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Building a Nation A project for the National Library of Canada's Confederation websites

In this project, students will review the major factors, significant events and key individuals involved in the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867. They will organize and participate in a “Confederation Review Conference” in order to examine how Canada can best serve regional interests and group perspectives in the 21st century. **Parts of this project may be useful to educators when used independently.**

The National Library of Canada's Confederation websites are aimed at giving students a good basic knowledge of how Confederation came about. The Confederation for Kids website has been written and structured for children ages 9 to 13, and is designed to be easy to use in either the classroom or at home. Also useful, for ages 12 and up, is the Canadian Confederation website. (URL: www.nlc-bnc.ca/confederation)

Subject/Age

Social Studies (History) and Language Arts, Ages 11+

Learning Outcomes (WCP) Objectives (QC)

Learning Outcomes (APEF) Expectations (ON)

Social Studies Outcomes for this project (History):

In completing this project, students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the factors that contributed to Canada's Confederation.
- Locate relevant information about the regional interests of each colony, using a variety of sources.
- Analyze and describe current issues and their potential impact on Confederation today (e.g. demands of the Aboriginal peoples, Quebec issues, Western issues).
- Communicate the results of inquiries for specific purposes and audiences.
- Identify the contributions of each political region to Canadian Confederation today.

Language Arts Outcomes for this project:

R (Reading):



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- Read a variety of fiction and non-fiction materials for different purposes.
- Select the material needed from appropriate sources.

W (Writing):

- Communicate ideas and information for a variety of purposes (to evaluate information, to compare points of view) and to specific audiences, using forms appropriate for their purpose and topic.

O/V (Oral and Visual Communication):

- Express and respond to a range of ideas and opinions concisely, clearly and appropriately.
- Contribute and work constructively in groups.

These Language Arts Outcomes correspond to:

- WCP GO - **R:** 3.2; **W:** 4.1; **O/V:** 1, 5.1
- Quebec objectives - 3 (**Reading**); 1 (**Writing**); 4, 1 (**Oral**)
- APEF CGO - **R:** 4; **W:** 9; **O/V:** 1, 2

Student Demonstration of Learning

The students will review the major factors, significant events and key individuals involved in the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867. They will organize and participate in a “Confederation Review Conference” in order to examine how Canada can best serve regional interests and group perspectives in the 21st century.

Materials/Resources Required

Computers with access to the Internet
Video camera, VCR, and television monitor

[Handout 1: How Did Canada Start?](#)

[Handout 2: Reasons](#)

[Handout 3: Assets and Needs](#)

[Handout 4: Values](#)

[Handout 5: Writing Speeches](#)

[Handout 6: Speeches Review](#)

[Handout 7: Charter of Rights](#)

[Handout 8: The Constitution](#)



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[Handout 9: What Have We Learned?](#)

[Sources Sheet](#)

[Assessment Sheet](#)

Web Links

National Library of Canada's *Confederation for Kids* website

URL: www.nlc-bnc.ca/confederation/kids/

National Library of Canada *Confederation* website

URL: <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/confederation/>

National Archives of Canada's *Constitutional Evolution* website

URL: http://www.archives.ca/05/051104_e.html

Other useful websites on Confederation:

Early Canadiana Online: Canada in the Making

URL: <http://www.canadiana.org/citm/>

The Canadian Encyclopedia Online (Historica)

URL: www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com

- See also the Sources Sheet.
- Educators may need to identify specific sources to be used.

Instructional Procedures

Students will need to be familiar with common Web navigation symbols, tools and terminology (e.g.: back, home page, etc.).

NOTE: Parts of this project can be separated and used independently. For example:

- Task 1 can be used for a review of Confederation for students ages 11 and up.
- Tasks 2 to 6 can be used to review and revisit Confederation as it happened in the 1860s.
- Tasks 7 and 8 can be used to review rights and the Constitution.



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Enhancing Students' Interest

Discuss/create a class constitution/contract for students and the educator. Include: rules, rights and responsibilities. When finished, review the process.

- Were there any differences in opinion about rules, rights and responsibilities?
- Who favoured which rules/rights/responsibilities? Why was that?
- How was the consensus reached? (negotiations, force?)
- Was it an easy process? How could it be made easier?

Large-Group Work (Whole Class)

The teacher reads an imaginary headline from a fictional newspaper front page:

CANADA TO START ALL OVER!

Students are invited to discuss this “headline”:

- What do you think this headline means?
- Why do you think a country might want to “start over”?
- Would you agree/disagree that Canada should start all over?
- Do you think this would affect you (change your life) as an individual? How?
- What would have to be done in order for a country “start all over”?
- How did Canada “start” in the first place?

Small-Group Work (3 to 6 Students)

Task 1: When did Canada come into being?

This final question (How did Canada “start” in the first place?) can lead to an invitation by the teacher for the students to visit the National Library of Canada's *Confederation for Kids* website or *Canadian Confederation* website.



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The class can be divided into small research teams who visit the website in order to find answers to the following questions. Following this research, each team must report its findings (orally) to the whole class. See [Handout 1](#) for the tasks for each group.

