On July 1, 1867 fireworks lit up the skies and guns roared a salute from Sarnia in the west to Halifax in the east. It was the day that Canada became a nation. Four British colonies—Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick—joined to form the new Dominion of Canada. On the crowded streets of Ottawa, people cheered as John A. Macdonald was sworn in as Canada's first prime minister. George Brown, another prominent politician, announced:

"With the first dawn of this summer morning, we hail the birthday of a new nation. A united British America [Canada] takes its place among the nations of the world."

Today, it is hard to imagine Canada as a country with only four provinces and a population of just 3 million. Canada in 1867 was certainly much smaller than it is today. In just 33 years from 1867 to the turn of the twentieth century, however, the country grew at an astonishing pace. New provinces and territories were added, and the population increased to 5.3 million.

In those years between 1867 and 1900, Canada was taking the first steps toward forging its own identity. The characteristics that began to define Canada by 1900 were ones that would continue to shape the country's identity throughout the twentieth century.

1. Brainstorm characteristics that you think might define a country's identity.
2. What characteristics do you think defined Canada in 1867?
First Peoples, Early Settlements

Aboriginal peoples were the first inhabitants of what we call Canada today. In the 1860s, the population was estimated at about 100,000 spread across the continent. They lived as independent nations with their own governments, laws, traditions, and distinct cultures. The French arrived on the shores of the East Coast in the early 1600s and established the first French settlements. In 1759, the British defeated the French at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham and established the colonies and territories of British North America.

What contacts did the North American colonies have with one another in the 1860s? They had stronger ties to Britain and even the United States than they did to each other. Transportation was mainly by water over seas, rivers, and canals. Railways were beginning to be built, but travel over land was mainly by horse and cart over dirt roads. Over 82 per cent of the people in the colonies lived on farms or in small villages. Most people did not venture very far from their homes.
The Push to Nationhood

What brought the colonies together? In the 1860s, a number of issues were brewing that eventually led to the birth of Canada.

1. The Threat of American Takeover
   The threat of an American takeover was very real. During the American Civil War between the Northern and Southern states, Britain appeared to support the Southern states by supplying them with warships. When the North won the war in 1865, the British North American colonies worried that the Northern armies might take revenge on Britain by attacking them. American politicians and newspapers were also talking about Manifest Destiny — the idea that it was natural the United States would one day control all of North America. In 1867, the United States bought Alaska from Russia. British Columbia was hemmed in to the north and south by the United States. Would the United States take over the vast open plains east of British Columbia next?

2. Changing British Attitudes
   The colonies had been seen as a source of wealth and power for Britain, but by the 1860s some people in Britain felt the colonies were too big a drain on the home country's finances. Suddenly, the colonies could no longer be sure that Britain would defend them in case of attack from the United States. The colonies were vulnerable. If they united, they could pool their resources and better defend themselves.

3. The Need for New Trade Links
   Britain was also less willing to provide the colonies with special trading privileges. Before 1846, the colonies could ship wheat and flour to Britain at a very low tax. In 1846, that trade preference ended when Britain announced free trade. The British North American colonies then worked out a reciprocity (free trade) agreement with the United States in 1854. Certain goods could pass over their borders tax-free, but the US ended the agreement in 1865. The colonies began to realize that they had to develop better trade links among themselves.

Aboriginal peoples, like these Kwakwaka’wakw on the West Coast were the first inhabitants of what we call Canada today.
4. The Need for Railways

If there was going to be trade among the colonies, there had to be rail links. A railway connection between the Atlantic colonies and Canada was also essential for defence. If the colonies were attacked by the United States, British troops could be rushed from Halifax. But in winter, the St. Lawrence River was frozen solid and the only way troops could reach Canada would be by rail. A railway building boom began, but Britain was reluctant to keep sending finances for the railways. The individual colonies did not have the resources to build the lines of steel themselves. If the colonies united, expenses could be shared.

