

HOW WAS CONFEDERATION ACHIEVED?

Think back to the last group project you were assigned at school. What challenges did the group face? How were everyone's perspectives taken into account? How was the group able to make a final decision? Confederation dealt with these same questions. Bringing people together to unify a country was a great feat.

THE CHARLOTTETOWN CONFERENCE

In September 1864, representatives from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick were planning to meet to discuss a Maritime union. When news of this meeting reached the Province of Canada, John A. Macdonald and other pro-Confederation leaders asked to attend. The conference was held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

The Charlottetown Conference was the first of three sets of meetings held between 1864 and 1866 to discuss and debate Confederation. Some of the objections to Confederation you read about earlier in this chapter resulted from the Confederation debates. Newfoundland was not represented at this conference. Colonies in the Pacific Coast region were not central to the discussions of Confederation at this time. Through lengthy speeches and many arguments, politicians from the Province of Canada and the Maritime colonies discussed the idea of a formal union.

Look at the photo in **Figure 2.23**. It shows delegates (representatives elected or chosen to act on behalf of others) at the Charlottetown Conference taking a break from the discussions. Compare this photo to the painting in the chapter opener. What similarities and differences do you notice?



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What concerns might representatives from the Pacific Coast have brought to the discussions of Confederation?

FIGURE 2.23 This photo was taken on the steps of Government House in Charlottetown in September 1864. **Analyze:** What details in the photo suggest these leaders did not necessarily represent the interests of everyone living in British North America at this time?



FIGURE 2.24 *Dancing at the Charlottetown Province House Ball, 1864*, created by Dusan Kadlec in 1982. **Analyze:** What message about the role of women is the artist trying to convey in this painting?

WOMEN AT THE CONFERENCE

In addition to the daily discussions, there were various social events held during the conferences. The leaders' wives and their unmarried daughters and sisters often attended the many dinners and parties.

At the time Confederation was being discussed, women could not vote. Refer to **Figure 2.24** and **Figure 2.25**. Do you think the presence of some women at conference events was adequate to establish their collective voice in the decisions being made about Confederation?

FIGURE 2.25 Comment from Professor Nielson, Calgary, Alberta, September 21, 2015. **Analyze:** What primary sources did Nielson use to research the role of politicians' wives and daughters during Confederation?

“Although women were not part of the formal decision-making process that resulted in Confederation, some politicians' wives played informal roles. Male politicians' letters show that they discussed Confederation politics and their political decisions with their wives. Letters and diaries also suggest that politicians' wives and daughters were included in social events during, for example, the Charlottetown Conference. At these events, women's social skills could be put to use to build friendships and goodwill among delegates, which were necessary for the men to be able to work together on the Confederation project.”

— Carmen Nielson, Mount Royal University

READING PRIMARY TEXT SOURCES

Historians look to different types of sources to understand the past. These kinds of sources are created by someone who witnessed or experienced the events or conditions of the time under study. Primary sources can be a deliberate account of the past, such as a newspaper article, letter, or diary. They can also be material considered traces of the past, such as an advertisement or a restaurant menu.

Historians must ask questions and make observations and inferences to create an understanding about how and why events unfolded as they did. When the information in a historical source helps answer a question about the past, it becomes historical evidence. To uncover evidence in a primary text source, historians do a close reading, analyzing and evaluating what the source says. **Figure 2.26** lists some of the questions that historians ask when they are closely reading a primary text source. Note that not all of the questions can be applied to all primary sources. Sources such as diaries and personal notes were not meant to be seen by an outside audience.

Question Category	Sample Questions
Source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of document is it? • When and where was it created? Who wrote it? For whom was it written and why? • Is the author describing his or her own experiences, or those of others?
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What claims does the author make? • What evidence does the author give to support these claims? • What is the author's perspective on the topic? How can I tell?
Writing style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What words or phrases does the author use? What do these words and details communicate to the reader? • What feelings does the writer express?
Audience response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What effect did this text likely have on its readers? • How might a different audience have responded to it?

FIGURE 2.26 When closely reading a primary text source, historians must consider a number of factors to develop an understanding of the source and its content, including whether it was written for an outside audience or not.

The editorial in **Figure 2.27** was published on September 16, 1864. The Charlottetown Conference had ended on September 9. The discussions were scheduled to continue in a few weeks at a second conference in Québec City.

