

Territorial Evolution, 1871

Abstract

In 1871, British Columbia joins the federation as a province with the boundaries it attained in 1866. Canada's long and diversified settlement history is reflected in the two distinct patterns of boundaries that differentiate between eastern and western Canada. The eastern boundaries closely conform to natural features such as drainage basins, while the boundaries of western and northern Canada reflect the administrative organisation of these lands by, first, the Hudson's Bay Company and later the Government of Canada.

Canada

The fear of losing the territories to the West was also behind Canada's interest in the colony of British Columbia. By the end of the 1860s, the Cariboo gold rush was over and British Columbia was facing a very large public debt. Some British Columbians wanted their colony to become part of the United States. Their side received a boost in 1869, when an American transcontinental railway offered West Coast people an easy way to travel and ship their products to the East. Towards the end of 1869, a petition to join the United States was circulated: it was signed by one hundred and four people (out of a population of roughly ten thousand inhabitants).



Figure 1: Photograph of a Canadian Pacific Railway Surveying Operations Camp, 1871

Canadian Pacific Railway, surveying operations camp at elbow of the Saskatchewan River, men's lodge, division P, next to Indian dwelling.

Source: Horetzky, Charles, 1840-1900. Camp at Elbow, party of surveyors for the Canadian Pacific Railway journeying on the North Saskatchewan. — [Sept.1871]. — 1 photograph: b&w; 21 x 26 cm. — Modern print from a glass negative. Ref. No.: PA-009170. National Archives of Canada.

Other British Columbians started a campaign to persuade the inhabitants to join Canada. One of the leaders of the campaign was the editor of the *British Colonist*, who had changed his name from Smith to Amor de Cosmos. Talks between the colony and Canada began in 1870. It was finally agreed that British Columbia should enter Confederation, that the large debt of the province would be taken over by Canada, and that a Canadian railway, to link British Columbia to the East, would be begun within two years and completed within ten years. British Columbia became the sixth Canadian province on July 20, 1871.

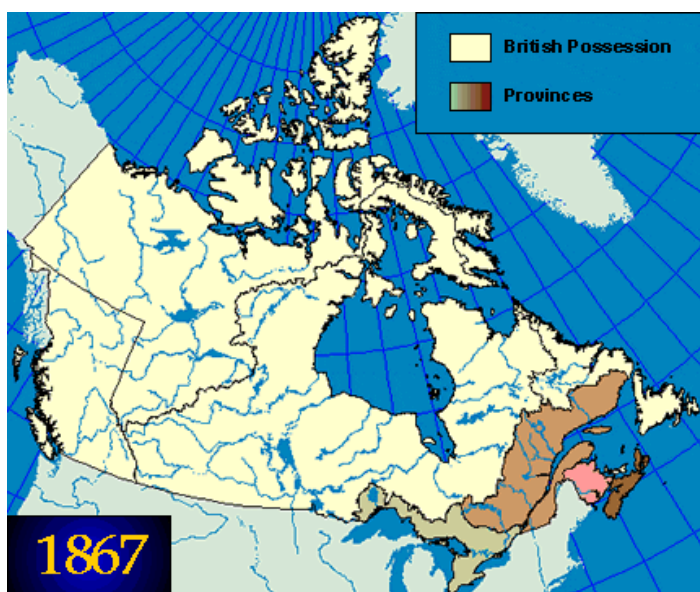
British Columbia

The colony of Vancouver Island had been set up by the British government in 1849 to keep the American settlers (who were moving into Oregon at that time) from taking it over. Then, in 1856, gold was found on the mainland. The colony of British Columbia was created in 1858 because of the Cariboo gold rush. Queen Victoria named the colony. The original boundaries of British Columbia were drawn in 1858 when the colony was created. The boundaries were: the United States to the south; the Pacific Ocean to the west, the 55th parallel in the north; and, to the east, the watershed between the rivers that flowed into the Pacific and those that flowed to the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. In 1863, a northern territory, the Stickeen Territory, was added to British Columbia, and the northern boundary became the 60th parallel. The two colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island were joined in 1866; they kept the name of British Columbia, and Victoria became the capital city. When British Columbia joined Canada as a province in July 1871, it kept both Vancouver Island and the previously delimited boundaries.

