

Fathers of Confederation

Grades 4-8

Written by Frances Stanford

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Fathers of Confederation, SSJ1-45

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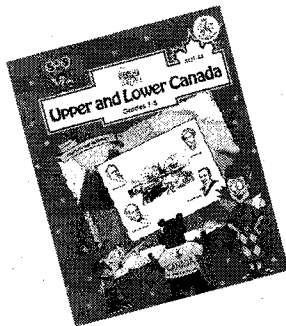
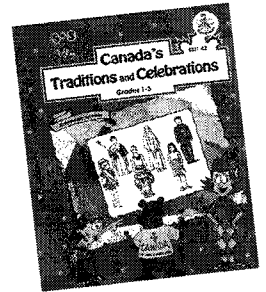
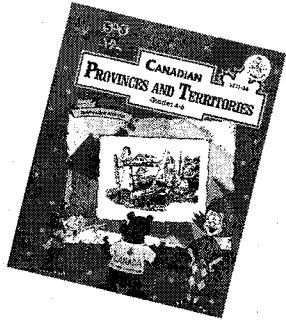
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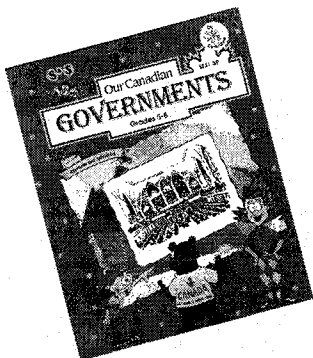


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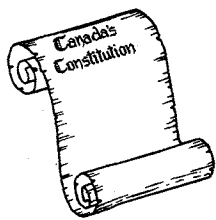


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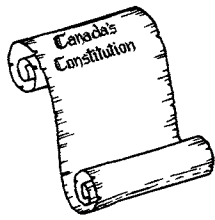


Fathers of Confederation



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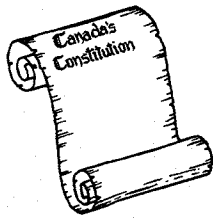


Introduction

Before 1867, the only independent nation in North America was the United States. Canada, as we know it today, did not exist. It consisted of a group of British colonies that were dependent upon Britain, and had very little contact with each other. The colonies on the Atlantic coast were Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. The inland colonies were Upper and Lower Canada, which became the Province of Canada consisting of Canada East and Canada West in 1841. The rest of the country was unsettled, except by the Natives, and was owned by the Hudson's Bay Company who called it Rupert's Land. Each of these colonies had developed its own way of life based on fishing, farming, lumbering and fur trading.

When Britain created the Province of Canada in 1841, it had done so with the hope that the English speaking population of Canada West would overcome the French speaking population of Canada East and bring an end to the use of French. This attempt failed because of the skill gained in politics by the French. It also failed to provide good government to the colony. Both parts of the province had equal representation in the Legislature and disputes often became bitter. Two political parties emerged: the Conservatives of Canada East called the "Bleus" and the Reformers of Canada West called the "Rouges". By the late 1850's, the government had almost come to a standstill and consequently, no one party could hold power for very long.

By the 1860's, the politicians had come to the conclusion that this form of government was not working. Their determination to change the system was the beginning of Confederation. The deadlock within the government in the province of Canada forced two political enemies - John A. Macdonald and George Brown - to form a coalition government. The main idea behind this coalition was to unite all the British North American colonies. At the same time, several situations arose that seemed to give the idea of Confederation a push. The Canadians realized that there was a possibility of the United States trying to annex Canada as a part of its country. Britain had started to buy its products from other countries and not just from the British North American colonies. Railways had come to British North America in the 1850's and had begun to change the way of life of the colonists, bringing them closer together with the other colonies.



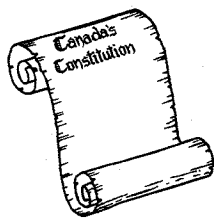
Fathers of Confederation



In 1864 the colonial governments of the Atlantic colonies, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, decided to have a meeting in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island to discuss the possibility of forming a union of these four colonies. The politicians from the Province of Canada heard about the upcoming meeting. They asked if they could attend and were accepted. As a result of this meeting, the representatives from the Atlantic Provinces decided to put aside their original plans and work towards forming a Confederation of all the British colonies in North America. They decided that they would unite under one central government, which would give power to the nation as a whole. Each colony would become a province of this central government with powers to deal with its own individual matters. As part of the plan, the central government would build a railway to connect the colonies. This was the first in a series of meetings to formulate the Confederation proposal and is known as the **Charlottetown Conference**.

