

**Conflicts and Agreements:  
Canada's Foundations and  
Their Consequences,  
1865-1949**

**Edited by Daniel Heidt**

ISBN: 978-1-7750475-0-6

Front cover graphics by Frank Flitton

Back cover graphic adapted from photo taken by Saffron Blaze

“Conflicts and Agreements” was organized by:



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# Conflicts and Agreements: Canada's Foundations and Their Consequences, 1865-1949

Edited by Daniel Heidt

## Panelists:

Patrice Dutil

Daniel Heidt

Jacqueline Krikorian

P. Whitney Lackenbauer

Marcel Martel

Robert Wardhaugh



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## Introduction:

In response to curiosity about Confederation during this sesquicentennial year, historians Patrice Dutil, Daniel Heidt, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Marcel Martel, Robert Wardhaugh, and political scientist Jacqueline Krikorian convened at the University of Waterloo on 31 March 2017 for a public panel to review Canada's expansion, strengths, and faults during the past 150 years. Everyone was impressed by the ensuing 1.5 hours of discussions, so the Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism agreed to commission a publication of the proceedings in written form, and post it to the web before 1 July so that more Canadians would have the opportunity to consider the event's varied opinions for Canada 150.

Daniel Heidt, PhD  
Project Manager, *The Confederation Debates*

## Remembering Canada's Previous Birthdays



A stamp commemorating Canada's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.



Photograph of crowd in front of Parliament during the diamond jubilee celebrations, July 1927.

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3202130

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Welcome to our discussion of *Conflicts and Agreements: Canada's Foundations and their Consequences, 1865 to 1949*. First of all, I'd like to acknowledge that we're on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron Neutral, Anishinabek, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to the Six Nations which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Tonight, we're going to talk about Confederation. We will think about what Confederation means in historical context, what it means in present-day context, what we're choosing to remember and what we're choosing to forget as we go through this national exercise of reflecting on 150 years of the Dominion of Canada.

I've always been fascinated by Canadian political history, and the ways that we as Canadians have thought about Confederation over the last 150 years. We might begin by zooming ourselves back one hundred years, and think about 1917. Canada, with its population of eight million people, found itself in the midst of a cataclysmic world war. Some would suggest that in April of that year, on the crest of Vimy Ridge, a sense of Canadian identity was born, one that hadn't hardened before that time. A certain nationalist narrative suggests this victory on the battlefield, and the voice in imperial decision-making won by Prime Minister Robert Borden immediately thereafter, marked our transition from colony to nation.

Others would say that the losses we sustained at Vimy precipitated the conscription crisis that left us irrevocably divided. But before conscription, when the time came in the summer of 1917 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation, a new Centre Block was dedicated on Parliament Hill (the Parliament Buildings having burned to the ground the year before, with all but the Library of Parliament spared) as a memorial to the Fathers of Confederation and to the valour of Canadians fighting in the First World War in Europe. This was very much a celebration of the Fathers of Confederation, and a moment that was tied to this crusade overseas.

Ten years later, with the war behind us, Canada had big diamond anniversary celebrations. A national committee was set up and issued a booklet urging Canadians, across the country, to hold public religious ceremonies. This was something I just cannot imagine in 2017: a national edict coming down urging Canadians to go out, and through your churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, organize events celebrating confederation. On 1 July 1927, the cornerstone of the Confederation Building

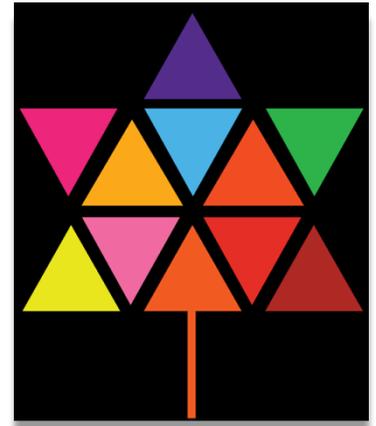
was laid, the Carillon and the Peace Tower inaugurated, and also the occasion of the first national radio broadcast in Canadian history.

1967. It was quite a year. A Centennial Commission had a mandate to promote the interests of the Centennial and to plan programs and projects that were specifically focused on peoples and events of historical significance. The past was very much present in the centenary celebrations. There was an incredible outpouring of enthusiasm, at least in some circles, at a time when Canada was going through a moment of intense national reflection. Within the Canadian historical community, the Centenary series, which began as a series of fairly conventional political histories, began to integrate social history into narrating and defining the contours of our past.

The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (the Bi and Bi Commission) asked the question on many English Canadians' minds: what does Quebec want? Many English Canadians, like Paul and Paulette Lackenbauer who are in the audience, headed off to Montreal for Expo 67. For many Canadians from outside of Quebec, this was their first time travelling to and actually experiencing *la belle province*, first-hand. Yet within Quebec, a different sense of awakening or understanding or dialogue that was going on at the time, suggested that Quebec's course might, and perhaps should, ultimately be separate from that of Canada's. We had George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* reflecting a left nationalist perspective, during a period when the Conservative nationalist historians such as Donald Creighton, celebrating Sir John A. Macdonald and his vision of Canada, had entrenched their narrative of Canada's political past (and its present). This was the era of John Porter's *Vertical Mosaic*, looking at the different structures of Canadian society, and within that Bi and Bi Commission, a recognition in Book Four of its report of how other ethnic groups enriched Canadian culture, and recommending their integration rather than assimilation in Canadian society—an idea that would yield an official multiculturalism policy for Canada in 1971.

Perhaps the need to find, on the national political level, someone who could overarch Canada's political divisions also became apparent in Canada's centenary year. The national celebrations were connected to Expo 67, saw the construction of the National Library and Archives, the National Art Centre, youth travel exchanges, and travelling exhibits. Some of you might remember the Voyageur Canoe Pageant paddling across the country—a country which had grown, by that point, to 20.4 million people.

So as we found ourselves anticipating Canada's sesquicentennial, marking 150 years of Confederation, what were Canadians thinking about—or what



The logo for Canada's centenary celebrations.



Maps from the  
Government of Canada

were politicians encouraging them to think about? Well, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage arranged hearings in the fall of 2011, asking: What are we going to celebrate? Are we going to commemorate important moments in Canadian history? Is the anniversary an opportunity to pay special tribute to those people who have shaped our history? Or is it an opportunity to think about the Canada of tomorrow?

Quite a meaty dialogue went on about these different events. In response to the committee's 2012 report, then-Conservative Minister of Canadian Heritage James Moore said, "The road to Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday offers us an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate our history"—so unabashed history focus—and "the achievements that define who we are as Canadians. Recognizing anniversaries such as the bicentennial of Sir George-Étienne Cartier's birth, the centennial of the start of the First World War, the 75th anniversary of the start of the Second World War and the bicentennial of Sir John A. Macdonald's birth encourages Canadians to gain a true sense of our nation's history and reaffirms our pride in our achievements.... On the road to 2017, let us continue to celebrate all of the things that make Canada the united, prosperous and free country we are today." This was quite a triumphalist sort of vision of a celebration, to be sure, that would highlight defining political and even military moments that had made us Canadians.

Yet what we find ourselves looking at in 2017 is something quite different. The Liberals have focused on a vision of our strength lying in our diversity—a vision certainly resonates with my sense of Canadianness in the twenty-first century. But there is no mention of a political past that we might celebrate during our 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations. It is not about history. It is about our sense of the future. The four official themes certainly speak to me as a Canadian: diversity and inclusion; reconciliation from nation to nation with Indigenous people; youth (which we saw there in 1967 as well); and the environment. Within those official themes, I find it striking that the only one that seems to gesture towards history or the past is that emphasizing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. I do not see any suggestion that we *celebrate* Canada's past, or seize our 150<sup>th</sup> as a moment to reflecting on examples of what we, as Canadians, have contributed to our country and to the world over time. Instead, it evokes a sense of penance, for all of the hardships, for the costs that we have inflicted. Perhaps there is fear that, if we celebrate our achievements, the euphoria will preclude us from reflecting upon and taking responsibility for our history of colonial violence as a country—as if Canadians cannot do both simultaneously.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage, Mélanie Joly, describes the sesquicentennial as "an opportunity that communities throughout the country should seize, dream about what the future holds, contribute to our

country's growth, bring about changes, leave a lasting legacy for coming generations." Join a celebration, sure, but not a celebration about the past. Join a celebration about what we can become, and look to the youth to guide us, not the elders, not the knowledge-keepers who might reflect on where we have been. So there is my food for thought to, perhaps, frame up some of the conversations, discussions, and maybe debate that we will have here tonight.

