Canada before Confederation
Maps at the Exhibition

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Introduction

Understanding Canada before Confederation

Today

The confederation of Canada in 1867 created a platform upon which the modern nation by this name grew over the following 150 years. It was originally composed of the present-day provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. The country has experienced vast change during this short period. The provinces of Manitoba (1870), British Columbia (1871), Prince Edward Island (1873), Saskatchewan and Alberta (1905), Newfoundland (1949), and the territories (Northwest Territories, 1870; Yukon Territory, 1898; and Nunavut, 1999) became part of Canada. Immigration from around the world has created a cultural and linguistic mosaic for which the nation is known. The country has developed a reputation for both peacekeeping and military support for conflicts abroad that dates from the First World War. Its wealth of natural resources make Canada one of the richest countries in the world. These achievements find

1 For a series of excellent essays about the events leading up to and following Confederation and its impact from the perspective of the provinces and territories, see M. Brook Taylor, ed., Canadian History: A Reader’s Guide. Vol. 1: Beginnings to Confederation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

2 The complexities underlying Canada’s multicultural population have been explored in the essays collected by Elspeth Cameron, ed., Multiculturalism and Immigration in Canada: An Introductory Reader (Toronto: Canada Scholars’ Press, 2004). Also see Alan B. Simmons, Immigration and Canada: Global and Transnational Perspectives (Toronto: Canada Scholars’ Press, 2010).

3 A critical examination of the country’s peacekeeping programme can be found in Karsten Jung, Of Peace and Power: Promoting Canadian Interests through Peacekeeping (New York: Peter Lang, 2009). For the rosier portrayal of peacekeeping disseminated within the country, see Colin McCullough, Creating Canada’s Peacekeeping Past (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).
their roots not in Confederation, which rather describes an act of parliament that was approved by the Queen of England, but instead in the early modern period. It was during this time that Europeans came to and staked claims upon these lands, from the Cabot voyages of 1497 to the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Over the course of these centuries Canada as a place (both imagined and real) and its people slowly emerged from its chrysalis as English, French, as well as other European nations interacted with the peoples and cultures native to Canada.

The historical processes that shaped Canada after Confederation have negatively impacted the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Whether Maliseet or Cree, Mohawk or Wendat, Native Canadians were and remain alienated from their land: they observed the laws and cultural norms of foreigners; practiced an old-world religion; spoke a foreign language and were prohibited to teach the next generation their own tongue; and were disempowered as authorities and custodians of this land, its flora and fauna, and its vitality. Government institutions ranging from social welfare to systems of education have and continue to treat Indigenous peoples differently than the rest of Canadians. Another consideration is that the presence of Europeans over the centuries contributed to the decimation of Canada’s Indigenous populations through the spread of infectious disease. This decline in population (which has in recent decades turned around and Indigenous peoples are now one of the country’s fastest-growing demographics), when viewed in conjunction with these other losses, means that today some Indigenous peoples do not know their ancestral language, do not live upon their traditional lands, and do not use their cultural customs. These losses grew out of the pre-Confederation period. During these centuries Europeans rendered Indigenous space empty and proceeded to refill it with their own knowledge and ways of viewing the territories that now comprise Canada. Europeans dismantled the sophisticated societies of these lands through their colonial projects while at the same time they held fast to their Western worldview. This worldview

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was elastic enough to accommodate the apparition of the Americas on the map, but it was not sufficiently flexible to view the peoples of the Americas as the equals of Europeans.

This inequality persists in scholarship and is an issue of which we are mindful throughout this book. Many attempts to examine Canada’s cartographic history focus exclusively on European perceptions of place and ways of representing space. Most of the cartographic documents presented in this book were forged using Western cartographic practices. Yet it seems important, given the complexities of the Canadian cultural and geographical landscape, to demonstrate the impacts of the so-called Doctrine of Discovery from a cartographical perspective. The supposition that a land had been “discovered” by Europeans allowed them to construct a justification for claiming it; a papal bull promulgated in 1494 further supported this practice so long as the lands of non-Christians were seized. The gaze of the discoverer in this sense harnessed what David Matless has termed “the eye of power-as-domination,” which became manifested

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through the map as a tool of colonization. Positioning Canada as a land discovered made way for the cartographic discourses of domination and submission during a period in which English and French map-makers attempted to render their sovereigns’ territories larger, more consequential, and occupied either textually or physically by Britain and France. We can also understand how these same powerful discourses often narrowly defined Indigenous peoples as a homogeneous constituency in need of custodianship and civilization. Throughout this book we meditate on how cartographic technologies aided the maps’ creators in sustaining the Doctrine of Discovery. At the same time, we will point out how Europeans attempted to know Canada and its Indigenous peoples in meaningful ways.