In this activity, you will do a close reading of **Figure 2.27** to look for evidence that can help you answer the following inquiry question: In 1864, did most people in New Brunswick support the idea of Confederation?



“Politicians may go to Charlottetown and in secret session decide that Confederation is just the thing that’s wanted by this Province, and they may lay their heads together to devise ways and means of bringing about such Confederation at an early day; but when we see a disposition shown to cram this scheme down the people’s throats without giving them time for reflection, we certainly shall be the last to lend assistance to the accomplishment of such designs....

We cannot but express our indignation at the pusillanimous [cowardly] conduct of the Lower Province [Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and P.E.I.] delegates. They were sent to Charlottetown ... to discuss the question of a Union of their own Provinces. Under the blandishments [flattering words designed to persuade] of Canadian politicians, (who invited themselves to the Conference!) they placed the Union of the Lower Provinces entirely in the back-ground.... They come back, of course, without having considered the subject which their Legislatures gave them for discussion, and admit themselves so overpowered by the “Canadian view” that they can think of nothing else.... There is now no guarantee that, when they appoint themselves to go to Québec to the Grand Conference of all, they will not resolve to annex the Provinces to the United States.”

— *Saint John Morning Telegraph*

FIGURE 2.27 Editorial from *Saint John Morning Telegraph*, September 16, 1864

HOW TO CLOSELY READ A PRIMARY TEXT SOURCE

Consider **Figure 2.27**. Write down everything you know about the creation of the source.

- What kind of document is this?
- When and where was it created?
- Who wrote it? Why did they write it?

STEP 1

Read the text carefully. Look up the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. Summarize the main ideas and arguments presented.

- What is the topic of this editorial?
- What opinion is expressed? What evidence is given to support this opinion?

STEP 2

Read the text again. What strategies did the author use to persuade readers?

- Which words or phrases does the author use? What details does the author communicate to the reader?
- What feelings is the author expressing?

STEP 3

Consider how different audiences might have responded to this text at the time.

- What response do you think regular readers of the *Saint John Morning Telegraph* likely had to the editorial?
- How might others in New Brunswick and in the other colonies have responded to this editorial?

STEP 4

What inferences can you make? What does this text suggest about whether, in 1864, people in New Brunswick supported the idea of Confederation?

STEP 5

THE QUÉBEC CONFERENCE

By the end of the Charlottetown Conference, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island had abandoned the idea of a Maritime union to consider a union with the Province of Canada. But now all of the leaders needed to work out the terms of Confederation.

A second conference was held in October 1864 in Québec City. Representatives from Canada West, Canada East, and the Atlantic colonies discussed and debated the needs and wants of the colonies.

COMPROMISES AND TERMS

The Maritimes wanted access to new trade partners in British North America. For this, they needed a railway to move their goods. Prince Edward Island wanted a ferry system to have better access to the mainland. It also wanted a solution to the land ownership issue so tenants could buy their own land. Canada East wanted special rights for religion, education,

and language. John A. Macdonald of Canada West wanted a very strong central government. He drafted the majority of the resolutions (decisions) reached during the Québec Conference. Examine the report in Figure 2.28. Why do you think historians would want to preserve this draft version of the report rather than keep only the final, clean copy?