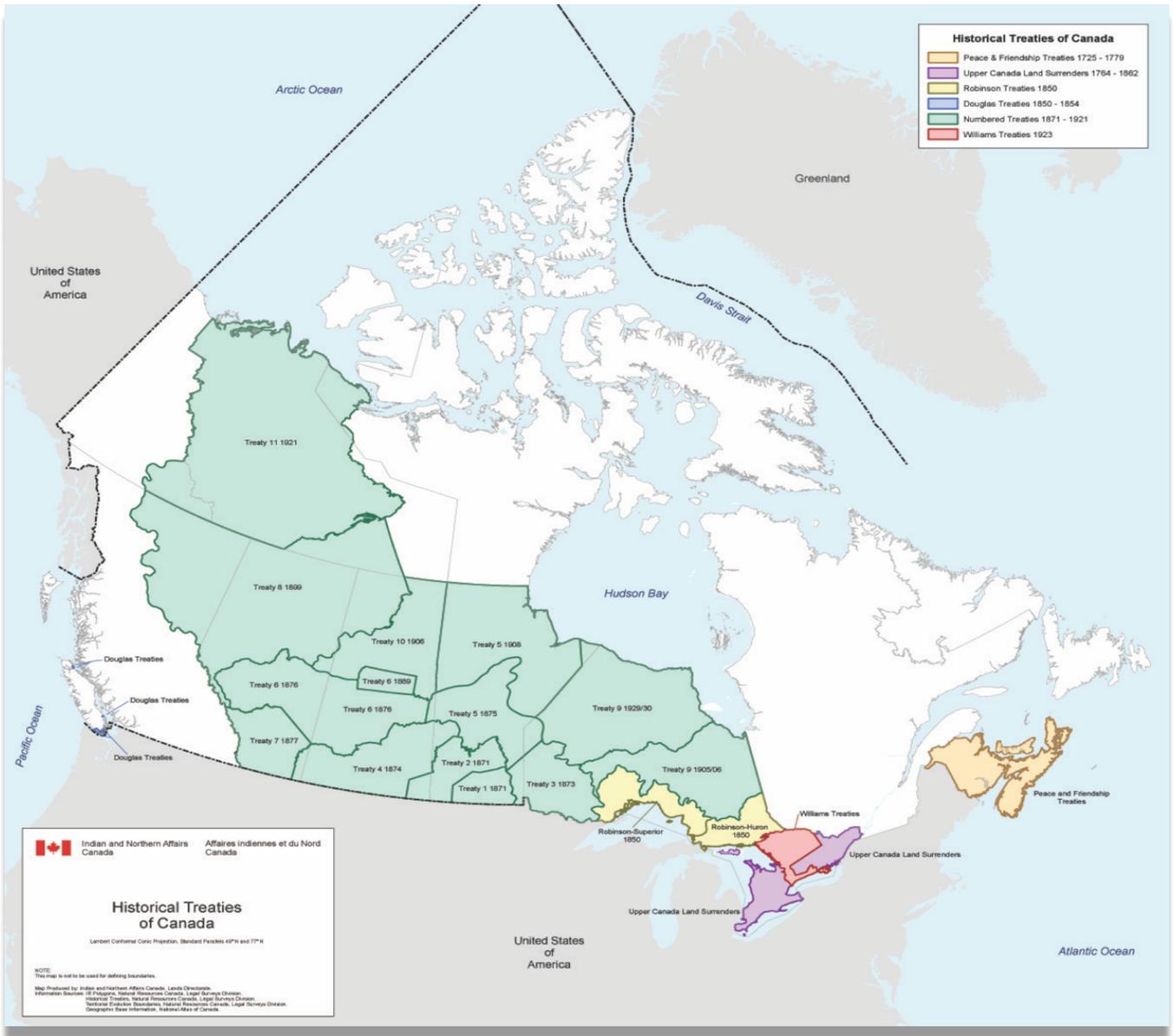
Next, I'd like to invite Daniel Heidt, the co-organizer of this event who did all the work in pulling together this wonderful group of speakers, to introduce us to a Canadian political history project that he's created and led over the last couple of years to make accessible to all Canadians the mountains of transcripts of parliamentary debates that preceded Confederation, not only in the lead up to 1867 but through to 1949. Dr. Heidt has published several articles on various Canadian history topics, and he's currently turning his PhD dissertation on Ontario and federalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into a book. Dan, please introduce us to *The Confederation Debates*.

## Introducing *The Confederation Debates*

**Daniel Heidt:** Thank you all for coming here tonight. This evening is co-sponsored by *The Confederation Debates*—which I am going to discuss in a minute—and the University of Waterloo's Library. It has been wonderful the way they've come together with us, supporting us in many ways by providing historical resources, and of course, helping to organize this evening.

So... *The Confederation Debates*. As you all know, Canada did not just spring from the womb fully formed. It evolved over time. We added provinces over the decades and, whenever this occurred, its local—then colonial—legislature, debated whether or not joining was a good idea. There was often considerable disagreement on this point. Similarly, after 1867—and the establishment of the Dominion of Canada—the federal legislature in Ottawa also debated each provincial addition. There were, for example, a lot of Ontarians—including our future prime minister Alexander Mackenzie—who said that the federal government's commitment to construct a transcontinental railway in ten years was overly expensive, and therefore insisted we renegotiate with British Columbia. That's right... many Ontarians actually opposed B.C.'s entry into Confederation based on the terms of union. In addition, the Crown negotiated eleven Numbered Treaties with Indigenous peoples between 1871 and 1921, from Northern Ontario right through to the Yukon. *The Confederation Debates* is taking all of these





Map from the Government of Canada

Indigenous, colonial, and federal records (over 7,000 pages of text in all), digitizing them, and posting them to a legacy website hosted by the University of Victoria.

By putting all of these records together, we expand our understanding of Confederation. When they hear this term, Canadians usually think of people like John A. Macdonald, George Cartier, Amor de Cosmos, and the like. By taking the concept of Confederation and stretching it to encompass right to the 1940s when Newfoundland joined Canada, we get a whole different cast of characters, and a much more representative understanding of the country's evolution, which included Indigenous peoples like Louis Riel and Chief Poundmaker. Similarly, we're not used to thinking of Laurier as a founder of Confederation, but of course he was prime minister when Alberta and Saskatchewan were created. Joey Smallwood, who became the first premier of Newfoundland in 1949, also shaped the union. We hope to secure funds for a second stage of the project which will bring the project up to 1999 and encompass all of Canada's territories.

As I've said, University of Waterloo resources have been integral to this project. We partnered, for example, with the Library of Parliament to get the vast majority of the digitized materials we needed. But every once in a while, one of their pages did not scan well and it has been wonderful to come and check UW's hardcopies to fill in the gaps. Research assistants have also helped us to digitize materials that were not yet online using UW library equipment.

All of these records are going to be posted to a legacy website where there will be a variety of ways to browse and search. Of course, visitors will be able to keyword search it. If you are into data mining and text analysis, you will be able download the dataset for free. Everything, in fact, will be free. Users will also be able to browse the material through a map by inputting their postal code and learn, for example, who their local MP was in 1867 and what that individual thought about British Columbia joining Confederation. High school students will be able to use this map feature to browse to locally pertinent material without any pre-existing historical knowledge.

But we wanted to make the material available in other ways. So we are also putting out quotes of the day on social media. These have been going since July 1 of this year. We post one every day in both official languages, regardless of whether the material was originally in French or English. They're pretty entertaining. The first image on



House of Commons records at the University of Waterloo

I thank God, sir, I never insulted Upper Canada, like some of those who reviled me. I never compared the people of Upper Canada to so many codfish. I showed on the contrary that I was always willing to meet the just claims of Upper Canada.

Antoine-Aimé Dorion  
Rouge Leader  
16 Feb 1865

#ConfedDebates

1865 - 1949  
Confederation Debates

1865 - 1949  
Les Débats de la Confédération

the screen is from Antoine-Aimé Dorion—an anti-Confederate from Quebec. This was our first post on 1 July of this past year. He said, “I thank God, sir, I never insulted Upper Canada like some of those who [have] reviled me,” from Upper Canada,” because, as you know, Upper and Lower Canada did not get along very well. “I never,” he continued, “compared the people of Upper Canada to so many codfish,” but instead considered their just demands. By the time the project is finished, we will have published 365 of these quotes, encompassing all of our varied records and introducing Canadians to the key pro- and anti-Confederation figures from the 1860s to the 1940s.

*The Confederation Debates* is also packaging the documents into lesson-plans for Grade 7, 8, and high school students. We divide the class into 4 to 6 groups and give them each a historical figure. The students then read a biography, as well as a two to four page handout filled with quotes from our records on key timeless themes like majority rule and minority rights (see top left). Sure, the speakers are usually discussing English-French, Catholic-Protestant concerns, and some of these discussions may or may not resonate as intensely today, but the philosophical issues involved—religious freedom, majority rule and minority rights—are timeless. These debates are a way for students to engage these concepts while learning about Parliament—because they actually engage in a mock Parliamentary debate. At the end of this activity, the students also learn about citizenship and voting because they get to vote in an election-like activity on whether their province should have joined Confederation.

But none of those resources will be possible without the help of average Canadians. You see, we have a problem. When we take a page from these texts, digitize it into an image, and then run it through software to turn it into searchable text, the results are often garbled. So, we have built a proofreading site where anyone can help us convert these records into searchable text. On the right you can see an example of converted text, pre-populated by our software. All we need you to do is go to the site, look at the text, and make sure that the right matches the original image shown on the left.

Primary Source: George Étienne Cartier's Views on Confederation

When the Province of Canada's Legislature debated Confederation in February and March 1861, George Étienne Cartier said the following points:

SCHOOLS / MINORITY RIGHTS

"Some parties—through the press and by other means—pretended that it was impossible to unite our Confederation, on account of the differences of races and religions. Those who took this view of the question were in error. It was just the reverse. It was precisely on account of the variety of races, local interests, &c., that the federation system ought to be successful, and would be found to work well [if done, here?]"



Image held by Library and Archives Canada

SCHOOLS / MINORITY RIGHTS

"Objections had been taken to the scheme now under consideration, because of the words 'new nationality.' Now, when we were united together, citizens were created, we would form a political nationality with which neither the national origin, nor the religion of any individual, would interfere. It was sanctioned by every fact that the diversity of races, and hopes were expressed that the democratic-federalist would prevail. The idea of unity of race was rejected, — was impossible. Distinctions of this kind would always exist. Christianity in fact, appeared to be the only ideal that a great nation could not be formed."

"Because Lower Canada was in great part French and Catholic, and Upper Canada was British and Protestant, and the Lower Provinces were mixed, it was fairly and reasonable to be desired. Look, for instance, at the United Kingdom, federated as it was by three great races. [Here, here I had the diversity of race impeded the glory, the progress, the wealth of England? Had they not rather each contributed their share to the greatness of the Empire?]. In our case Confederation we should have Catholic and Protestant, English, French, Irish and Scotch, and such by its efforts and the success would increase the prosperity and glory of the new Confederation. [Here, here I] viewed the diversity of races in British North America in this way: we were of different races, not for the purpose of warring against each other, but in order to compare and contrast for the general welfare. [Here, here] Wishes that all agree with the

- \* See - reserves
- \* Exempted - used
- \* Exempted - completed
- \* Case - open
- \* Transfer - conversion
- \* Excludes - copy

All you need to do make the left and right EXACTLY the same.

You do not have to speak French, I should add, because most of the colonial debates were only recorded in English.

Ontario high school students can use this proofreading activity to complete their volunteer hours from the comfort of their own homes. We also encourage them to list participating in this national legacy project on their resumes. I'm glad to explain how this works in more detail so, if you are interested, please [email me](#). Older people can do it too—our oldest volunteer is 93! So please have a look at the site. If you have any questions, let me know. I'm now going to turn things back over to Whitney for the discussion with our expert panel.

## Confederation—A Moment or Process?

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Thanks, Dan. Dan's going to be joining us on our panel. I am also very pleased to introduce our other panelists. Patrice Dutil is a professor of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson University and the President of the Champlain Society. He has contributed to a wide variety of media on political affairs, and has published extensively on Canadian political history and public administration. His eighth book, *Prime Ministerial Power: Its Origins under Macdonald, Laurier, and Borden*, is out in May. Since 2015 he's been the editor of *Canadian Government Executive*, a monthly magazine.

