



The Terror of the Coast: Land Alienation and Colonial War on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands, 1849–1863

Chris Arnett

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On April 20, 1863, the British naval gunboat *Forward* attacked a Native village on Kuper Island. The naval officers believed that the village harboured individuals involved in two recent assaults against European transients in the Gulf Islands. The gunboat fired on the village and was repulsed with casualties after a fierce battle with a handful of warriors. Following this defeat, the colonial government responded with one of the largest military operations in the history of British Columbia, which took place on the east coast of Vancouver Island and extended throughout the waters and islands of Active Pass, Trincomalee Channel and Stuart Channel, from Saturna Island north to Comox.

Previously ignored or misunderstood by historians, the war between the Hwulmuhw or “People of the Land” and the colonial government of British Columbia remains of utmost significance in today’s world of unsettled First Nations land claims. Chris Arnett reconstructs the fascinating account of the events of 1863 using newspaper editorials, letters and articles; government and police correspondence; naval ship logs; and “Letters of Proceedings.” He demonstrates how the first treaty process initiated by the colonial government ended in military action. After the war of 1863, Aboriginal land continued to be alienated and Native jurisdiction eroded throughout British Columbia—leaving an inequity that remains unresolved almost a century and a half later.

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