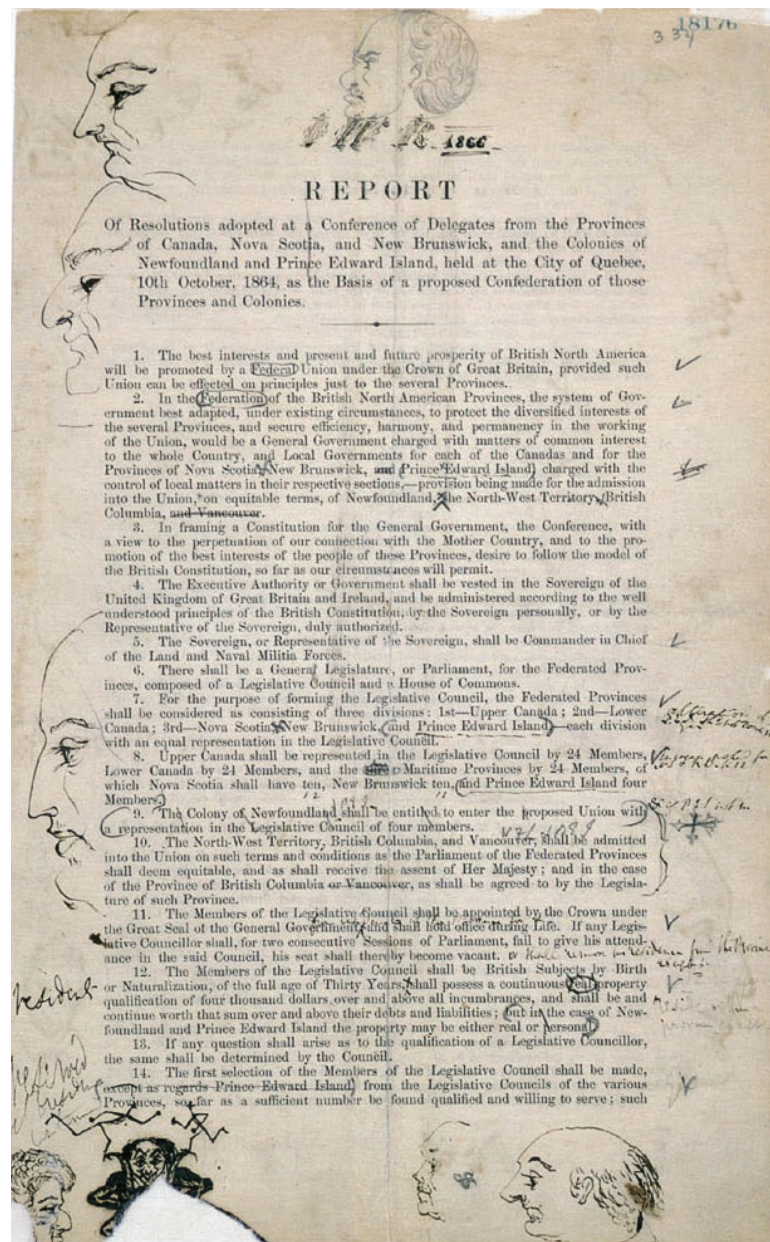
FRAMEWORK FOR THE DOMINION OF CANADA

The Québec Conference established that the federal government would consist of two houses. In the lower house, or House of Commons, representation would be based on population size. Smaller provinces, such as Prince Edward Island, would have fewer representatives. To provide some balance, the upper house, or Senate, would be based on regional representation. This meant that there would be a more equal number of members from Canada West, Canada East, and the Atlantic colonies.

It was agreed that the federal government would be responsible for “Indian Affairs.” It would absorb the debts of the colonies up to a maximum amount. It would also control all major sources of revenue, such as taxes related to trade. In return, each province would receive a payment from the federal government to help cover expenses. At the time, the payment amounted to 80 cents per person.

How might agreeing to one colony's demands create problems for other colonies?

FIGURE 2.28 John A. Macdonald's copy of the first page of the report drafted at the Québec Conference in 1864. **Analyze:** What do the doodles reveal about Macdonald's personality outside of being a politician?



OUTCOME OF THE QUÉBEC CONFERENCE

As a result of the Québec Conference, only the Province of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia agreed to join Confederation. Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland were not yet convinced the union was in their best interests. Read George Brown's words about the results of the Québec Conference in Figure 2.29. Of the regions involved in drafting the Québec resolutions, which region does Brown imply will hold no power?

THE LONDON CONFERENCE

With the list of resolutions drafted, the Fathers of Confederation representing Canada West, Canada East, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia travelled to England to write the *British North America Act*. This legislation would officially end their status as individual British colonies. They would be joined together as a united, partially self-governing country by an act of British Parliament. The London Conference, which took place between December 1866 and March 1867, is represented in Figure 2.30. Why would creating a new country out of the colonies in British North America require a legal act of the British Parliament?

“All right!!! Conference through at six o'clock this evening—constitution adopted ... a complete reform of all the abuses and injustice we have complained of!! Is it not wonderful? French Canadianism entirely extinguished!”

— George Brown, Father of Confederation

FIGURE 2.29 Letter from Brown to Anne Nelson, his wife, October 27, 1864. **Analyze:** How would you describe Brown's reaction to the results of the Québec Conference?

FIGURE 2.30 J.D. Kelly's painting entitled *The Fathers of Confederation at the London Conference, 1866*, was reproduced as a colour poster in 1935. **Analyze:** What do the details of the people, room, and papers suggest about this meeting?