To his right, to your left, is Marcel Martel, who's a professor of Canadian History at York University in Toronto where he holds the Avie Bennett Historica Canada Chair in Canadian History, published widely on public policy, language rights, and nationalism, and is currently working on two collections of essays on *Globalizing Confederation: Canada and the World in 1867* (University of Toronto Press, Fall 2017), and an edited volume pointing out the best publications on Confederation over time entitled *Roads to Confederation: The Making of Canada, 1867* (University of Toronto Press, Fall 2017), which I believe he is working with, both ones, on the other panelist just to his right, Jacqueline Krikorian, who is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at York University specializing in the field of law and politics, a member of the bar of Ontario, and brings a tremendous amount of background to our conversation on Confederation and constitutional politics tonight.

Last, and certainly not least, is Robert Wardhaugh, a Professor of History at Western University (formerly the University of Western Ontario) who specializes in Canadian political history with an emphasis on federalism and the Prairie West. Rob has written books on *Mackenzie King and the Prairie*



"... the whole feeling in my mind now is one of joy and thankfulness that there were found men of position and influence in Canada who, at a moment of serious crisis, had nerve and patriotism enough to cast aside political partisanship, to banish personal considerations, and unite for the accomplishment of a measure so fraught with advantage to their common country."

*George Brown, President  
Executive Council, Grit Leader,  
Upper Canada  
8 February 1865*  
Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3213212



“Sir, the most experienced, the most distinguished statesmen of the Mother Country appreciate the importance of the proposed change, and regard the movement as deserving of the highest commendation...”

Arthur Rankin  
Member of the Legislative  
Assembly  
Upper Canada  
10 March 1865  
Photo credit: McCord Museum

West, and *Behind the Scenes: The Life and Work of William Clifford Clark*, as well as co-authoring two of the major textbooks in Canadian history. He is just finishing up a monograph on the Rowell-Sirois Commission, a landmark royal commission looking at the Canadian constitution, relationships between the federal governments and the provinces, which he promises to have out in time for you all to buy and give out as Christmas presents.

Enough from me, and jumping right into the discussion. I have prepared some questions in advance to sort of further this conversation and give it some coherence. First, I want to ask the panel a broad-sweeping question—the kind that would give nightmares to any undergraduate, but one that I know all of you eminent experts can work wonders with it. To what extent should we look at Confederation as a *moment* in time (which is implied when we fixate on a “150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of something”) rather than as a *process*? How do we best approach Confederation, or even begin to conceptualize it at its base level? Patrice, do you want to lead us off on this one?

**Patrice Dutil:** I drove for three hours to be here, I’m going to start. [Laughter]

**Marcel Martel:** You did not enjoy the drive? [Laughter]

**Patrice Dutil:** Did you know it is bumper-to-bumper all the way to Guelph?

**Robert Wardhaugh:** It is Friday.

**Patrice Dutil:** “It is Friday,” he says. How am I supposed to know these things? I’m from Toronto. I said to people, you know what they do in Waterloo on Friday night? They discuss Confederation. [Laughter]

**Marcel Martel:** But this is cool.

**Patrice Dutil:** That’s why I’m here. I want to be with the cool people. [Laughter] I do not want to be in Toronto, where it is raining and miserable. I was thinking of your question... can I come up with another word?

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Absolutely.

**Patrice Dutil:** Because I’ve been wrestling between moment and process. And that is really a cruel undergraduate question. I’m going to throw in another word, to be provocative. I’m going to call Confederation a movement. It is a moment for sure, but it has many moments, as Dan pointed out. Is it a process? Yes, but when I think of process somehow a different kind of image is conjured in my mind as something more bureaucratic and manufactured. This is politics. I see Canada as politics, and I have real trouble thinking of Canada as something more than politics. And maybe I’m going to offend people when I say that, and that’s fine. But I think of Canada

as a movement. A political movement that starts somewhere—and we can have massive historical arguments as to when it really starts. But let's say, for argument's sake, 1858/59, or the first George Brown musings about Confederation: the idea of a small Confederation between central Canadian provinces and maybe western territories. And then Macdonald's idea of going beyond it, and then all the other adherents to the idea. It took a movement to create this country and to keep it going.

Canada is such a hard country to like. Let's be blunt. It is a fantastic country to love; it is a country we love. That's why we're here on a Friday night. That's why I drove for three hours. [Laughing] Thinking to myself, why am I driving to Waterloo tonight? I do not know these people! I'm flattered to be here. I'm flattered to be asked, and I think we are all part of the same movement that gave this country birth. Canada's a hard country to like. It is a great country to love. Why is that? Because it stands for ideals, it stands for a certain idea of what a civilization should be about; it is not so much about bloodlines and sacred traditions. It is a political movement. It could be an intellectual movement: at some moments there have been intellectuals who've fought for various versions of "Canada First," or who fought for certain ideas of Canada; who defended Canada in light of people who've opposed it. It is a movement. It is the idea that there's a process of politics that must carry on. Somehow it is often perceived as a minority movement, because there's so many pressures that pull at the fabric of this country every day, every way. All sorts of legitimate forces. This country stands against gravity. As I think it was Stéphane Dion, who often said, both here and when he travelled around the world in his better days as a Liberal minister, that Canada is a country that works in practice, it doesn't work in theory. And I see it that way. Canada as a movement. It is a moment, but it is been many moments. A process, yes, but more than just a mechanical dynamic. It is a movement. I've spoken enough. Thank you.

**Marcel Martel:** Well, Patrice is quite smart because he decided to deconstruct the question, and he decided to come with a different answer.

**Patrice Dutil:** I had three hours to think about it. [Laughter]

**Marcel Martel:** I know, I know. Well in our case Jacqueline and I left at 2 p.m., and we got here at 4:20 p.m. Yeah. Anyway, I'll go with the word "process" because I concur with Patrice. When did the Confederation process start? My answer is 1858. And then of course the moment that we know is 1864, and then 1866, and then 1867. But it doesn't stop in 1867. The Confederation process continued with Louis Riel in 1869, and then 1871 with British Columbia and then Prince Edward Island, despite the fact that the Premier of P.E.I. said that his colony would never join Confederation, it



"It is impossible to say what danger may beset us after we enter Confederation."

*Louis Riel  
Convention of 40  
Representative, and Métis  
Leader*

*3 February 1870*

*Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3623464*

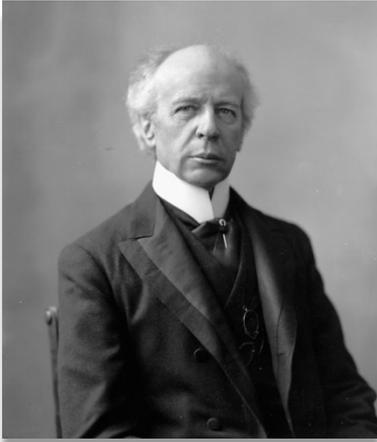
happened in 1873. Then, I would argue that Confederation is a process. I like Patrice's answer. Maybe Canada is a country that is difficult to like. However, my question to Patrice is if he knows many countries where people would say, I like it all the time? I cannot identify a single country where I will find, let's say 10 individuals who would be able to argue, "I like my country the way it is." And maybe that's the reason you argue in terms of a movement. But for the moment I would say that Confederation is a process.

**Jacqueline Krikorian:** I want to thank you for having us here this evening. Professors really like to talk about their research even if it is on a Friday night. [Laughing] We were just thrilled at the opportunity to speak to you tonight.

I think Confederation can be viewed both as a process and as a moment in time. First, we can think of Confederation as a lost opportunity; in 1867, we had a real opportunity to bring in more voices and people into the Confederation process, including Indigenous communities, women, visible minorities, among others. None of these communities were considered or deemed worthy to be in the rooms where these discussions were taking place. And if we reflect upon some of the problems that we have today, maybe if the process had been more inclusive in 1867, then maybe we would be in a different position today. Maybe not, but maybe.

I also think of Confederation as a moment in time. March 29 was the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *British North America Act of 1867* receiving royal assent, and it resulted in a significant change for British North America. We can consider all of the different factors, all of the different conferences or meetings that took place, all the different ideas underpinning Confederation. But this one document, this one piece of legislation, has considerably shaped the direction of our country. And so, I think of Confederation also as an important moment in time because it adopted our constitution that has been foundational not only to our legal structure but our politics as well.

**Robert Wardhaugh:** I'm not going to go with any of the answers that were given. Instead, I'll be the fly in the ointment and I'll say Confederation was a bit of a fiasco. That's what I'll say. I'll say it happened for the reasons that you do not think of usually, arguments that aren't usually used for a nation to take place, or to form: external pressures from Britain; external pressures from the United States after too much unofficial support for the South during the American Civil War; to get out of political deadlock, because Upper Canada and Lower Canada, or Canada East, Canada West, Quebec and Ontario, couldn't get along and so they needed something to get out of that political log-jam. When you're teaching students about Confederation, they usually are quite interested in it, not because it is some kind of a great



"Mankind is ever the same. New problems and new complications will always arise, but new problems and complications, when they do arise, always revolve within the same well beaten circle of man's passions, man's prejudices and man's selfishness. History therefore should be a safe guide, and it is generally by appealing to the past, by investigating the problems which our fathers had to deal, we may find the solutions of the complications that face us."

*Wilfrid Laurier, Prime Minister,  
21 February 1905*

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3218138

moment of nationalism or nation building, something to celebrate, but instead that it happened for the particular reasons that it happened.

I definitely can't see Confederation as a moment, for my region in particular—which is Western Canada—because of course the West didn't become part of Confederation in 1867. [Laughter] Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870 after the first Riel Resistance, thereby thwarting the so-called Fathers of Confederation's plan for building their nation. Then of course the signing of the treaties came after 1867—which was a terrible episode for the Plains People who were starving and sick while they signed. Finally, the Rebellion of 1885 ended with Riel—the so-called Father of Confederation for Manitoba—being hung for treason. So different perspectives on everything.

**Daniel Heidt:** Well I had a very short drive in today because I live in Kitchener. [Laughter] But I used to drive to London often because Rob was my supervisor, and this event brings back fond memories of past classroom and pub debates. I have a slightly more optimistic view of Confederation. I like the idea of thinking of it as a movement, but I think if we want to use this term, we need to also recognize that it was often a failed movement. Newfoundland rejected Confederation, after all, in 1869. Prince Edward Island reject also rejected it for some time. What form Confederation would take on the Prairies also took quite a while to figure out.

I'm consequently more persuaded to think about Confederation as a process that underwent many geographic iterations over time. As Rob said, each time Canada created or accepted a new province, there was a re-discussion of what Confederation was for. Certain constitutional issues about provincial rights almost invariably came up. Financial deals between the federal government and the provinces—something we do not think that much about in Ontario but which has considerable political importance in other parts of the country—was repeatedly rehashed. So, I contend that Confederation-as-process offers analytic merit and utility.