With the presentation of oral reports from each of the small research teams, the students achieve an awareness of the process (Who? What? Where? When? Why?) that led to the birth of Canada.

The teacher revisits the fictional headline:

CANADA TO START ALL OVER!

The class is in charge of the Canada “starting all over” process. In order to ensure that it is completed fairly and efficiently, the class will organize and stage a Confederation Review Conference. The first task is to establish WHO will have a voice (participate) at this conference. Examples:

- 10 provinces?
- 3 territories?
- Native peoples?
- New Canadians (recent immigrants)?
- Interest groups: Women’s rights? Environmentalists?

Students are invited to select ONE of the above groups/regions which they wish to help represent. The resulting small groups of representatives will have as their responsibility the preparation for, attendance at, and participation in the Confederation Review Conference on behalf of their selected group/region.

Example: 3 students represent Nova Scotia; 2 students represent Nunavut; 2 students represent women’s rights, 3 students



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represent Native peoples from various regions, etc.

Task 2: Reasons. Students brainstorm and research a list of as many reasons as possible why their group/region would, or would not, want to be a part of a Canada for the 21st century. (See [Handout 2](#).)

- Information on reasons can be found on the sites listed in **Web Links** and on the [Sources Sheet](#).
- Each reason should be ranked on a scale of 1 to 5.
- When the reasons have been completed, the totals should be added. Which side has more points? Remain in Canada? or seek a new future with a new status from within or from outside of Canada? This is the decision the group will present at the Confederation Review Conference.

Task 3: Assets and Needs. Next, students should research and brainstorm assets and needs of their group/region. (See [Handout 3](#).)

- What could they give to, share with, or trade with other regions and groups in a new Confederation?
- What do they need that they could hope to get from other regions?
- Students should again assign points to each item. This will eventually help prioritize the content of the group/region's speech to be presented at the Confederation Review Conference.

Task 4: Values. After this (or at the same time), they should create a chart of values that they hope to see their new country represent. (See [Handout 4](#).)

What rights do they consider important enough to include in the new constitution?



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- Free speech?
- Equal rights?
- The right to vote? (Who?)
- Environmental protection?
- Official languages?
- Culture?
- Other?

For government, do they wish it to be:

- A republic?
- A monarchy?
- A constitutional monarchy?
- A democracy?

- A dictatorship?

Students should research these terms to understand them better.

Groups must arrive at agreed-upon decisions regarding the issues in Preparatory Task #4, and be prepared to present these decisions during speeches at the Confederation Review Conference.

Task 5: Writing Speeches. Groups select a main speaker (or two) to be a “Father/Mother of Confederation” for that group. As a group, they should write a short speech to be made to the others. (See [Handout 5](#).)

The text of the speech represents the findings resulting from each group/region’s work during Preparatory Tasks 1, 2 and 3. The speech, therefore, should include:

- Why they hope for a new Confederation (or not).
- How they hope to benefit from this new Confederation.
- What strengths they bring to Confederation.
- What type of government they would like to see.
- Three rights that they wish to have protected by this new



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Confederation.

Large-Group Work

The Confederation Review Conference

Task 6: Speeches. All members from each of the group/region teams attend the Confederation Review Conference (the conference might be staged in a special area of the school -- e.g. on stage in the gymnasium).

The representative speakers are introduced. Each speaker delivers his/her group/region's message. Handout 6 is distributed to facilitate the audience's engagement and to allow them to compare the groups' positions on various issues. The speeches could be video recorded.

Following the Confederation Review Conference speeches, a copy of the video recording could be sent to an appropriate exterior audience (a member of Parliament?) for the purpose of requesting expert feedback/response regarding the content of the texts.

At the end of the speeches, discuss the following:

- Were there major differences? In what areas?
- Are the differences negotiable, or do they think that some groups may opt out?
- On the basis of the speeches, would they want to enter into Confederation? Why or why not?
- Are there enough groups to make a new country?
- Was it an easy process?
- Which groups made it difficult?

Optional, for students ages 15 and up:

Task 7: Charter of Rights The Charter of Rights was a



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contentious issue when it was introduced. Discuss:

- Should there be one?
- Why or why not? Find reasons for both views.
- Should the Charter be above the rulers and Parliament, or should they be able to change it or ignore it? (Note: In some democracies the government sets laws and courts must apply them -- even if there exists a charter of rights that contradicts the law.)

Record each group's most important rights, and use these as a template for a charter of rights. Students could write these rights out using the language of the Canadian Constitution, or another constitution.

Task 8: The Constitution. Discuss, as a whole class, the nature the new government should take (democracy, republic, etc.).

- Should there be strong or weak provincial governments? Why or why not? (Possible extension activity.)
- Make a table showing which levels of government should have powers over:
 - The Army
 - Taxes
 - Natural resources
 - Education
 - Immigration
 - Etc.
- Reach a consensus, either by vote or by compromise.

Possible Extension

Students ages 16+ could write a position paper on the advantages and disadvantages of strong central government versus strong regional governments in a country the size of Canada.



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Notes on Enriching This Activity