Animation of the territorial evolution of Canada from 1867 to 1999

The animation, *Territorial Evolution 1867 to 1999_e.gif* is located in the animated gif folder.





Canada's boundaries are dynamic political structures that reflect the changing political, economic and cultural conditions of the country through time. This animation shows sequentially the history of boundary changes in Canada from Confederation to the creation of Nunavut.

Map Sources

Provinces and British Possessions, 1867

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Related Web sites (1999 – 2009)

Federal Government

Canada: A People's History

<http://www.cbc.ca/history/webdriver?MIval=EpisodeSum2.html&lang=E>

Episode summaries of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's documentary series about the history of Canada.

Government of Canada. *Canada's Digital Collections. The Acadian Odyssey*

<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/acadian/english/toce/toce.htm>

The History of Acadia and the Acadian Experience in Canada

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/>

Information on the Department and on services offered to First Nations People. See "Publications and Research" for recent data on Aboriginal population, First Nations Profiles, news on treaties and land claims, etc.

National Library of Canada and National Archives of Canada

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>

The National Archives of Canada authorizes the disposal of records by federal government institutions and specifies the terms and conditions for their long-term preservation when they have archival value or historic importance; offers advice and orientation to support government institutions in the business of information management and record keeping; and provides records storage facilities.

The National Library's Canadian Confederation Web site

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/index-e.html>



Provincial/Territorial Government

British Columbia Archives

<http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/index.htm>

Gouvernement du Québec. Archives nationales du Québec (available in French only)

<http://www.banq.qc.ca/accueil/>

Les Archives nationales du Québec conservent des milliers de fonds : 43 km de documents écrits, 7 000 000 de photographies, 800 000 cartes et plans, 53 000 heures d'enregistrements sonores, de films.

Government of Manitoba. Archives of Manitoba

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/>

Manitoba's rich documentary past is accessible to you at the Archives of Manitoba, which also houses the world-renowned archives of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Provincial Archives

<http://www.gov.nf.ca/panl/>

Government of Nunavut

<http://www.gov.nu.ca/Nunavut/English/departments/CLEY/>

Government of Ontario. Archives of Ontario

<http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/>

Government of Prince Edward Island. Department of Education. Public Archives and Records Office

<http://www.edu.pe.ca/paro/>

The Public Archives and Records Office of Prince Edward Island (PARO) acquires, preserves, and makes available for public research the records of the government of this province and private-sector papers and records deemed to be of lasting historical value.

Northwest Territories Archives

<http://pwnhc.learnnet.nt.ca/programs/nwtarchives.asp>

Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/>

Provincial Archives of Alberta

http://www.culture.alberta.ca/preserving/paa_2002/index.asp

Provincial Archives of New Brunswick

<http://archives.gnb.ca/Archives/Default.aspx?culture=en-CA>

Saskatchewan Archives Board

<http://www.saskarchives.com/web/index.html>



Yukon Archives

<http://www.btc.gov.yk.ca/archives/index.html>

Other

Canadian Geographic's Mapping Canada

<http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/mapping/default.asp>

Canadian Heritage Gallery

<http://www.canadianheritage.com/index2.htm>

The Canadian Heritage Gallery is a very extensive collection of historical Canadiana on the Internet.

Historical Atlas of Canada Online Learning Project

<http://www.historicalatlas.ca/website/hacolp/>

This site is still under development but promises to be an excellent site for historical maps of Canada. All maps shown on the site have been adapted from the printed version of three-volume Historical Atlas of Canada.

Musée McCord Museum

<http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/>

Founded in 1921 by David Ross McCord, the McCord Museum conserves, studies and presents a remarkable collection of objects, archives and historical photographs, from the 18th century to the present.

The Hudson's Bay Company Archives

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/index.html>

The HBCA offers a wealth of information on the human and natural history of western and northern Canada and the western USA. Whether you are an historian, genealogist, ethnologist, environmental scientist or land claims researcher, the HBCA may be able to help.

Association of Canadian Map Libraries and Archives (ACMLA)

<http://www.acmla.org/>

ACMLA actively serves as the representative professional group for Canadian map librarians, cartographic archivists and others interested in geographic information in all formats.