**Confederation 1867**

Canada became a nation in 1867 when Britain passed the British North America Act, today known as the Constitution Act 1867. What characteristics defined Canada in 1867?
The Land and Economy

Canada in 1867 included four provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Quebec. Ontario and Quebec were much smaller than they are today. The Fathers of Confederation hoped to have other colonies join the country to fulfill the dream of a nation stretching "from sea to sea."

The majority of people in the country were farmers, fishers, or merchants. Economically, there were strong ties to Britain. Canada was seen as a source of wealth and economic power for the home country. Vast quantities of furs, fish, timber, grain, and flour made their way on ships across the Atlantic to the tables of Britain. While some industries were developing in Canada, most manufactured goods from clothing to dishes came from Britain or the United States. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, however, had a lively trade with the east coast of the United States and the West Indies.

The People

The majority of people in Canada were of British (English, Scottish, Irish, or Welsh) heritage and had come from Britain or the United States. Since Canada was still part of the British Empire, Canadians were subjects of the British Crown and swore allegiance to Queen Victoria. They flew the British flag and sang "God Save the Queen" at ceremonies and special events. It was not unusual to see British soldiers on the streets and in garrisons throughout the colonies.

French Canadians had been in Quebec and the Maritimes since the 1600s. In 1867, they were also British subjects. They had kept their language, religion, system of laws, and culture, but the fact that they had been "conquered" by the British in 1759 was still a bitter pill for many to swallow. They felt the constant pressure of the

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Canada's first census (population count) was taken in 1871. Ninety-two per cent of the population was of either British or French origin. The census did not include Aboriginal peoples living in the country. Why?

Montreal in the 1860s was the largest city in Canada and was bustling with life.
British majority around them threatening their identity.

Aboriginal peoples were also considered by the government to be British subjects, though they saw themselves as independent, self-governing nations. They were placed under the authority of the federal government at Confederation. A department of Indian Affairs was created to manage the way they would live. The policy of the government was for assimilation. That is, the government wanted to gradually absorb Aboriginal peoples into Canadian (mainly British) culture. The government made treaties to gain Aboriginal lands and moved many Aboriginal peoples onto reserves. Children were sent to special residential schools where they were not allowed to speak their languages or follow their cultural traditions.

Other ethnic groups made up 9.3 per cent of the population in 1871. They included Blacks (primarily in Nova Scotia and Ontario), Germans, Ukrainians, Scandinavians, Chinese, Italians, and others. There were already a number of different ethnocultural and racial groups in Canada, though their numbers were small.

**The Government**

Canada's government was based on features from both the British and American systems. Following the American model, Canada had a federal system. Provincial governments looked after local affairs and a central government looked after affairs affecting the whole country. But in Canada, the federal government was meant to be more powerful than the provincial governments. In the American government, the states had wider powers than the central government.

Following the British model, Canada had a parliamentary system with a House of Commons made up of representatives elected by the people. The Queen of England was still the head of government and she appointed a Governor General to represent her in Canada, but both had to follow the wishes of the majority in the House of Commons. Like Britain, Canada's government also had an "upper house" called the Senate. The name was taken from the American system. Its main function was to double check all laws passed by the House of Commons.

The new nation of Canada in 1867 was not declaring independence from Britain. Government in Britain still had the final say on any changes to Canada's constitution (the rules, practices, and laws for how a country should be governed) and its foreign relations. Canada's constitution, however, gave Canadians more direct control over their own affairs. Canada was also beginning to define itself as different from both Britain and the United States.

**The Roots of Regionalism**

On Confederation Day people celebrated, but not everyone was rejoicing. In Nova Scotia, anti-Confederationists burned a likeness of Premier Charles Tupper side-by-side with a rat. In New Brunswick, a newspaper headline read: "Died – at her
residence in the city of Fredericton, The Province of New Brunswick, in the 83rd year of her age." In Quebec, French Canadians wondered if they would have an equal say in government and could maintain their distinct identity in a country dominated by English-speaking people. Aboriginal peoples were not consulted about their role in the new country.

Some colonies rejected Confederation outright. Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island believed they would have little real representation in the federal government. The government in the new capital of Ottawa was too far removed to understand their concerns. The colonies had developed their own strong identities. Even in 1867, the roots of strong provincial and regional differences were well established in Canada. Canada has always faced the challenge of uniting regions that have very different needs, geographies, peoples, and economies.

