

Territorial Evolution, 1912

Abstract

In 1912, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec are extended northward. 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

After the creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba said they also wanted to get northern extensions. In 1912, the Government of Canada passed Bills to extend the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba northward to their present boundaries. The District of Keewatin lost much of its territory, while the District of Ungava became part of the Province of Quebec.

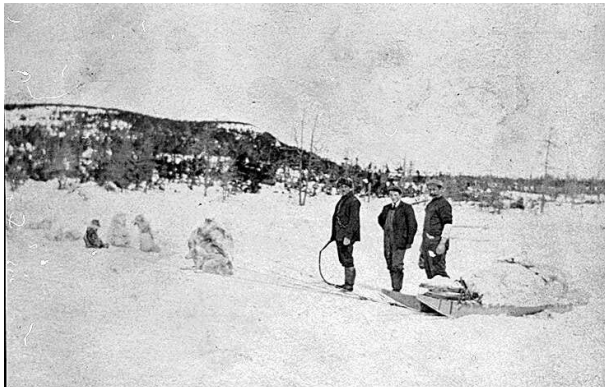


Figure 1 : Photograph of Men with Large Polar Bear on Sled

Left to Right: Bill Martin, L.A. Learmonth, S.B. Fequet with large (1000 lbs) polar bear on sled, on sea between Cartwright and Pay Harbour.

Source: Photo N-1987-033-2030080 L to R: Bill Martin, L.A. Learmonth, S.B. Fequet with large (1,000lbs) polar bear on sled, on sea between Cartwright and Pay Harbour, [Labrador]. Spring 1912 Accession Info: N-1987-033-0012 (2030080) Subject: Polar bear Identified People: S.B. Fequet Lorenz A. Learmonth Bill Martin Geographic Area: Labrador Date: 1912. Date Range: 1912-1912. Archives of the Northwest Territories.

The years after 1905 also saw the end of another boundary conflict -- one between Canada and the United States over Alaska. The Alaska boundary was described in an 1825 convention between Great Britain and Russia; this document described most of the boundary clearly, except for the part around the Alaska Panhandle. When the United States bought Alaska in 1867, it inherited the 1825 boundaries.

Part of the problem with the Panhandle was that the territory had not been well known at the time the 1825 boundary was drawn. As the area was explored and its resources became known, a dispute arose over the interpretation of the original description. When gold was found in the Cassiar district of British Columbia, the only way into the area was via the Stikine River through U.S. territory. In 1872 and 1874, the government of British Columbia officially asked that the boundary be demarcated.

After gold was found in the Klondike, the dispute erupted again when the claims of both countries to passes and ports leading into the Yukon clashed. In 1889, a commission was appointed to study the question, and its provisional decision stated that the Chilkoot and White passes, and the point where the Chilkoot River met the Dalton trail were points on the boundary. In 1904, a convention between Great Britain and the United States created an Alaskan Boundary Tribunal to attempt to settle the question.

A convention between the two countries was finally signed in 1906, which set the boundary as it exists today. This boundary effectively shuts off Canada's access from the sea in the area of the Alaskan Panhandle. The boundary was officially demarcated between 1904 and 1913.

Ontario

Ontario claimed a right to a northward extension of its territory. It also supported Manitoba's right to expand northward and suggested a boundary: a northward extension of the eastern boundary of Manitoba as it was then, to the Churchill River, then straight up the middle of the channel of that river to its mouth; the territory of Manitoba would also be extended to the 60th parallel. The territory belonging to the district of Keewatin and situated east of the boundary of Manitoba would then be included in the province of Ontario. The geographical reasons for this claim were not stated.

The eastern boundary of Manitoba, as decided by the government of Canada, did not follow this suggestion, because the government feared that the town of Churchill would be divided between the two provinces. So the eastern boundary of Manitoba (and the western boundary of Ontario) was drawn as a straight line north from the existing boundary of Manitoba to the east end of Island Lake, and then a straight line from there to the intersection of the 89th meridian of longitude and the shore of Hudson Bay. The territory to the east of this line passed from the District of Keewatin to the Province of Ontario.

