

What were the steps leading to Confederation?

The Charlottetown Conference 1864



September 1, 1864 - Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were to meet with 8 members of the Canadas at Charlottetown.

The leaders of the colony of Canada asked to be invited and suggested instead a larger scheme of union-- a confederation of the Maritime colonies and the colony of Canada. Representatives from Canada (both Canada East and West), Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick attended. John A. Macdonald and Georges Etienne Cartier led the Canadian delegates.

The Advantages of a larger union included:

- Economic growth with expanded markets
- Completion of an intercolonial railway
- Improved defence
- Greater opportunities for Maritime politicians

It was decided to continue the talks the following month in Quebec City.

The Quebec Conference 1864



October 10, 1864

All delegates returned from Charlottetown and also included Newfoundland

Meeting were kept private, no press or public were permitted to watch.

The Quebec Conference was a serious discussion of the specific details of Confederation. A major point of contention was whether the new country should have a

- Legislative union where all the laws are made by the central government

or a

- Federal union where the central government makes some laws, but the provinces make their own laws for local matters.

John A. Macdonald preferred a legislative union because he saw how a federal union in the USA had led to civil war.

However, it was decided that the new country would have a federal system of government so that Quebec and the Maritimes could maintain control over local affairs. Quebec, especially, did not want to lose control over language and religion. It was also decided that

- the House of Commons would be elected using representation by population (Rep. by Pop. means the

- higher the population of a province, the larger the number of seats allocated to that province. Essentially, it relates to the basic democratic principle of "one person, one vote" and that all votes should count equally.)
- there would also be an appointed Senate with equal regional representation
 - Parliament would be made up of three parts, the elected House of Commons, the appointed Senate, and the monarch, represented by an appointed Governor-General.

Reactions

- French Canadian delegates accepted the terms of Confederation because the province would have control of local affairs, specifically education and religion. French culture would thus not be threatened by the bigger English population. However, *les Rouges*, led by A.A. Dorion, claimed that Confederation would mean the end of French Quebec.
- Canada West was happy because they got Rep by Pop, and the province would be able to dominate affairs in the new country. The deadlock of the previous years would be over.
- Delegates from the Maritimes were not so happy because they would have little power in the federal government, as they were so much smaller than Ontario and Quebec in population, but, like Quebec, they would be able to keep control of local matters.

At the end of the Quebec Conference the delegates drew up a list of seventy-two recommendations called the **Quebec Resolutions** or the **72 Resolutions**. The political system adopted at Quebec City is very similar to the system we still have in Canada today.

The delegates would have to explain these recommendations to the assemblies in each colony and persuade them to pass the resolutions, so that they could then ask the British government to approve the plan for Confederation. Thanks to the Great Coalition, the plan was swiftly passed in Canada. There was significant opposition in the Maritime colonies. Newfoundland was not interested from the start. New Brunswick electors voted Tilley out of office for a while, and Tupper had to face the determined opposition of Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia. Eventually, both legislatures voted for confederation. **Fenian raids** in New Brunswick showed how weak that colony would be if it tried to stand alone.

The London Conference 1866



December, 1866 - Delegates from the colonies travelled to London, where the British government approved the plan for confederation. A law of the British parliament acted as the constitution of Canada, and this fact was to cause trouble later, when Canada wanted to have its

constitution as a Canadian law, not a British law.

John A. Macdonald was the chairman and was joined by representatives from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and the Canadas. The name Canada was agreed upon by the

delegation and the British North America Act was passed with little debate.

On July 1, 1867, the **British North America Act**, commonly called the **BNA Act** was proclaimed.

The original Dominion of Canada had four provinces, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, but the BNA Act looked forward to including British Columbia and the lands of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Its motto, *A mari usque ad mare, From sea to shining sea*, anticipated the westward expansion of Canada.