## Personalities or Structures?

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Great, and thanks everybody for keeping to time. One of the tensions that Jacqueline's bringing up is the resiliency of the BNA Act. When patriation came in 1982, it basically took the original provisions of the BNA Act and carried them forward. So, in essence, if you're talking about Confederation being renegotiated over time, what accounts for the resiliency, whereby Section 91 and 92 remain today with the same division



"Our... House of Commons is to be an aggregate of provincial delegations. Each man is to come to it ticketed as an Upper or Lower Canadian, a New Brunswicker, a Nova Scotian, Newfoundlander, a Prince Edward Islander, or what not. These distinctions, which, if we are to be a united people, we had better try to sink, we are to keep up and exaggerate."

*Christopher Dunkin  
Member of the Legislative  
Assembly,  
Lower Canada  
27 February 1865  
Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3497383*

of powers (leaving judicial interpretation to the side)? This may be something that we can chat about.

Several of you sort of touched on, or brought up, the idea of region. Was Confederation primarily driven by personalities, *individual characters*, or is it more attributable to underlying *structures*—things such as regional economies, or regional cultures, or entrenched constitutional issues? This is the old Donald Creighton “character versus circumstance” sort of argument. How much weight do we give to humans and ideas in this versus broader structures or forces? Rob, you’ve already touched on that a bit for us, so maybe you can lead off.



“But the crisis was great, the danger was imminent, and the gentlemen who now form the present Administration found it to be their duty to lay aside all personal feelings, to sacrifice in some degree their position, and even to run the risk of having their motives impugned, for the sake of arriving at some conclusion that would be satisfactory to the country in general.”

*John Alexander Macdonald,  
Attorney General West,  
Conservative Leader,  
Lower Canada  
6 February 1865*

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3218713

**Robert Wardhaugh:** Okay. I would say, inevitably, both. I do not think you can focus on one without the other. Of course, you can focus too much on one rather than the other but, well, we have an interesting situation in Canadian history because of the way we view personality and the way we view the individual. We certainly do not have the same spade of heroes as other countries do. John A. Macdonald certainly doesn’t carry the same laurels or wear the same laurels as a George Washington in the United States. So I think it is inevitably an interplay of both of them, although again, as I pointed out, I think it is important that, when we look at individuals, we have to remember that different regions, or different personalities, are viewed differently in different regions. Louis Riel certainly has a different reputation in Western Canada—where the Family Day there is called Louis Riel Day—than he does here. And I know for my students at Western University in London, they know much more about Isaac Brock than they do about Louis Riel. So, that gets to the question about region, which is I think at the centre of understanding Confederation. I do not think you can understand Confederation without understanding region. I think it was the central issue, and I think it is the central issue that the Canadian federal structure continues to grapple and wrestle with.

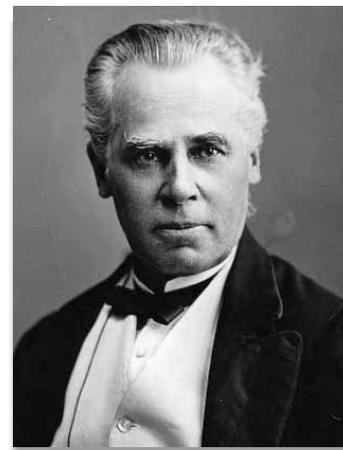
**Jacqueline Krikorian:** I think John A. Macdonald played a significant role, a formative role, in Confederation. This reflects what I mentioned a bit earlier about Confederation being an important a moment in time because it entrenched our constitutional foundation or structure. John A. Macdonald was a lawyer and in drafting our constitution he paid very close attention to how other colonies in the British Empire developed their constitutional frameworks. In many respects, he literally cut and pasted from some of them to prepare the British North America Act.

Macdonald was involved in drafting the constitution from start to finish. When the Fathers of Confederation met in Quebec City in 1864, Macdonald as the Attorney General for Canada West played a significant role in preparing the draft provisions that formed the basis of the 72 Resolutions

that eventually led to the *British North America Act, 1867*. In December 1866, after the London conference, he prepared the first draft of the country's new constitution. Macdonald played a formative role in the development of the country's constitution.

**Marcel Martel:** Role of individuals. Well, of course, if I were an historian who likes to write biographies, I would try to convince you that we have to focus on the role of individuals. If we look at the way we have been studying Confederation...if you remember, maybe, 40 years ago, we had, Donald Creighton who focused on Macdonald, and he made Macdonald the most important figure that brought together Canada. But we have included more and more individuals over the last 40 years and this gives us a better sense of the collectivities that produced Confederation. We mentioned Louis Riel, and it is interesting that even today, some people refuse to acknowledge him as a Father of Confederation.

But I'll mention another name that some of you may know: the Archbishop of Halifax, Thomas Joseph Connolly. Well, one thing that we know about him is that he fought hard on behalf of Maritime Catholics to have equivalent rights as Catholics in the future provinces of Quebec and of Ontario. And I would add to this...of course some would say, Connolly was part of an institution—yeah, the Catholic Church did play a role. However, the Catholic Church, depending on who spoke on behalf of the Catholic Church, had opposite views on what should be done. For instance, the bishops in Quebec did not want to sacrifice the gains that they made on education and this decision angered the Archbishop of Halifax. He was so angry that he took...you know it is funny because we started out our conversation complaining about the fact that it took Patrice three hours to drive here, it took us two hours and forty minutes, and then we spent an hour looking for the building... well, in 1864 you had to take a boat to go from the Maritimes to Quebec City so you had time to reflect on what you would do. And once most of the delegates agreed on the terms of union, they had to take another boat to London, England. This was exactly what Connolly did. He tried to convince Hector-Louis Langevin, George-Étienne Cartier, and others, that they should fight on behalf of all Catholics. But Cartier and Langevin had other interests to take into consideration—particularly the views of the Catholic Church in Quebec. But Connolly did not give up. He took a ship that brought him to London. He tried his best to meet not only with Canadian delegates, but also with British politicians, to make the case on behalf of all Maritime Catholics. He was not successful. One of the reasons he was unsuccessful was because some of the Fathers of Confederation visited the Vatican during the Christmas break and discovered that the Vatican was fine with the deal as long as Catholic rights were protected in Quebec.



“What was the best and most practicable mode of bringing the provinces together, so that particular rights and interests should be properly guarded and protected? No other scheme presented itself but the Federation system, and that was the project which now recommended itself to the Parliament of Canada.”

*George-Étienne Cartier, Attorney General  
Lower Canada  
Bleu Leader  
7 February 1865  
Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 2242461*



“The scheme of Confederation has no other object than to deprive us of the most precious of those rights, by substituting for them a political organization which is eminently hostile to us. The hostility of the scheme of Confederation being admitted, I maintain that its adoption will entail the most disastrous consequences.”

*Joseph-Xavier Perrault, Rouge  
Member of Legislative  
Assembly  
Lower Canada  
3 March 1865*

Photo credit: Bibliothèque et  
Archives nationales du Québec

And here we are, we have individuals, not only one, but several individuals, and I’m sure if we meet again in 50 years from now, we will add a couple of more individuals to this list, because this is the beauty of studying history. We think we know, but we still do not know a lot. But there is Patrice. I know you coedited a wonderful publication on John A. Macdonald, and I’m curious to hear your thoughts on the role of individuals in shaping events.

**Patrice Dutil:** Thank you. You know, in 1867 it also took three hours to go from Waterloo to Toronto. [Laughter] You just needed a faster horse than my car. Character and circumstance—it is the ultimate question, not just for undergraduates. I have to say I probably think about this every day. I teach public administration, I teach political science. And in political science people do not think individuals matter very much. But because of my training and my research in administration, I think of character a lot. It is one thing that historians do that other disciplines do not do—we ultimately place the individual in human history. Any good history will talk about actors and I find it very difficult to see something like Confederation as something that would’ve happened anyway.

When I’m teaching policy (and I worked in policy for 20 years before teaching), I try to bring out the impact of individuals, of policy entrepreneurs. Their decisions impact our lives—sometimes in ways we do not really perceive. Now, a lot of leadership is ordinary and transactional and really doesn’t have much of a transformative impact but, in the years before 1867, a movement came about. Not one individual, not just John A. Macdonald. He was central, but there were other people around him, as Marcel mentioned, not least George-Étienne Cartier. This founder was, incidentally, completely forgotten on his bicentenary in 2015, with one exception: the Prime Minister of Canada hosted a luncheon in his honour during the fall of 2014 in Quebec City. It was not held in Montreal—where George-Étienne Cartier was from—because people in Montreal just did not care. And, people in Quebec did not care much either—that’s why the Prime Minister held the luncheon in the Citadel. It is appalling, but that’s Canada—a tough country to like, but a great country to love.

Confederation was a movement. It was a whole bunch of people, in 1864, or 58/59, 64/66, who said, “you know, there’s something that needs to be...something needs to be broken through. We need a new structure, we need a new idea. Yeah, there are pressures. Britain doesn’t want us on its arms anymore, it does not want us around. The United States is a threat, absolutely. Russia is...has yielded territory to the United States, it will be formalized in 1867.” There were huge pressures, but those pressures were interpreted by individuals. They were interpreted by people who spoke to each other, created friendships, created alliances, and who came up with a

new idea. And that's what the moment of 1867 was, ultimately. It was the crystallization of a number of ideas that, after that, were carried through by people.

It is not surprising that your pictures on the giant screens behind us are not bags of money. Bags of money were important, but people have an impact. So as a student of politics and administration, I'm more and more convinced that people matter.

**Daniel Heidt:** It is hard to add much to what has already been said, but I'll try. The question is, of course, ultimately a bit of a false dichotomy. People are incredibly important; they bring their own personality and their own biases to these things. But I am here to bring my perspective on Ontario history into the discussion, and when I was thinking about it, it is very easy to say, "George Brown and maybe John A. were key Ontarian personalities"—though perhaps we are not used to thinking of the latter this way because he tended to take a national view of political developments.

But when I think about the 1860s, I think about structure. George Brown could have been the most popular man in the world in 1865 but if representation by population had not been part of the deal, it is debatable whether Confederation could have been passed in Upper Canada. It was a deal-breaker. Now, George Brown's the one who popularized 'rep by pop,' and he did an amazing job at it. Indeed, the idea was eventually popular among most Upper Canadian Conservatives as well. So it was this structural component of the BNA Act, which reflected major demographic realities, that was ultimately critical to bringing Ontario onboard. But I think of the Prairies as well. Think about the regional grievances that arose. They did not generally arise from personality clashes. Questions like resource rights or shipping costs were—and are—structural. Yes, these issues were ultimately pioneered by personalities, as Patrice says, but structures, in my mind, were primary.

