Introduction to The Cariboo Gold Rush

Background

- an extension of the gold rush in the Fraser Canyon from 1858 to 1860
- first major find of gold occurred at Horsefly in summer 1859

The Gold Rush

- thousands of miners flooded into the area during 1860-61 from many parts of the world (e.g., Overlanders, miners from California Gold Rush of 1848-49, British and Continental prospecters, immigration from China): 100,000 people at peak
- town of Yale (established as trading post 1848) booms as point to which steamboats could advance up river and starting point of the Cariboo Wagon Road to the Interior.
- the town of Barkerville founded 1862
- work began in 1862 on the very expensive Cariboo Wagon Road to link the gold fields of the Interior to the outside world
- peak in 1863 with an estimated production of 10 tonnes of gold
- replacement of surface digs by underground shafts, a capital and labour intensive kind of mining
- large companies took over the mines and hired crews at daily wages
- banks opened to value and receive gold
- gold shipped to the coast by express companies using pack trains and stagecoaches
- estimated $30 million worth of gold came out of the Cariboo during the 1860s
- gold peters out and most miners depart in the next decade

Short- and Long-Term Consequences for British Columbia

- economic boom-and-bust cycle
- short-term economic growth opportunities: accommodation, transportation
- demands for infrastructure: road building, construction of housing
- short-term rapid rise in prices of basic commodities, housing, and land
- growth of large public debt to provide services and infrastructure, especially the Cariboo Wagon Road
- political change as population expands (growth of municipalities)
- eventual movement towards confederation with the Dominion of Canada
- demands on government services and the bureaucracy
- immigration from diverse sources
- opening up of central British Columbia to non-Aboriginal settlement
- increased non-native population with whom the Aboriginal peoples come into contact