BYTOWN MUSEUM YOUTH COUNCIL

By the time of Confederation in 1867, Ottawa had been the capital of the Province of Canada for 10 years. Before then, Ottawa was a tough lumber and military community called Bytown.

The mission of Ottawa's Bytown Museum (Musée Bytown in French) is to explore and share the rich history of Ottawa and its people. The museum explores Bytown, from its earliest days to the present, through displays that include videos and artifacts from the past, such as clothes, photos, and paintings.

The museum also has a Youth Council (Figure 2.31) made up of 15 members ranging in age from 16 to 23, who learn about and promote Ottawa's history. Through their work, the members become active citizens of their community. For example, they give tours to museum visitors and participate in City of Ottawa events such as Heritage Day and Winterlude. During these events, Youth Council members dress in period costumes and interact with the public.



FIGURE 2.31 Members of the Bytown Museum Youth Council

“[THE YOUTH COUNCIL HELPS TO] BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.”

Being part of the Youth Council also helps its members build their creative and teamwork skills. They research and write blog posts on subjects such as Bytown's schools and historical burial grounds. In 2014, Youth Council members redesigned the museum's Youth Activity Area. They also researched and chose the themes and artifacts that are explored in the Youth Activity Area. One theme looks at childhood in rural and urban Ottawa in the late 1800s. The display has interactive components such as books, historical toys, and access to historical resources through technology.

The Youth Council also wrote and produced a video, in which members talk about their experiences with the group. One member says that her work with the Youth Council helps her “build a sense of community.” According to another member, “meeting people that work at this museum, as well as other professionals in Ottawa ... is something that will hopefully help me in my future career.”

The members of the Youth Council help people in their community gain new understandings of Ottawa's history. Their work helps foster pride in their city and its history.

A CALL TO ACTION

1. Ottawa's history is connected to Canada's history as its capital city. In what ways does the history of your community connect to Canada's history?
2. Members of the Youth Council share the history of Ottawa with their community in many ways. In what ways can you be an active citizen, learning and sharing your community's history?

THE DOMINION OF CANADA

July 1, 1867, became known as Dominion Day. Figure 2.32 shows people gathered to hear the reading of Queen Victoria's proclamation. In it, she declared that the Province of Canada (now split into two provinces, Ontario and Québec), New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were officially united in the Dominion of Canada.

John A. Macdonald was appointed prime minister on July 1, 1867, and was elected to the position a month later. Queen Victoria also knighted him for his role in forming the new dominion. Agnes Macdonald, Sir John A. Macdonald's wife, wrote about the impact of July 1. Read Figure 2.33. What does Agnes Macdonald indicate life with the new prime minister of Canada might be like?

In both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Queen Victoria's proclamation met with protests. Many people believed Confederation was pushed on them due to their lack of voting rights. Read Figure 2.34. What other voices may have been missing in the decisions on Confederation?



FIGURE 2.32 Market Square, Kingston, Ontario, July 1, 1867. **Analyze:** What does this photo suggest about the significance of July 1, 1867, to the people of Kingston?

“This new Dominion of ours came noisily into existence on the 1st, and the very newspapers look hot and tired, with the weight of Announcements and Cabinet lists. Here—in this house—the atmosphere is so awfully political that sometimes I think the very flies hold Parliaments on the Kitchen Tablecloths.”

— Agnes Macdonald

FIGURE 2.33 Excerpt from Macdonald's diary, July 5, 1867. **Analyze:** What do you think she means by “the very flies hold Parliaments on the Kitchen Tablecloths”?

“Confederation was a political deal between an exclusive group of politicians: all male, all property owners, and all of European origin. Though the new country was created out of the traditional territories of First Nations people, no First Nations people were involved in the discussions or consulted on the deal. Despite this, Confederation granted the federal government control over ‘Indian Affairs.’”

— Timothy Stanley, University of Ottawa

FIGURE 2.34 Statement from Professor Stanley, December 15, 2015. **Analyze:** Who does Stanley suggest had the most to lose with Confederation?

CHECK-IN

1. **FORMULATE QUESTIONS** What questions could you ask that would help guide your understanding of the conferences and Confederation?
2. **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** Which person or event do you think was most significant to the outcome of Confederation and why?