## Evaluating Sir John A.'s Legacy

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Several of you have referred to John A., and this is pulling you away from structure. The great Conservative nationalist historian Donald Creighton, to whom we have referred a few times, depicted John A. Macdonald as *the* Father of Confederation. We could even look at Richard Gwyn, former Chancellor at St. Jerome's and a Governor General Award-winning biographer of John A., who also places Macdonald as the central figure. Now in 2017, it seems, John A.'s reputation is under siege. He now has to share our ten dollar bill with several other prominent Canadians,



"Those who have been engaged in negotiating for the extension of the trade of British North America, know that peculiar difficulties exist when negotiating out of Union, compared with the facilities which would exist in negotiating when united."

*Leonard Tilley, Premier,  
Conservative Leader  
New Brunswick*

*28 June 1866*

*Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3506291*

and debates in the media swirl about whether he was really right and honourable in his policies, or whether we should simply dismiss him—like we’re almost being encouraged to do much of our history—as a simple racist, even a genocidal, elite who embodies all that is wrong with colonial violence and white male privilege in Canada’s history. So my question is, how do we assess John A. in 2017? Is he being given a raw deal by the media? Or is it time that we dispense with any vestige that we may have of Sir John A. as this Canadian nation-building hero? Dan, I’ll get you to lead this one off.

**Daniel Heidt:** John A. is complicated. He was a powerful guy who had his hands in everything. Without ignoring his many, many sins—not the least of which was, of course, the treatment of Indigenous peoples—I think we would be remiss if we made his mistakes the sum total of our understanding of his contributions to Canadian history. He was one of the leading figures at Charlottetown and Quebec, as Jacqueline has already mentioned, and he also chaired the 1866-67 meetings in London, England.

On the other hand, I think it is amazing how often, frankly, Confederation got away from John A. He originally opposed, for example, a federal solution to the Province of Canada’s political deadlock in 1865 and, as a member of the non-partisan constitutional committee struck by George Brown, was one of the few people who refused to sign that body’s summary report. When Macdonald realized that the country was going to proceed with a federal solution, he jumped on board and quickly became one of its pioneers. After Confederation—and Jacqueline I’d love to get your take on this—Macdonald preferred a heavily centralized federation. Other politicians like Oliver Mowat and Honoré Mercier, however, appealed to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the UK, which repeatedly ruled in favour of greater provincial autonomy. So, I think it is important that we appreciate Macdonald’s immense influence, while recognizing that he did not always get it his way. In fact he often had to adjust, and was really good at covering for it.

**Robert Wardhaugh:** My interpretation of John A. Macdonald hasn’t really changed, and so when we think about this question, or the media’s attention to it, we have to try to examine what has actually changed. It isn’t that new history has been uncovered, or that we have learned anything new. It is of course based around the findings and the attention focused on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and on the issue of the atrocities committed in residential schools—mainly occurring or beginning in the 1880s onwards—which were part of John A. Macdonald’s policy to assimilate the First Nations. That was the goal, that was the plan, and that’s why the Indian Act was introduced in 1876. That was the plan with the Numbered Treaties, and residential schooling was a way to assimilate the First Nations. Social

“Far from being the architect of peaceful progress, Macdonald pioneered some of the most ruthless practices of European colonialism and possibly the largest landgrab in the history of British colonialism... Macdonald’s Aryan vision shaped his efforts to create a white supremacist state system, one predicated on the monopoly of racialized Europeans over state power, policies that came at the costs of the lives of the [Indigenous] people of the plains and that brought generations of suffering to racialized Asians. These actions might be something worth reflecting upon in a multicultural Canada as we enter a period of celebrating the life of this man.”

*Timothy Stanley, “John A. Macdonald’s Aryan Canada: Aboriginal Genocide and Chinese Exclusion,”*  
activehistory.ca,  
7 January 2015

scientists at the time believed that the First Nations were a dying people, and so, if they had to estimate, they assumed that by the 1930s there would be no more First Nations. They would either be assimilated, or they would have died out. Again, none of this is new information. But it has come to the fore with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and one of the major offshoots of that is that we must focus on educating Canadians about the realities of residential schooling. And that's fine. John A. Macdonald can be blamed for that. He has to carry the blame for that. At the end of the day he was the prime minister, and so he receives the credit that we want to give to him as "the" Father of Confederation. That may not have been the full story, but because he was prime minister he gets that title, he gets the credit that people like Donald Creighton gave to him. But as a result, he also ultimately has to carry and shoulder the blame for the policies that were put into place. So, I do not have any interest in honouring or dishonouring John A. Macdonald.

I have more of an interest in presenting the history in as clear and as truthful, if that's possible, a way, so that students can understand what happened, can understand how Canada was formed, can understand what the objectives were in forming the country, and it was to create a white Anglo-Saxon country. That is the objective. John A. Macdonald can be excused, I suppose, for being part of the generation, because he certainly didn't stand against these policies. But he wasn't unique in that. We could have had him perhaps be more of an enlightened individual, and perhaps rise above those societal positions. But then again, had he risen above them and been a bit of an enlightened radical, which did exist at the time, he would not have been Prime Minister, and so we would not be talking about him.

**Jacqueline Krikorian:** Prior to the 1860s, there had been discussions about uniting the British North American colonies. But during the 1860s several factors converged that allowed for the union to go ahead. First, there were advances in communications and transportation. In June 1866, the telegraph linked London to British North America. The capacity of one colony to reliably communicate with another in real time had not existed in North America prior to June of 1866.

Climate science is also changing. Doug Owram documents this in his research. There was a new understanding that the West was habitable and that its lands could be used for farming. Surveyors and engineers made technological advances too. Steam allowed for the building of railroads, which allowed people to move from coast to coast at unprecedented speeds. New ideas and their implementation were important as well. The emergence



"Sure, John A. Macdonald was a racist, colonizer and misogynist – but so were most Canadians back then"

Tristin Hopper, *National Post*,  
10 January 2015

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3192702

of responsible government, for example, laid the ground work for Confederation.

**Marcel Martel:** Sorry. It is difficult to add something to what was said because I agree with Rob regarding Macdonald. It is true that we have known for several decades that there is a dark side to John A. Macdonald. Think of 1869: when Canada bought the Northwest Territories, Canada sent a lieutenant governor to take possession, and then Louis Riel and the Métis made their voice heard. Macdonald wanted to suppress them but was unsuccessful because there was no railroad between Ontario and what became Manitoba. Then he was forced to negotiate.

In 1885, he was able to repress the Métis and First Nations because the railway was nearly complete to Battleford. What we forget—and I'm not trying to defend John A. Macdonald—is that we are dealing with individuals who reflected their time. At the time, most Canadians believed that the Aboriginals were a problem that would resolve itself. They would disappear. The role of the federal government, supported by Protestant churches and the Catholic church, was to accelerate this process of cultural extermination. Now we use words like “extermination.” Perhaps we avoided such words in the past because we were afraid of using them, or because we believed that we did not have enough evidence, but I agree with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Now we can call it cultural genocide. If Richard Gwyn was with us, he would make the case that John A. Macdonald was a great man. Macdonald, for example, implemented the National Policy. But at the same time, he was the man who sent the militia to crack down on the Métis and Aboriginals in 1885. It is also Macdonald who introduced the Indian Act, and since I'm someone who does not believe that individuals alone can shape history, I tend to highlight the fact that John A. Macdonald was not ahead of his time.

The last thing I will add to this is to say that Macdonald also acted in the context of imperialism. European states wanted to expand their empires, and Canada did the same in the West despite the fact that the Métis and Aboriginals did not subscribe to this project. And how did Canada react? It decided to crush the Indigenous opposition by sending a military force. I know that we will talk about treaties later on, but Canada signed treaties with Indigenous peoples, and we did not honour these agreements.

**Patrice Dutil:** I've been working on Macdonald now for well over a decade, late in my career. I published an edited book, with Roger Hall, on John A. Macdonald. It is called *John A. Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies*. This was a project that brought together scholars from across the country, people who have various expertise, and the challenge to these

“... an effort at historical accuracy and contextual understanding seems a welcome counterpoint to the rampant myopic urge to erase the entirety of Canada’s history. Demands that historical figures be judged by the standards of the present – as evidenced by the repeated animosity shown the statue plan – threaten to denude our country of its entire past.... Simply declaring all historical figures unfit for 21<sup>st</sup> century consumption ignores the crucial role they all played in that chain of events that yielded modern Canada. Rather than holding them to the impossible (and ever-changing) standards of today, the only fair way to consider the historical contribution of our past leaders is to weigh their most significant accomplishments in the context of their own times.”

*Peter Shawn Taylor, “Stop hating Sir John A. (and other history lessons), Maclean’s 3 March 2017*

people was to take another look at Macdonald, and see what we can make of the man. I do not subscribe to the idea that Confederation was a product of John A. Macdonald alone. Far from it. It was a movement. But there's an opportunity here to reflect seriously about the man, to look at his record, to move away from the Donald Creighton biography that was written in the early 1950s and the second volume that came out a few years later. So this is really an old treatment. The various contributors to our book shed new light on Macdonald. Whether it was his attitude towards Aboriginals, his attitude towards the West, or his attitude as an administrator—I focused on Macdonald as an administrator—there is no doubt that he had a huge imprint on Confederation, and on his time. Yes, of course, he reflected the biases of his era. There's no disputing what my predecessors have said, that his view of Indigenous Canadians was that this was a people on their way to disappearing and that he was not going to stand in their way. His view of Indigenous Canadians was an Ontario view, where the Indigenous people of Ontario were, slowly but surely, assimilating, and he said, in his mind, "that's the way it was going to be." Not just him: with a few exceptions, that's the way they all thought. So, I mean, there is tremendous opportunity here to reflect on John A.

It could also have been a lot worse. Macdonald could have used, for political purposes, huge divisions between Catholics and Protestants. He could have divided Irish from the British-born Canadians. He could have really used French Canada as a foil. He didn't do any of that. His mind was to build. Yes, his mind was to build. Colony? Call it what you want. Yeah. His mind was building a North America that was not going to be American. And, so what? Yes, acquire the West, build a relationship with British Columbia, let the territory go as far as you can go. Why not? There might be some resources out there that might benefit Canadians. I tell you, it is easy to criticize 150 years later, but try to find a more visionary Canadian...for good and bad, a more visionary Canadian over the last 150 years, and you're going to be hard-pressed to find somebody who can beat John A. Macdonald.