Towards the Twentieth Century

So as Canada approached the twentieth century, the country's land area, population, and economy had grown considerably. The world was beginning to take notice of this new country called Canada. By 1900, Canada was also beginning to look outward to its place in the world.

As you follow the story of Canada through the twentieth century in this book, you will see the following key topics highlighted throughout. Take a minute to think about how each of these topics is reflected in what you have read about Canada's development from 1867 to 1900. What aspects do you think will change or remain the same in the early twentieth century? Then read on and find out.

Emerging Identity 1867 - 1900

In 1867, Canada was a nation of four provinces in the East. By 1900, the country stretched across the continent from Nova Scotia in the east to British Columbia in the west and north to the Arctic Ocean. The country was also establishing closer transportation and communication ties. The transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway was completed in 1885 and the telephone was invented in 1876. Social and economic developments were occurring, and Canada saw the first stirrings of a cultural identity. The National Gallery, for example, was founded in 1880. The timeline on the following pages (pp. 8–9) highlights some of these major developments in Canada's growth to 1900.
A GROWING NATION 1867 - 1900

1867 - 1879

Political Changes

1869 - 1870 Red River Resistance; Louis Riel and the Métis fight for land and political rights, and the right to enter Confederation as a province

1870 As a result of the Red River Resistance, Manitoba becomes a province of Canada

1871 British Columbia joins Canada and is promised a railway link with the East

1873 Prince Edward Island joins Canada
North-West Mounted Police are created to police the West

Economic and Technological Changes

1869 First Eaton’s department store opens in Toronto

1872 Elijah McCoy invents the lubricating cup used on trains and in factories

1876 Alexander Graham Bell completes first long-distance telephone call from Brantford to Paris, Ontario

1876 First new hardy Red Fife wheat is exported from Manitoba

1878 John A. Macdonald introduces his National Policy to promote economic growth in Canada

Social and Cultural Changes

1871 - 1875 Canada signs treaties with Aboriginal nations in the West; many are moved onto reserves

1872 Trade Union Bill makes labour unions legal

1875 Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) is founded to lobby against alcohol abuse and to push for women’s rights, including the right to vote

1875 First organized hockey league game is played in Victoria Rink, Montreal

1876 Canadian government passes the Indian Act that makes Aboriginal peoples “wards of the state” and sets out rules by which they should live
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Britain grants Arctic Islands to Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>North-West Rebellion led by Louis Riel is crushed; Riel is hanged</td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>Horse-drawn streetcar debuts in Winnipeg</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>Canadian Pacific Railroad across Canada is completed largely through the work of immigrant labourers including thousands of Chinese; postal services expand westward with railway</td>
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<td>1886</td>
<td>Liberals first propose unrestricted free trade with United States</td>
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<td>1888</td>
<td>Buffalo on the western plains are basically extinct</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>National Gallery is established</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Royal Society of Canada is founded to promote research and learning in Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>First women students are admitted to University of Toronto</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>Sun Dance of Aboriginal peoples is banned by the federal government as part of its policy to assimilate Aboriginal nations</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>Report of Royal Commission on Relations of Labour and Capital points out problems of unsafe working conditions, low wages, child labour, etc.</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Manitoba Schools Act ends tax support for French-Catholic school system</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Niagara Falls hydroelectric plant opens</td>
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<td>1897</td>
<td>Dr. Henri Casgrain becomes first known Canadian to drive a motorcar – top speed 29 km/h</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>Gold rush attracts thousands to the Klondike region of the Yukon</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>James Naismith of Edmonton develops game of basketball</td>
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<td>Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson begins public readings of her poetry</td>
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<td>1894</td>
<td>Labour Day is celebrated as a holiday</td>
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<td>1896</td>
<td>Canada introduces an “open door” policy to immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>First Women's Institute is founded by Adelaide Hoodless to teach women about nutrition, child care, and domestic science</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Canada has grown to a nation of 5.3 million people</td>
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