

Canada

French and British expeditions began exploring and later settling across modern-day Canada in the late 15th century. In 1583 a royal prerogative of Queen Elizabeth I claimed St. John's, Newfoundland, as the first North American English colony. Twenty-five years later Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec City, which became the first permanent settlement in the country and the capital of New France. In 1622, the first settlers left Scotland but were unable to establish permanent settlements for another seven years, toward the end of the Anglo-French War. And then in 1642, the Jesuits sponsored a group of settlers that founded what is now Montreal. These few facts address the dual nature of Canada today.

Whereas English settlers continued to flood the New World over the next century, those from France paled by comparison. The two countries fought two wars during this time that turned out to be pivotal. The first took place between 1722 and 1725; known by various names, we prefer to call it the Three Years War. In theory this war was a series of battles between New England and three bands of Canadian Indians who were allied with New France and were fought primarily in Nova Scotia, Maine, and Vermont (at the border between New England and New France).

The French and Indian War was part of a global conflict called the Seven Years' War fought between 1756 and 1763 pitting Great Britain against France and Spain over control of colonial and trade empires. Britain was ultimately victorious and in the resulting Treaty of Paris, France ceded almost all of its territory in mainland North America. However, the ruling British regime retained and protected most of the property, religious, political, and social culture of the French-speaking people. Spain's short intervention on the wrong side of the war resulted in its loss of Florida, although the country gained French Louisiana west of the Mississippi River.

The American Revolution of 1776 sent so many Loyalists scrambling north of the border that the colony of New Brunswick was formed eight years later. In 1791 the Province of Quebec was divided into two parts, the largely French-speaking Lower Canada along the St. Lawrence River and Gaspé Peninsula and an English-speaking Upper Canada populated mainly by Loyalists. The capital of New Canada was initially settled in 1796 at York, which is present-day Toronto.

The 19th century saw Canada grow westward. First, the Colony of Vancouver Island was chartered in 1849. Over the next twelve years three other Colonies were founded expressly to

prevent gold miners from the U.S. from overrunning them—the Colony of Queen Charlotte Islands (1853), the Colony of British Columbia (1858), and the Stikine Territory (1861). Just two years later, in the year of the birth of J.C. Fields, 1863, the Colony of the Queen Charlotte Islands and most of the Stikine Territory were merged into the Colony of British Columbia. (The remaining land north of the 60th Parallel became part of the Northwest Territory.)

Conferences held in 1864 at Quebec City and Charlottetown united the British Colonies in North America into a federation that formed the basis for the London Conference held two years later. Delegates to the London Conference drafted the British North America Act and presented it to Queen Victoria in 1867. She granted royal assent to this Act that March, setting July 1 as the date for the formation of the Dominion of Canada. Today July 1 is celebrated as Canada Day. The proclamation is shown in the accompanying figure. Canada was thus formed in 1867 as a federal dominion consisting of four providences: Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. The term *dominion* was chosen to signify Canada’s status as a self-governing colony of the British Empire. The British parliament then enacted a law defining the Province of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia as a federated kingdom. Thus began an accretion of provinces and territories and a process of increasing autonomy from the British Empire, which became official in 1931 and completed in 1982. The Canada Act of 1982 severed the vestiges of legal dependence on the British parliament.