## Indigenous History as "Confederation" History?

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** If Thomas D'Arcy McGee hadn't met the fate that he did, perhaps he would be been our counterpoint, but that is "what if" history. One of things that we have decided upon for *The Confederation Debates* project is to treat the Indigenous treaties, the Numbered Treaties, particularly starting in the 1870s, as part of Confederation. This does not present new evidence, but represents a re-envisioning of Canada—and



"We are the children of the plains, it is our home, and the buffalo has been our food always... Bad men and whiskey were killing us so fast that very few, indeed, of us would have been left to-day. The Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter. I wish them all good, and trust that all our hearts will increase in goodness from this time forward. I am satisfied. I will sign the treaty."

*Isapo-Muxika (Crowfoot)*  
*Blackfoot First Nations Chief,*  
*19 October 1877*  
Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3629853

certainly a different conversation than the “two founding peoples” narrative that dominated 50 years ago.

Today, Indigenous peoples are widely recognized as an integral part of Canadian history, and increasingly integral of what it means to be Canadian. We have a new citizenship oath, announced in February, which requires new Canadians to pledge to honour Indigenous treaties. Is *The Confederation Debates*’ decision to make these Indigenous treaties a part of Confederation a helpful idea that will facilitate reconciliation? Or, alternatively, is trying to redefine Confederation by including Crown-Indigenous agreements a radical distortion of history? At the core, can we *celebrate* Confederation, or do we need to criticize or even sacrifice the idea of celebrating Confederation in the interests of the broader goal of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and the re-establishment of nation-to-nation relationships? Does this question about reimagining the Confederation debates to include Indigenous Treaty negotiations resonate with any of you? Patrice?

**Patrice Dutil:** I’ll try this one. I’m not against it. I think this is an insightful project and now that we are discovering a little bit more about what Indigenous peoples were intending with these treaties I think it is a great idea. Historians are discovering new things. What was the Indigenous state of mind, how did they interpret things? There’s more evidence coming out about these things. I think what is important is to bring them out and to include those texts as foundational to the evolution of our country. In fact we could start including all sorts of Acts and government laws from the last 150 years that were also influential in creating this notion of a nation. So I think It is a good idea to include the Treaties. It will compel us to think about them. It will compel us, perhaps, to do even more research, to encourage students to do more research into the nature of these treaties, and also, to set them in context.

Canada, yeah, signed treaties with Aboriginals during the 1870s. It didn’t have to. It could have done nothing. There were 25,000 people, maybe 40,000 people, roaming the West at that point. They could have said “we do not care.” The government could have done nothing. And what would have happened in a case like that? We do not know. But the government could have done nothing, which was what was happening in the territories South of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. What was happening in the South at the same time, of course, was extermination. So, yeah, put it in. Put it in, but put it in context. I think it compels us to put it in context and to examine, again, examine the Canadian experience in light of what was happening everywhere else.

**Daniel Heidt:** Can I jump in?



“The governor mentions how much land is to be given to us. He says 640 acres, one mile square for each family, he will give us.” And in a loud voice he shouted, “This is our land! It isn’t a piece of pemmican to be cut off and given in little pieces back to us. It is ours and we will take what we want.”

*Poundmaker*

*Cree First Nations Leader (later Chief)*

*19 August 1876*

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3613736

**Marcel Martel:** Okay.

**Daniel Heidt:** I thought I'd mix it up a bit. [Laughs.] I am obviously going to come down in favour of including Treaty negotiations in our understanding of Confederation since I am running the project that is putting all of these records together. I think that if we define Confederation as a process where Canadian leaders are negotiating and debating the country's founding constitutional records, then including the Numbered Treaties and the records of their negotiation is a no-brainer. These oral and written agreements established geographic borders, recognized governing positions and created responsibilities that the courts have since recognized.

The question becomes, as I see it, how far do we go? Where does “Confederation” stop? This is something that we struggled with when framing *The Confederation Debates*. If we were to include the Robertson-Huron Treaties from the 1850s, for example, nobody in the room would probably squirm very much. But, if we look out East, the Peace and Friendship Treaties from the 1700s come to the fore, and we would really be distorting a word like “Confederation” by contending that it began in the 1700s—unless, of course, we were talking about the Six Nations—but that was a different confederacy [laughing]. So I think, if we want to talk about bringing Indigenous-Crown agreements into “Confederation” history—as opposed to Canadian history where all of the agreements I have mentioned are integral—I think we need to limit ourselves to agreements negotiated within the post-1867 era.

**Robert Wardhaugh:** I think this one's a no-brainer. There's no question that we have to include the treaties as Confederation documents. There's just no question. If we are to have any chance of educating the populace, and working towards any form of reconciliation, we have to. We have to allow the First Nations to have a place in our founding stories. I think it was until the 1980s that historians still spoke in terms of the compact theory when debating Confederation. The argument was over whether Canada was a treaty of 10 different provinces or a compact between two founding people, the French and the English. That was the central debate that was going on about what Canada was politically, and of course lost in that, for racial reasons, were the First Nations. And so to not include them as a founding people was ridiculous, but we did that, as I say, into the 1980s, and some people continue to do it. So, I do not think there's any choice there.

I'm not sure I would agree with Patrice's point that we could have done whatever we wanted to, or that the government could have done whatever it wanted to with the First Nations after 1867, after the acquisition of Rupert's Land in 1869 and 1870. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 is, of course,



“It is well known that if we have plenty in our gardens and crops we would not insist on getting more provisions, but it is only in the case of extremity and from the ignorance of Indians in commencing to work the land that we speak. We are in the dark. This is no trivial matter with us.”

*Mistawais*

*First Nations Chief*

*22 August 1876*

*Photo credit: Cree Nations  
Heritage Centre*



“You are the subjects of the Queen, you are her children, and you are only a little band to all her other children. She has children all over the world, and she does right with them all. She cares as much for you as she cares for her white children, and the proof of it is that wherever her name is spoken her people whether they be red or white, love her name and are ready to die for it, because she is always just and true. What she promises never changes.”

*Alexander Morris, Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories,*

*12 September 1874*

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3476623

a very important document. I always try to pound that into my students if there are certain dates that you have to know, certain documents that you have to know, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 was very important. It not only dealt with the conquest of Quebec after the Plains of Abraham, but it is a pivotal document that keeps getting brought up in court cases involving First Nations because it basically laid out a land acquisitions framework. If the Crown, and then the Canadian government wished to acquire First Nations land, it had to extinguish Aboriginal title. This provision made treaties necessary, and they were accepted and I do not think there was any doubt that they were going to be followed. 123 treaties were signed by the time Confederation took place in 1867, and then, of course, we move into the Numbered Treaties that followed. And they are pivotal documents.

From a Western Canadian perspective, the focus on Confederation in 1867 is one thing, but the very first Prairie historians, people like Chester Martin, argued that there were, in fact, two Confederations. The first Confederation took place in 1867, and it included the small form of Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. The second Confederation, encompassing the rest of Canada’s present-day boundaries, developed over a very short period of time. I always tell students that if you think about how fast time passes, it was only within 15 to 20 years that Canada expanded drastically. This was not a long period of time, yet this was when Canada expanded. It was this expansion, this second Confederation that was much more germane and that was the one which, of course, included the Treaties.

**Jacqueline Krikorian:** The *British North America Act, 1867* was just legislation. It was just one piece of a larger British legal context. There were other important aspects of British laws in Confederation. Common law remained in effect. Earlier decisions by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council played a role. There were treaties between the British government and Indigenous communities. They are legal instruments with legal obligations. There were also treaties between Great Britain and the United States. American/British treaties affected Canada and pertained to issues like trade or security, i.e. what kinds of vessels could be on the Great Lakes. There was colonial legislation, from the Canada East and Canada West, for the province of Canada, as well as from the other colonies that existed both prior to and after Confederation. All of these legal documents are significant to the establishment of Canada.

**Marcel Martel:** Since the question refers to reconciliation—first of all, should we include treaties? The answer is yes. Is it part of the reconciliation process? I would argue yes. Why? Because I think we are eager to know what has happened over the last 150 years when we look at the relationships between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. When non-Aboriginals came to

what is now known as North America, they were able to work and develop new alliances with non-Aboriginals. And up until the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, those alliances were strong. After, the War of 1812 non-Aboriginals no longer needed Aboriginals for the defence of what would later become Canada. So, Canadians are eager to know, what has happened over the last 200 years, and I think that the treaties help us to identify what happened.

Patrice, you made an interesting statement, that maybe we did not need treaties. I think treaties were essential, because Canadian politicians wanted to avoid the cost and bloodshed that was happening south of the border at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This decision was not made because we were better; it was because we did not have the financial means or the human resources to exterminate the country's Indigenous inhabitants. So we decided to instead go ahead with treaties. This move facilitated the colonization of the West and Northern Ontario. But we forget too—and Jim Miller mentioned this almost two months ago during his lecture at St. Jerome's University on Aboriginal relations—Indigenous peoples wanted to sign treaties because they reaffirmed their special relationship with the Crown. The federal government—which was basically John A. Macdonald and those administered his government's policies within the federal bureaucracy who forgot to honour their obligations during the ensuing 150 years.

## Confederation and Regionalism

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Thanks. Early on in our discussion, Rob framed the next question that I have for us when he came out definitively emphasizing the centrality of region. I will begin with a quote from historian David Bercuson in his introduction to the book *Canada and the Burden of Unity*, saying that if federal policies had been used to help hinterlands overcome “geographic handicaps,” Confederation would have been better. Instead, the federal government has always responded to the desires and ambitions of central Canada, not the Atlantic provinces, not the West. Central Canada has always been where the preponderance of votes are. It is where elections are won and lost. This was true at Confederation, and this was true when Bercuson offered his assessment in 1977. So, Rob, you've already weighed in on this, and I hope you expand on the extent to which region is the defining factor in both the form that Confederation originally took, and the trajectory that it has taken since 1867?

**Robert Wardhaugh:** Yeah, as I've indicated, I think region is central, and I guess that's probably because I'm from Western Canada and I'm a Prairie historian. Only in Ontario would we actually be having a discussion of

“National growth might have been more even, if federal policies had been designed to help hinterlands overcome geographic handicaps, but the federal government has always been more representative of the desires and ambitions of Central Canada than the Maritimes and the West together. Central Canada is where the votes are and where elections are won and lost; this was true at Confederation and it remains true today.”