In the balance, the dominance of European modalities of representation ensures that European cartographical representations usually have been considered more authoritative by scholars than Indigenous ways of viewing and knowing. The impact of this dominance from a place-naming perspective is another factor that we consider throughout this book, because European maps contain a programme of colonization predicated on language, religion, and economic gain. The placement of a toponym in English could be symptomatic of British as opposed to French claim to or even presence in a region. Historical maps also provide a window into better understanding Indigenous peoples, their cultures and histories, and these same texts can be re-evaluated with these

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9 This problem will be made more evident throughout the course of this book. For its persistence in Canadian culture today and particularly through its education systems, see Cheryl Woolsey des Jarlais, Western Structures Meet Native Traditions: The Interfaces of Educational Cultures (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008).

10 For more on this subject, see George Raudzens, ed., Technology, Disease, and Colonial Conquests, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries: Essays Reappraising the Guns and Germs Theories (Leiden: Brill, 2003). For the relationship between technology and the formation of national identity, see Marco Adria, Technology and Nationalism (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009).
new objectives in mind. We revisit these maps to apply a similar methodology to the movement, interactions, and presence of both European and Indigenous groups. By delving into Indigenous place names found on these maps, moreover, rather than relying on the perhaps more familiar English- and French-language toponymy, we can better see Indigenous peoples (as opposed to only their colonizers) represented in the early modern period and through much of the cartographic documentation studied in this book. The eighteen maps selected for this book were created between 1507 and 1772. All, perhaps with the exception of the first two, relied upon Indigenous informants and, in some cases creators and co-creators. This toponymy comes to us primarily through these informants, even if Europeans were the ones who wrote it down.

Each of these maps demonstrates one or more European, Indigenous, or Métis ways of negotiating the intercultural encounters that define early-modern Canada, whether from a linguistic perspective or through culturally specific means of conceiving of space, mapping, and exerting territorial claims. We make the distinction here between Indigenous and Métis groups because the distinction existed in the early modern period, at least in the eyes of Europeans. The latter term refers to a person of mixed Indigenous and European background. In this case, an Indigenous people now embraces a name created by Europeans. We reflect on the degree to which this influence works in reverse at various moments throughout this book, particularly in terms of toponymy. The choice to employ a French-language name over an English one absolutely agitates the linguistic politics inherent to naming both peoples and places. Great care has been taken throughout this book to reflect on these seemingly unstable vocabularies and to identify tricky areas in scholarship that must be navigated or remain in need of attention.

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11 Recent attempts to do this have been undertaken by Gustavo Verdesio, Forgotten Conquests: Rereading New World History from the Margins (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2001). Also see Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999).

12 For Canada’s Supreme Court ruling and recognition of Métis peoples as Indigenous see the Daniels Decision: Daniels v. Canada (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), 2016 SCC 12, [2016] 1 S.C.R. 99. For more on the Métis, see Chris Anderson, Metis: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).
As the maps selected for this book demonstrate, European authorities have long relied upon and valued Indigenous knowledge when it benefited them in some way—Samuel de Champlain, for instance, made heavy use of Indigenous information in creating his maps. During the development of the fur trade in North America, English and French authorities collaborated with Indigenous traders who harvested furs and then sold or traded them to outposts operated by corporations such as the Hudson’s Bay Company. Efforts to map fur-producing areas became a priority of the Hudson’s Bay Company, which relied heavily upon Indigenous informants, travelers, and their movements in order flesh out a cartographic picture of Canada’s north. We can therefore understand when and how Europeans chose to value Indigenous knowledge or suppress it altogether. It is hoped that contemporary readers will find context for our future in these lessons from our past.

By focusing on the early sixteenth to late eighteenth centuries, moreover, we will be able to understand how Indigenous informants influenced the decisions and movements of Europeans. European mythologies mixed with Indigenous knowledge in interesting ways. As will be seen later in this book, Europeans thought that they would encounter a western ocean connected by waterways that spread from the east to the west so that Canada could be completely traversed by water. Indigenous knowledge led French explorers to conclude that the Mer de l’Ouest (Sea of the West) did exist, just as they had imagined, and they pursued this mythical body of water through centuries of expeditions. Studying this period of cartography will provide scholars with a deeper understanding of how Europeans and Indigenous peoples viewed Canada as a space, and how the vast size of Canada was apprehended but also negotiated by all peoples.