The second meeting was held in Quebec and is known as the **Quebec Conference**. It was attended by delegates from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the United Province of Canada: Canada East and Canada West. Newfoundland sent two observers, since it had not made a firm commitment to join the Confederation. The objective of this meeting was to work out the details of the union of the colonies. George Brown insisted on **representation by population**, since it would give his home province, Canada West, the majority in the government. The Maritime Provinces started to lose interest. Prince Edward Island decided not to join, since a railway to the Atlantic Provinces would be of little benefit to them. However, an agreement was worked out that the four colonies of Canada East, Canada West, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick would pursue the idea of forming a union. The agreement included seventy-two points on which the delegates agreed and is known as the **Seventy-Two Resolutions**.

When the resolutions from the conference were brought back to each colonial government, there were strong objections to Confederation. Canada West opposed the building of a railway, while the French speaking voters of Canada East thought they would be even further oppressed by the English speaking majority. In the Maritimes, the issue was attacked in the newspapers and used as an election issue. Leonard Tilley of New Brunswick lost his seat in the government because he was one of the delegates who had supported Confederation. However, the British were delighted with the idea of a union of the colonies. They were finding that the cost of defending the colonies was becoming too expensive. They sent a new governor to ensure that Tilley was elected back into office. The **Fenian Raids** from the United States, which introduced a new threat of being taken over by the Americans, and the end of the **Reciprocity Treaty** with the United States, helped to overcome the objections to Confederation.



Fathers of Confederation



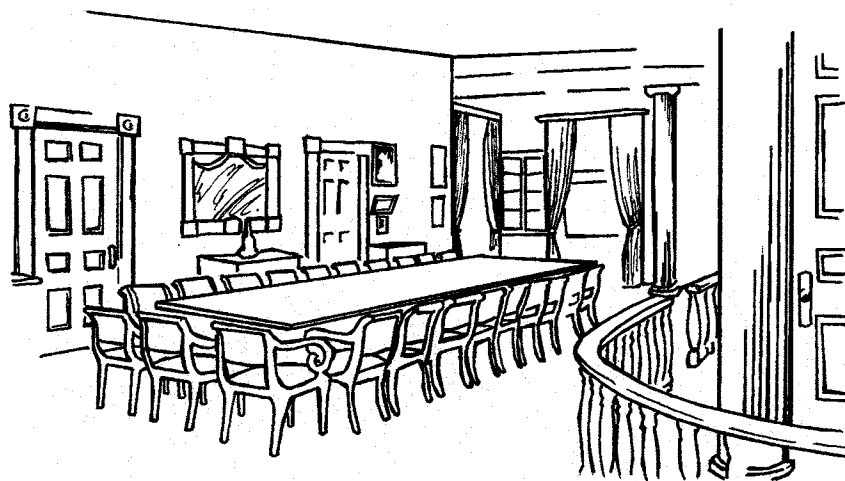
A third conference was held in London, England in March 1867. It was at this **London Conference** that the actual details of Confederation were worked out. The British Parliament passed the **British North America Act** which established Canada as a nation called the **Dominion of Canada**. This act became law on July 1, 1867, with Sir John A. Macdonald as its first Prime Minister.

Fathers of Confederation

The term **Fathers of Confederation** refers to the names of the delegates who attended the Charlottetown, Quebec and London Conferences at which Canadian Confederation was planned and established.

Canadian Provinces and Territories and Dates of Joining

Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick	1867
Manitoba, Northwest Territories	1870
British Columbia	1871
Prince Edward Island	1873
Yukon Territory	1898
Saskatchewan, Alberta	1905
Newfoundland	1949
Nunavut Territory (separate from the Northwest Territories)	2000



Name: _____ Date: _____

Points to Ponder

1. What were the forces that led politicians to call a meeting in Charlottetown in 1864? Why did the politicians from the Province of Canada want to attend?

2. What was the result of the Quebec Conference?

3. What did the British government think of the idea of a confederation of the colonies in British North America? Why?

4. What was the result of the London Conference?

5. What does the term "Fathers of Confederation" mean?

  **Explore History**  

1. What were the Seventy-Two Resolutions? Research this topic and prepare a poster for your class.
2. What is the motto of Canada? Why is this appropriate?
3. Draw a timeline showing the dates of entry into Confederation for all parts of Canada.
4. Why was Canada given the name "Dominion of Canada"?