*David Bercuson, Canada and the Burden of Unity (1977).*



“[Moved] Whereas the larger powers and income incidental to...provincial status are urgently...required to aid the development of the Territories and to meet the...necessities of a large and...increasing population. Be it resolved, that this House regrets that the Federal Government has decided not to introduce legislation...granting provincial institutions to the Territories.”

*Frederick WAG Haultain  
Premier, Northwest  
Territories*

*8 April 1902*

Photo credit: U Saskatchewan  
University Archives

whether region is important. [Laughter] At almost every step in this Confederation process, it was about region. I think Confederation itself, dealing with the colonies of British North America at the time, it was about region. And of course, what has been left out in a lot of this discussion—I guess because none of us are Maritimes specialists—is, of course, the Maritimes. Regionalism certainly played the pivotal role there, and it was much of the reason why Prince Edward Island refused to join initially, and why Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had to be forced into Confederation, and certainly why Newfoundland held out until 1949. So, yeah, Canadian history has been dominated by certain schools over time, whether It is Harold Innis’ staples thesis, or Donald Creighton’s Laurentian thesis, but I fall in the camp of W. L. Morton’s regional thesis, and I would certainly put region at the forefront.

**Jacqueline Krikorian:** Regions are important because many of them have provincial status and control over their natural resources. In 1867, timber and coal was very important for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Land in Prince Edward Island also was an important natural resource at this time. Provinces represented their regional interests both in the discussions leading to Confederation and afterwards.

**Marcel Martel:** I like this question about regions, because when I teach Canadian history, I ask my students to identify how many regions there are in Canada? [Laughter] Immediately students would say 6: the Maritimes / Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, the West, B.C., and then the North. And then I say “the West...you know, what do you do with Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta,” and students point out that Alberta is totally different from Saskatchewan, and we end up with 10, 11, or 12 different regions. Since I live in Toronto I also ask whether we should consider Toronto to be a region? We think that we know what we are talking about when we use the word region, but it does not take long [laughing] to recognize that the answers can be complicated.

The Fathers of Confederation, however, had fun with this. In order to please George Brown, they acknowledged the ‘rep. by pop.’ principle for the House of Commons, but the Senate was based on regions and, at the time, they identified three: Quebec, Ontario, and the Maritimes. I like this notion of regions, because we always leave the room without knowing what is a region. [Laughter]

**Patrice Dutil:** That’s why I hate regions. [Laughter] I never use regions. I never talk about it. I mean, it...because inevitably, I work in downtown Toronto, which is a region unto its own. The most important region of Canada, it so happens. [Laughter]

This is worth reflecting on, because—as Rob pointed out—50 years ago, the big debate—no, 100 years ago, 130 years ago, the issue of Canada’s agreement, Confederation, was debated in the sense that, is it a compact of provinces—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario—or is it a pact of nations, French and English? Everybody thought it was a compact, a pact of provinces, because that’s the deal. You know, four provinces will join together, form Canada, there will be a national government, and that’s how it will work. And then this idea emerged in French Canada, especially after Louis Riel’s death, that...no, Canada is more than just a deal between four provinces. It is actually a deal between English and French Canada and, if it is a deal between English and French Canada, then it has to be spread across the land. And we have resisted that idea. Many people in Quebec still today believe that Canada is a compact between French and English, and they judge Canada based on whether it lives up to that compact, and, of course, it does not. We had an opportunity with the Meech Lake Accord, those of...nobody here’s old enough to remember Meech Lake.

**Marcel Martel:** I do. [Laughter]

**Patrice Dutil:** I worked on Meech Lake, so I remember it very well. But it was denied, and it was denied because it gave special recognition to Quebec, to preserve and promote its culture. It was rejected on that basis. You could argue it was rejected on other bases, but that is the core. The ideas came back with the Charlottetown Accord, and it was rejected, except in Toronto, because we thought any deal would be a good deal, we do not really care: we’re Toronto. And it was rejected again.

And that is my point. Canada is not a thing of regions: it is a thing of provinces. It is a very legal deal. And, you live with it, or you do not live with it. If you’re a Quebec nationalist, you say, Confederation has failed because it has failed to live up to the expectations of French Canadians. And, because of that disappointment, well, it fueled a movement among the Quebecois to become nationalist and to argue that because Canada failed French Canadians, then Quebec should separate. But it is not like that. Canada is a deal among provinces. It is an unequal and uneven deal. Some people have felt shafted over the years. The Maritimes started complaining about Confederation basically on 2 July 1867. [Laughter] The West complained all through...well, from the time it was born, until recently—

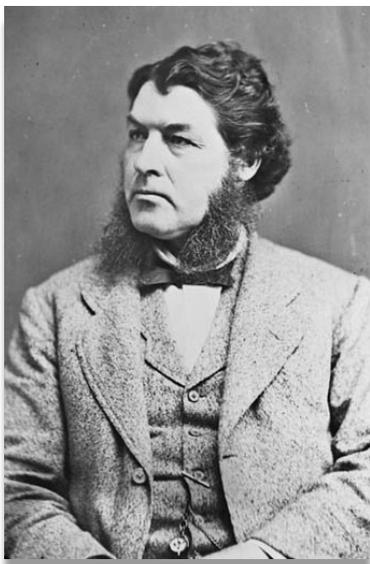
**Marcel Martel:** It is still complaining.

**Patrice Dutil:** It is still complaining. And, you know, the chapter we included in our book on Macdonald and the West from two economic historians makes a very good case that this chronic complaint was politically manufactured, and that the West was not shafted by the National Policy.



“The nature of the union will be such as to make the interest of this part of the dominion identical with other parts. We cannot suppose that the dominion parliament would seek to injure this province. A man would not wantonly injure the smallest member of his body. He could not do so without feeling it... Community of interest is the best guarantee for fair play to every section. The dominion is made up of provinces, and the prosperity of the dominion means the prosperity of the provinces of which it is composed.”

*John Robson, Member of the  
Legislative Council, B.C.  
9 March 1870  
Photo credit: LAC*



“Look ... at the parliament of England... of 600 members... There you will see a dozen independent men controlling parties and influencing the destinies of the country. Is not this evidence that in a British American parliament of 194 members the representatives of the Maritime Provinces would render it impossible for their interests to be ignored or set aside.”

*Charles Tupper  
Conservative Premier  
Nova Scotia  
10 April 1865*

Photo credit: LAC, MIKAN 3461834

There is no evidence at all that the National Policy harmed Western development. This was a political manipulation by Western nationalists—I’ll call them that—to fight Ottawa, and to build their own political base. So I reject regions. I see Canada as a provincial pact, as a very difficult-to-like provincial pact, but, you know, on top of that is this idea of Canada, this movement of Canada. So... I’ve talked enough. I’ll leave it at that.

**Daniel Heidt:** I loved Rob’s comment at the start of this discussion noting that the importance of regions could only be open to discussion in Ontario. I want to build on that point, not in a defensive way, but to encourage us as Ontarians to think for a minute about who we are. If you go outside of Ontario, let’s say to Alberta, I’m pretty sure you will hear some vivid descriptions of what an Ontarian is. Similarly, if you go to Nova Scotia, or perhaps Quebec, they will also have some suggestions about what makes Ontarians unique. If you ask an Ontarian what an Ontarian is, the first thing they might point out to you is that their spell-checker claims that it is not a word. [Laughter]

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Which is true.

**Daniel Heidt:** I think we would have to struggle to define Ontario as a region. But as a province, I think there is at least one common trait within our political culture, and that is our tendency to want to lead the country. And we have tended to lead in one of two ways—both of which are based on common assumptions.

The first style of leadership can be summarized as follows: what is good for Ontario is good for the country. In 1867, Ontario entered Confederation with ‘rep. by pop.,’ which translated to roughly 45 percent of the seats in the House of Commons. If Ontario’s MPs all voted as a block, and they secured a few English Canadians from Montreal or Maritimers to side with them, they could have run the country. This is the theory that George Brown and most of the Reformers pioneered. Did you know, for example, that when Louis Riel led the Red River Resistance in 1869 and 1870, Edward Blake—then our Premier and who subsequently led the federal Liberal party through general elections during the 1880s—decided that the Legislative Assembly in Toronto should put a bounty on his head. When the Opposition Leader rose and pointed out that Ontarian Legislature had no jurisdiction in Manitoba, Blake’s reply went something like this: “yes, of course we do. Thomas Scott [the person who was shot] was an Ontario citizen.” This stance was, of course, a legal fiction, but this assertion the province’s alleged “moral influence” resonated here. Blake, in fact, went on to make the same sort of argument in the House of Commons concerning Riel.

Patrice discussed how different parts of the country were frustrated with the deal they got. One of the earliest examples is Nova Scotia. For those who do not know, this province's voters entered Confederation by electing anti-Confederates to all but one of their federal ridings. John A. Macdonald had to deal with this, and "Pacified" Nova Scotia—as Donald Creighton would later describe it—by offering Nova Scotia better financial terms of union (i.e. more money). Edward Blake, sure enough, again opposed this move. Why? Because Ontario tax payers contributed an immense chunk of federal revenues and many of its voters disliked policies that sent more of those monies out of their province. Blake's argument was simple and can be summarized like this: "we need to stick to the terms of union. Right now, deviating from it would hurt Ontario. But, if we can deviate from the terms of union at all, maybe Ontario could use its votes to take money away from Nova Scotia in the future." Again, Ontario's influence came to the foreground. John A. won the day in this case, but the argument had longevity. Take Premier George Drew of the 1940s, when the federal-provincial deal of Confederation was again being redrawn to suit the post-war era. Again, Drew said, "you know, all the provinces are coming to the federal government for money. Ontario provides much of the tax money; Ontario is being milked like a cow and it is going to be sucked dry by all these other provincial demands." It was the same argument, whether you are looking at the 1860s or the 1940s.

There is an alternative way that Ontarians have also led, and I will be quick. It is a complete reversal of the assumptions I have just described and it is also a perspective which we tend to more readily identify with today: what is good for Canada is good for Ontario. John A. Macdonald regularly used this sort of argument to justify policies that were not always popular in Ontario. The argument went like this: "Confederation is good for Ontario. Be generous to the other provinces and Ontario will ultimately benefit." We are much more familiar with this sort of argument now. It became especially pervasive in Ontario political culture after George Drew's premiership. Penny Bryden has written a fantastic book looking at the Ontario premier's office after the Second World War, and basically makes the argument that it increasingly tried to lead Canada through the Quiet Revolution and other major political questions that rocked the country. Premiers like John Roberts held a "Confederation of Tomorrow Conference" in 1967. Subsequent premiers often sided with Ottawa during the constitutional negotiations of subsequent decades. Again, Ontario was leading, but in these cases, it led while rarely mentioning "Ontarian" interests.

