ships.
- The Royal Navy soon became important to the emerging social life of Fort Victoria, since the aristocratic naval officers were always in demand at social functions, such as balls.
- Douglas encouraged these activities, but he was not always impressed with the colony's new upper class. Douglas and most of the HBC employees who had settled in the colony had Métis or First Nations wives. They were often shunned by the prejudiced and class-conscious newcomers.

#### **James Douglas – “The Father of British Columbia”**

- Born 1803, son of a Scottish merchant & a free Black woman from Guyana. Educated in Scotland, worked for the NWC & HBC after the merger.
- 1828 – Marries Amelia Connolly, the Métis daughter of the Chief Factor of Ft. Vancouver. He later takes command of both Ft. Vancouver & Ft. Victoria for the HBC.
- 1851 – Douglas becomes governor of the new Colony of Vancouver Island. Because of a conflict of interest, he is asked to end his connection to the fur trade.
- Douglas protects British sovereignty, builds the Cariboo Road & makes treaties with local First Nations.

#### **The Douglas Treaties**

- Douglas decided to negotiate treaties in which First Nations would surrender land title to the government. Fourteen treaties were negotiated between 1850 and 1854.
- Douglas decided that:
  - the First Nations could choose where their reserves
  - he instructed surveyors to make sure to include already established First Nations villages
  - The size of the reserves was also left up to the First Nations.
  - Range lands for cattle and horses were included
  - First Nations were able to keep their traditional hunting & fishing rights
- When Douglas paid for the land surrendered by the First Nations in the treaties, this act acknowledged **Aboriginal title** to the land. This acknowledgement had tremendous significance in the late 20th century during treaty negotiations in British Columbia.
- However, once Douglas was out of power, those who took over the government chose to interpret the agreements their own way. Much of the land in the treaties was taken away.
- Joseph Trutch, Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works for the colony, refused to honour agreements appearing in some of the Douglas Treaties. Trutch openly disliked the First Nations, and he reversed Douglas' policies.