Quebec

Quebec's claim to a northern extension was made on November 9, 1907. The province claimed the District of Ungava: all the territory between its northern boundary and Hudson Strait, and between Hudson Bay in the west, and the Atlantic Ocean or to the limits of Newfoundland in the east. The province also asked for all the islands in Hudson Bay next to the mainland.

The province claimed that this area belonged to it geographically, since it was completely separated from any other province. The province also believed the government of Quebec was the best suited to govern and develop the natural resources of Ungava. Quebec also requested this extension as compensation for any advantages that Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (the province had claimed an extension to Hudson's Bay, but it was denied) might gain from having their territory extended to Hudson Bay.

The province was given most of the territory it had claimed. The district of Ungava became part of the province of Quebec. Quebec did not get any coastal islands, because a proper description of the islands would be difficult, and because the federal government wanted to keep control over them for purposes of navigation and defence.

Manitoba

Manitoba wanted to increase its size to match the size of the newly created provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It claimed a large part of Keewatin for several reasons, including the fact that for several centuries, the only means of communication between the outside world and the Red River settlement was through this territory, by way of Hudson Bay. The province also claimed that it would be better to join this territory to Manitoba because the Government of Ontario was too far removed from the area to properly secure it.

The province also claimed those parts of the former districts of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Athabaska which had not been included in the province of Saskatchewan. Its main reasons for this claim were, again, to match the size of the neighbouring provinces, and because the province had been requesting an extension of its boundaries over this area for over 25 years. Manitoba's strongest argument for control of these territories was the fact that when the province of Saskatchewan was created, the government of the Northwest Territories had stated that these territories could be given to the province of Manitoba.

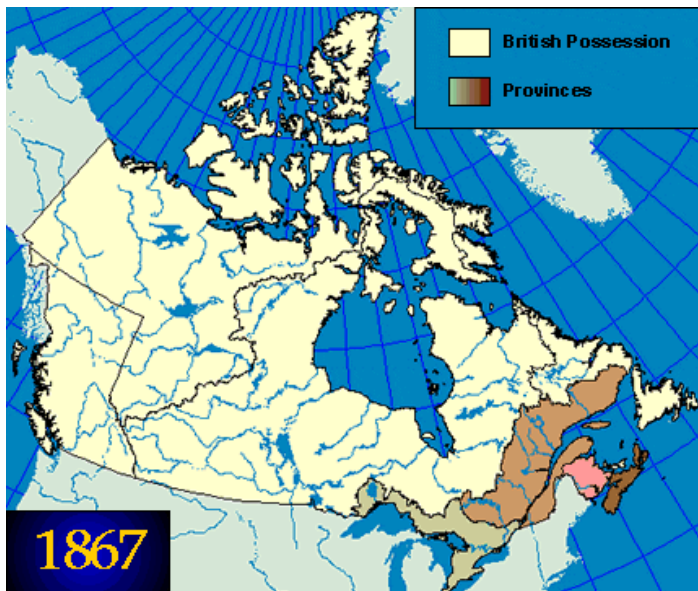
In 1912, the eastern boundary of Manitoba (and the western boundary of Ontario) was defined, by the Government of Canada, as a straight line north from the existing boundary of Manitoba to the east end of Island Lake, and then a straight line from there to the intersection of the 89th meridian of longitude and the shore of Hudson

Bay. This decision did not follow Manitoba's eastward claim which would have brought the boundary into the vicinity of Fort William, Port Arthur and Lake Nipigon.

Manitoba's western boundary was extended north to the 60th parallel of latitude, thus giving to the province the parts of the territories of Assiniboia, Saskatchewan and Athabasca which had not been included in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Geomatics Canada. 1995. Territorial evolution of Canada [CD-ROM].

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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.