From both perspectives—whether the assumption was "what is good for Ontario is good for Canada," or the vice versa—the point is Ontarians have



"The Provincial secretary stated that these 47 Representatives would hold the balance of power in the General Parliament just as the Irish members do in the British House of Commons... Do you suppose parties would cease under Confederation? Would you not have gentlemen supporting the Opposition, and others, the Government; and then what becomes of the argument of the 47 Representatives from the Maritime Provinces, holding the balance of power?"

*William Annand*  
*Anti-Confederate Leader*  
*Nova Scotia*  
*12 April 1865*  
Photo credit: Nova Scotia Archives

regularly tried to lead the country. It has been quite consistent throughout our political culture and it is a helpful quality to keep in mind when understanding regional politics in Canada.

## Confederation: Success or Failure?

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Thanks. Cognizant of time, because I want to leave time for questions from the audience, the final question that I'll pose to the panelists is: at this point, through the discussion we're having here, what you have read, what you have thought about over the last few years (and indeed your entire careers), can we call Confederation a success? If Canada 150 is a cause for celebration, what should we be celebrating in 2017? Is there a historical component to that celebration that is not just about Canadians coming to terms with how bad we have been in the past and the need to reconcile to move forward? Is there something that we can celebrate?

**Someone:** That Donald Trump's not our leader. [Laughter]

**Patrice Dutil:** You know, this is a good question, and I'll answer unabashedly in favour of the motion that we can call Canada a success, without a doubt. Without the slightest doubt, Canada is a success. We do not know it, and we do not celebrate it, we do not talk about it, we're embarrassed by it, we're intimidated by it. Some of you may have had the pleasure of watching the CBC on Sunday night. Did anybody see that show, *Canada: The Story of Us*? Show of hands, please. Who saw it? Nobody? Nobody. [Laughter] Really? Well, we can debate this later?

**Marcel Martel:** No, no, it is true, I did watch it.

**Patrice Dutil:** You taped it, you do not count. [Laughter] Okay, so listen. Sunday night, 9:00, okay? A show on *Canada: The Story of Us*, introduced, no less, by the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, who informed us that this was a very important event. That obviously did not matter to you, that the Prime Minister of Canada thought it was important. [Laughter] It forces us to consider what we value, and to consider those things about Canada that we take for granted. And I ask my students this all the time. What do you think... what do you value about being Canadian? Most of them have never thought of it. It is purely taken... It is completely taken for granted.

There, you know...and what is it about Canada that you treasure? What is it that we should treasure as citizens? And I'll give you one, and I'll just give you one: that's liberty, freedom. And we... you know, can debate who has freedom and who doesn't, and, we'll gladly debate all that until the cows

"Canada 150 is a celebration  
of indigenous genocide"  
NOW Magazine (Toronto), 29  
March 2017

come home, but we have remarkable freedom in this country, and it is not something we just acquired last year. We have a tradition in this country of abiding by freedom—not for everyone, the record’s not perfect, absolutely. Find me a country that has a perfect record. Find me one. But by and large, this country that emerged over the last 150 years, 200 years, call it what you want, and has created the envy of the world. And that is something to celebrate.

And, you know, that transformation is part of history. I’m a historian, I love to study everything, warts and all, but the end result of Canada is a remarkable experiment in politics, a remarkable experiment in social development, and an experiment that is well worth applauding. Yeah, there are things that are wrong with it, I grant it, and they need to be fixed, and I applaud those who want to fix it. But, without a doubt, to answer your question, a success, and we should be proud of it. And we should learn how to celebrate it, and we do not, you know, the lessons that were given to us 50 years ago were lost. And that’s a shame, that’s a deep shame.

**Robert Wardhaugh:** I’m all up for a party. [Laughter] It may seem like I’m angry and I’m frustrated and I’m a whining Westerner. But I do have to say, having moved from Winnipeg to London, I now think that most Westerners should come to Ontario and live here for a bit to get a different perspective. Now I even get sick of the Western whining, so I hear you. But I do like to party, and I do like to celebrate birthdays. Although, while I’m celebrating my birthday, I do not often like to sit and think too deeply about why I’m celebrating, because then I’m going to have to start thinking, oh, wow, I’m one year closer to death [laughter], all the terrible things I’ve done in my life, and all the regrets I have, and all the things I’ve failed to accomplish, and all the things I should have done, and where I should be, and what I’m not doing, and...okay, yeah you get it. [Laughter] Exactly, exactly. So I stop. So I stop. And I think this is the same thing with Confederation. I think, absolutely, Patrice is absolutely right. I mean, relatively speaking, we are an amazing success story, and we have a lot to celebrate, and we have a lot to be proud of, and we have a lot to value, and I’m there with you.

I have a problem with commemorations, however, and I have a problem with the state forming commemorations. I do not like, for example, the celebrations of the War of 1812, and Harper government’s form of martial nationalism that was put forward with the War of 1812 and the celebrations of World War I and this ridiculous idea that we became a nation on Vimy Ridge, and these types of ideas. We absolutely have a lot to be proud of, but when the state starts coming in and forming what we’re supposed to value, and what we’re celebrating, and therefore what history we’re remembering, I think we’re often in a little bit more dangerous territory.

“Canada 150 celebrations must address injustices”  
*Toronto Star, 8 January 2017*

**Jacqueline Krikorian:** I was at a talk last night by Justice Murray Sinclair from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and he was telling us, in very vivid terms, about the 80,000 children who were forced to move into residential schools. He told us that more than half of them reported being sexually abused. So, in terms of celebrations, I think that many of us value our country and our citizenship. We are excited about the future, and look to our past to better understand where we are going. But it can't be all about celebrations. I think there is also a dark cloud hanging over us in 2017 that we have to sort of come to terms with. The rights and needs of Indigenous peoples need to be addressed for us to move forward as a country in any meaningful way.

**Marcel Martel:** I'll be brief, and the reason I want to be brief is because I have an answer that may surprise us. I will refer to a book that Jacqueline mentioned to me. The title of the book is *The Endurance of National Constitutions*, and it is a comparison of constitutions written since 1789. It is a group of scholars in the US that decided to compile every constitution written since 1789. On the first page, they share with their readers an interesting piece of information. The average life expectancy of a national constitution is 19 years. Then, here we are, we are celebrating 150, and it looks like those who wrote it, either they were very clever, or those who live under it are not very clever because they do not want to challenge it. [Laughter] And maybe this is something. It is difficult to disagree with what Patrice, Rob, Jacqueline, and I...I'll wait, you know, for Daniel, but maybe there is something we should reflect upon [laughing]. You know, here we are, we have been very critical of John A. Macdonald, and many others, but they did manage to write and to put together in a document... I know usually we laugh about the document because we say, oh yeah, we are the only part of the world where we mention that we have to build a railway. However, there were other sections in this constitution that are still with us, and maybe this is national constitution is 19 years, well, it looks like we did something that was quite clever [laughing].

**Patrice Dutil:** How long does it usually take to patriate them? [Laughter]

**Marcel Martel:** Well, you raise an interesting question about patriation. Do you consider patriation a complete rewriting of constitution, which was not the case. Some in the 1960s argued that the Canadian constitution had to be rewritten but there was no consensus on the type of changes that were needed.

**Daniel Heidt:** I love all of the answers that we have just heard, and I think the media has set up a bit of a false dichotomy between celebration and shame when discussing Canada 150. There is lots of room for both, and most of us in this room will end up attending festivities on July 1 and falling

"Canada has certainly committed its share of mistakes over its 150 years. But where we've erred, we've apologized. And the trajectory has been unquestionably upwards. Canadian history should be considered a process, and the result today is a country that stands as a model for the rest of the world in terms of tolerance and diversity."

*Peter Shawn Taylor, "Stop hating Sir John A. (and other history lessons)" Maclean's, 3 March 2017*

somewhere between these two poles. What struck me when I started thinking about Canada 150 well over a year ago when we were planning this project, is that this is a time of reflection that will lead us to make a decision about shame and pride. And I think that is really the crux of Canada 150 for many of us. Maybe we do not like birthdays, and we do not want to reflect too much. But I do not think Canada is going to die anytime soon, so I think we have cause to be a little more optimistic about how we feel about it.

And if we want to celebrate something that Canada got right, I propose the following: our founders recognized, right from the start, that Canada was going to be a country encompassing diverse provinces and peoples. Now at that point the discussion was generally limited to French and English, Protestant and Catholic—there was no recognition of Asian or Indigenous peoples—but we had to build some degree of tolerance into the fibres of Canada’s constitution, and any political broker who wanted to create a deal spanning more than one colony or more than one province had to grapple with that fact.

Canadian history is a patterned story of success and failure at accomplishing or resisting this consideration. Slogans like “let the Eastern bastards freeze in the dark” and “Idle no more” highlight occasions when we failed at this goal and there is no doubt that we have a very checkered past. But overall, and especially if Canadian history is compared to other countries that have a similar degree of ethnic diversity, we have had a good run. Look at Europe where countries with ethnic power disparities have generally broken apart into smaller units. Canada has persisted. We have had our referenda, but we have ultimately stuck together and achieved a remarkably high standard of living in the process. It is not evenly distributed, but we’re working on that. So I think there is a lot of cause for celebration on July 1. Enjoy the fireworks. [Laughs.]

**P. Whitney Lackenbauer:** Great. Thanks everybody. I did mention Dan and his central role in organizing this. I’d like to thank him again, our panelists, and Jane Forgay, the history and political science librarian at the University of Waterloo, who has also been instrumental in helping to organize, fund, and pull this event together. Thanks also to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a Connection Grant that has supported this event as part of our broader *Confederation Debates* initiative, and to the Crabtree Foundation who have provided generous funding the broader project. Thanks very much to all of you for coming. I hope you’ve enjoyed it as much as I have. I certainly learned a tremendous amount. And thanks to our panelists for coming together, and spending our Friday evening with us. [Applause.]

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## Conflicts and Agreements: Canada's Foundations and Their Consequences, 1865-1949

On 31 March 2017, historians Patrice Dutil, Daniel Heidt, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Marcel Martel, Robert Wardhaugh, and political scientist Jacqueline Krikorian convened at the University of Waterloo for a public panel to review Canada's expansion, strengths, and faults during the past 150 years.

This publication reproduces their wide-ranging discussions about Canada's expansion, the role of individuals in history, Indigenous People's place in Confederation, Sir John A. Macdonald's legacy, and regionalism. We hope that the discussion of these themes will continue to promote discussion and debate about the meaning, successes, and shortcomings of Confederation.