While researching these maps and the context of their creation, we were less concerned with understanding some pinnacle of European achievement—for instance, the first appearance of a river on the map of Canada—and rather focused on the transaction of knowledge between Indigenous and European peoples, and sometimes between Europeans in their contested efforts to colonize this land. By understanding these exchanges from a cartographic perspective, we can better apprehend the degree to which Europeans relied upon and valued Indigenous knowledge. This selection of maps also highlights at various moments the new technologies that enabled the representation of that knowledge during the early modern period, from new projections and cartographic endowments relating to scale, to instrumentation used to produce maps.
Better understanding the cartographers’ sources has additional benefits. Indigenous groups as well as scholars of language and history across this country are presently trying to understand the Indigenous origins of Canadian place names. The present book and its companion exhibition thus make available materials, as well as refreshing ways of encountering them, that could be of great importance to scholarship being undertaken on this subject. Importantly, we endeavor to show that Indigenous peoples influenced how and where Europeans undertook travels and later expansion into Canada.

Several of these maps have garnered little study in recent decades, due in part to the fact that they are rare and in some cases have never been published. For example, the anonymous French-language manuscript map titled *Nouvelle France*, made in about 1641 and depicting Huronia, is the unique product of a collaboration between a French mapmaker and Wendat (Huron) informants, for it contains numerous Wendat place names. The map was studied in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but not since then, and is almost unknown to the Canadian public and even to scholars. How it came to reside in the United Kingdom underlines the complexities undergirding the European colonial project as well as the intercultural interactions that took place between the English and French in Canada. This map is held by the UK National Archives, and thus is available for consultation to Canadians only by way of a trip across the Atlantic and access to a special archive. Our study of it in this book, as well as the high-quality colour image that accompanies it, explores the configuration of the Great Lakes and evidence of an Indigenous world view.

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The Exhibition and Catalogue

This book was produced to accompany an exhibition of eighteen rare and important maps of the territory now known as Canada, as well as of particular regions (e.g. the Atlantic region, the Great Lakes region). No previous exhibition has focused on Indigenous knowledge on maps created prior to 1800. Some of the maps in this exhibition have come from the collections of the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg; the others from collections abroad, including the Library of Congress, the John Carter Brown Library, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, and the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office. The maps were chosen for their cartographic importance or uniqueness, ability to contribute to a narrative of the development of the cartography of Canada, and use of Indigenous knowledge. Among the printed maps, we chose hand-coloured examples where possible because aside from adding visual appeal, colour makes it easier for the viewer to distinguish the different elements of the map. We also favoured manuscript maps, as these unique documents require more effort to consult, and are rarely reproduced at full size.

The exhibition consisted of specially commissioned facsimiles of the maps in question, rather than originals. This choice offered several advantages. It avoided the expense of insurance, special display cases, and security for the maps, and allowed visitors to handle and rotate the maps as their makers had intended, and to examine them closely without the interference of reflections from glass. In addition, the use of facsimiles allowed us to mount the exhibition in multiple locations simultaneously. The locations for the exhibition in 2017, the 150th anniversary of Canada’s confederation, include the following: in September at Bishop’s University (Quebec) and at the James Ford Bell Library (University of Minnesota); in October at Mount Allison University (New Brunswick); in November at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (Nova Scotia) and aboard the CSS Acadia; and throughout the second half of the year it will be shown aboard the C3

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15 Two exhibitions have focused on later Indigenous maps: see Pauline Antrobus et al., Mapping the Americas: An Exhibition in Two Parts (Colchester: University of Essex, 1992) and Mark Warhus, “Cartographic Encounters: An Exhibition of Native American Maps from Central Mexico to the Arctic,” Mapline Special Issue 7 (September, 1993), pp. 1-24.
vessel traveling the Northwest Passage as part of its CANADA 150 programming.

We opted for entries longer than those found in most other catalogues, so as to be able to supply more information about the maps’ context and discussion of the maps’ details. One of our goals for the book is that it will continue to be a valuable resource for the study of early maps of Canada for many years. As part of our effort to achieve this aim, we have supplied ample bibliography in each of the entries, not only about the map itself, but also about people, places, place names, and events connected with the map. We also supply below a general bibliography on the early exploration and mapping of Canada. This bibliography consists of secondary literature not cited in the catalogue entries, and also some works that are cited in the entries that will be valuable in any study of early maps of Canada. We hope that these features will make the book an enduring gateway to the subject.
Secondary Literature on the Exploration and Mapping of Canada to 1763

Books


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