

## Pre-Confederation

### Part I: Canada: 1750's – 1860's

- Canada began as a French colony.
- French settlement began in early 1600's with colonies in The Maritimes and along the St. Lawrence (New France).
- Early explorers such as Cartier, Champlain and LaSalle explored the interior of North America where they established fur trading posts and set up farming and fishing communities.
  - 1604 - Champlain established colony at Port Royale (Acadia)
  - 1608 - Founds Quebec
  - 1642 - Maissonneuve founds colony at Montreal
- New France grew slowly
  - ruled by Governor (appointed by France)
  - administered by intendant
  - clergy and seigneurs (wealthy land owners) form the upper class of colony
  - habitants (peasants) form the masses of the population
  - fur trading was the commercial basis of the colony
  - farming was also very important - more farmers than fur traders
    - used the seigneurial system of land ownership
    - long, narrow strips of farmland along the riverfront
- Due to nature of the fur trade, the colony did not expand much beyond its original size.
- By 1750's approximately 60,000 Canadiens inhabit New France.
- Meanwhile, English colonies were established along the eastern seaboard of the present day United States (**The Thirteen Colonies**)
- Economic rivalry between New France and The Thirteen English Colonies for rich fur trading areas leads to conflict.
- Both colonies attempt to befriend Indians as partners in fur trade and as military allies against the other colonies ("French and Indian Wars 1756-63).
- The Mother Countries (England and France) were often at war with each other
- Conflict extended to North America
- Both sides hope to control the continent and its rich resources

### **The Seven Years War (1756-63)**

- British forces defeat the French at “The Battle of Quebec” in 1759
- Occupy the colony in 1760
- The **Treaty of Paris (1763)** ended the Seven Years War
  
- Conditions of the Treaty:
  1. New France was ceded to Britain
  2. French presence in North America ends
  3. British take control
  4. New France becomes **British North America**
  
- French colonists concerned about their future survival. What would become of them?

### **French – English Relations**

- With the conquest of Quebec in 1760, a situation existed where more than 60,000 French colonists were under the authority of a few hundred British soldiers.
- The British government in London sent **General James Murray** to act as governor of the colony – thus he became the first British Governor of Quebec.
- Murray followed a policy of toleration with the French – that is to say he was sympathetic to their situation and tried to ease the transition of Quebec from a French colony to an English one.
- He allowed them to keep their language and culture because he knew that if he didn't then he risked a revolt (the French greatly outnumbered the English so the threat of an uprising was present).
- In the years immediately following the conquest, several hundred English speaking merchants from the Thirteen Colonies flooded into Quebec hoping to profit from the “spoils of war”.
- They reasoned that since Quebec was now an English colony it should be ruled as such.
- The merchants soon made demands including that:
  1. they (the English) become the ruling power.
  2. the British system of government (including an elected assembly) be used.
  3. French Catholics be prevented from holding political office or any positions in government or any power.
  
- General Murray felt that this was both unfair to the French majority and risky to the security of the colony.
- Therefore he delayed calling for an elected assembly.

- This delay infuriated the English minority who claimed that their rights as English citizens were being denied and that Murray was treating Quebec as though it was still controlled by the French.
- During the course of the next 60-70 years, the relationship between French and English at Quebec was strained.
- The British government in London tried to respond to this by passing a number of Acts which reflected the changing conditions of the colony.
- These Acts were vital to our understanding of the nature of the French – English relationship.
- The Three Acts were:
  1. The Quebec Act of 1774.
  2. The Constitutional Act of 1791.
  3. The Act of Union in 1841.

## **The Quebec Act (1774)**

### **Background:**

- Continuing strife between Murray and the Merchants led to his recall to Britain in 1765.
- His successor, **Sir Guy Carlton**, came to admire the orderliness of New France society and sensing that the Thirteen Colonies were on the verge of rebellion against Britain, he wanted to secure the loyalty of the French Canadians in order to prevent them from becoming allies of the rebellious colonies in a revolt against Britain.
- Carlton encouraged The British Government to pass the **Quebec Act** against the wishes of the English speaking merchants in the colony.
- The Act angered the merchants because it seemed to favor the French and prevented English domination.
- The French were generally pleased because the Act protected them and their culture as well as extending the borders of Quebec to include the prime fur trapping lands of the Ohio River Valley.
- The Act may have done more harm than good for **TWO** specific reasons.
  1. The loss of the fur trapping lands of the Ohio Valley incensed the American colonists and contributed to the outbreak of the **American Revolution** shortly after.
  2. The Act set a precedent of granting special favor of different treatment to Quebec – this contributed to Quebec’s sense of “separateness”.

## The Constitutional Act (1791)

### Background:

- After the revolt of the Thirteen Colonies, 10,000 of the colonists who had remained loyal to Britain arrived in Quebec where they were given land and supplies to help them rebuild their lives. (**This was how Britain repaid them for their loyalty.**)
- Most of the **Loyalists** settled in the western part of Quebec (west of the Ottawa River) giving that portion of the colony an English speaking majority, while east of the Ottawa River the population was mostly French.
- The arrival of these 10,000 Loyalists increased the English population and strengthened the influence of British culture in Quebec.
- **The Loyalists resented The Quebec Act.**
- They were not concerned with imposing their will upon the French in the same sense that the original merchants wanted; **but** they had remained loyal to Britain during The American Revolution and felt betrayed that they now had to live in a colony where the French seemed to have the “upper hand” and that they, as British subjects, were denied basic rights and privileges that other British colonists enjoyed.
- They demanded that Quebec be run as a British colony.
- It became obvious to the English government that changes were necessary.
- The Quebec Act could not continue as the blueprint for the colony.
  
- In 1791, **The Constitutional Act** was passed.
  
- It divided Quebec into **TWO** separate colonies (**Upper Canada** and **Lower Canada**) each with its own elected assembly [**REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT**]
  
- The Act was especially significant in that it gave official recognition to the “**cultural duality**” of Canada – that there were TWO Canadas: French and English, and the Act tried to be fair to both.
  
- The Constitutional Act actually helped to ease tensions for awhile as each colony attended to its own affairs independent of the other.
  
- The Act created:
  - Upper Canada – West of Ottawa River – English majority
  - Lower Canada – East of Ottawa River – French majority
  - Upper Canada is present day Ontario.
  - Lower Canada is present day Quebec.

## The Act of Union (1841)

- By the late 1830's reformers in both Upper and Lower Canada were dissatisfied with **Representative Government** and agitated for **Responsible Government** which was a more democratic system.
- When the reformers' demands were refused rebellions broke out in both colonies in 1837.
- The rebellions of 1837 were led by:
  - **William Lyon Mackenzie** in Upper Canada
  - **Louis Joseph Papineau** in Lower Canada
- In order to resolve the friction, the British government dispatched a new governor-general to Canada in 1838.
- This new governor-general was **Lord Durham** and he was to change the course of history in Canada.
- He reported that in Lower Canada he found "two nations warring in the bosom of a Single State."
- Durham felt that French colonial society, while quaint, was simple, backward and should not be permitted to dominate because it would hold back the colony and prevent it from progressing.
- Among his many recommendations for Canada, he urged that:
  1. Canada be granted Responsible Government.
  2. Upper and Lower Canada be united into a single colony – One Canada.
- This would mean that the English majority would dominate and perhaps (likely) swallow up French language and culture once the French were made a minority in a single colony.
- Durham hoped that assimilation would rid Canada of its French presence.
- French Canada was outraged.
- Nonetheless, these recommendations formed the basis for **The Act of Union** which was implemented in **1841**.
- Under the terms of this Act,
  - Upper and Lower Canada were dissolved and replaced by a new unified colony of Canada made up of Canada East and Canada West.
  - This Act actually reversed what the Constitutional Act had created 50 years earlier.
- The French were more determined than ever that their way of life would survive.
- The new Union worked well for a period of time.

### Political Deadlock: 1841 – 1864

- The new arrangement produced by the Act of Union meant that the separate assemblies of Upper and Lower Canada would be replaced by a single assembly with equal representation from the new provinces of Canada East and Canada West.
- Each territory was to have its own Lieutenant-Governor with a single Governor General ( as a representative of the British Crown)
- An executive council was still responsible for running the day to day affairs of the colony.
- Now however, the members of the executive had to come from the elected assembly unlike before when they were appointed by the governor.
- In this way, the new government of Canada, was **Responsible**.
- While this new union seemed like it should work, it actually became bogged down in an ineffective gridlock which would paralyze Canada for the next 20 years.
- Differences in language between the two provinces and a bitter class division within each state made it virtually impossible for any group to win a necessary majority to rule effectively.
  
- Canada West had a **Liberal – Conservative** party led by **John A. MacDonald** and the **Clear Grits**, a reform party led by George Brown.
  
- Canada East was divided into the **Bleus**, a conservative merchant party led by **Georges Etienne Cartier**, (which also had a large English speaking membership) and the **Rogues**, a radical pro-French party who likewise wanted reform but would not trust the English enough to work with them.
  
- For much of the late 1850's and early 1860's the government was able to survive because of a coalition between MacDonald and Cartier but the arrangement was very fragile and tenuous.
  
- In a 15 year period, 12 different governments were formed, between 1861 and 1864 despite two elections and four different governments, agreement could not be reached on major issues.
  
- Finally in on last great conciliatory gesture to save Canada, the political leaders of Canada West, MacDonald and Brown, joined forces with Cartier in Canada East in what has been called "**The Great Coalition**."
  
- This coalition could not last forever – it came together for one main purpose – to join all of British North America together in one great **CONFEDERATION!**