

# Confederation: July 1, 1867



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- In the 1860s the British colonies were facing many different kinds of problems.
- One solution for all of these was for the colonies to come together to form one country.

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- **Political problems**
- The Province of Canada contained the most people and was later made into the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.
- The government of the Province of Canada did not run smoothly because the English-speaking and French-speaking halves had different ideas about how things should be run.
- Leaders from both parts of the province decided that joining the other colonies might help solve their own political problems.

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- **Political problems**

- **Province of Canada:**

In 1840 the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada were joined to form the Province of Canada. Upper Canada was mostly English speaking, while Lower Canada was mostly French speaking. After Confederation Upper Canada became the province of Ontario, and Lower Canada became the province of Quebec.

## Confederation: July 1, 1867

- **Economic problems**
- In order for their economies to do well, the colonies needed to be able to sell their goods to other markets.
- At this time there were very few places that they could sell to.
- One solution was to bring all the colonies together. In this way they could more easily sell their goods to each other.

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- **Military problems**
- Since America had fought Britain to gain its independence, the relationship between British North America and the United States had never been stable. The relationship became even worse when Britain supported the South in the American Civil War.
- The North won the war and was angry at Britain for helping the South. Many Americans wanted to take over all of what is now Canada.

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- **Military problems**
- Meanwhile, Britain didn't want to have to pay for the cost of defending its colonies. It decided to encourage the colonies to join together, because the United States would be less likely to attack Canada if it were a self-governing country rather than separate colonies of Britain.
- The fear of the United States helped to strengthen the call for Confederation.

## Key Meetings on the Road to Confederation

- **The Charlottetown Conference, September 1864**
- The politicians from the Province of Canada convinced the politicians from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to consider a larger union.
- They agreed to meet again to discuss Confederation.



## Key Meetings on the Road to Confederation

- **The Quebec Conference, October 1864**
- During this conference the leaders had to work out how the new country would be run.
- The decisions were called the Quebec Resolutions. Although Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland both took part, after the conference they both decided not to join Confederation at that time.

## Key Meetings on the Road to Confederation

- **The London Conference, December 1866**
- This was the last conference, and it took place in London, England. Leaders from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and the Province of Canada had to take the rough draft of the Quebec Resolutions and come up with a final agreement.
- They created was the British North American Act. Once British Parliament approved it, Confederation could go ahead.

## Key Meetings on the Road to Confederation

- **July 1, 1867**
- **On this date Canada became a country with four provinces.**
- **New Brunswick and Nova Scotia hardly changed, but the Province of Canada was split into two new provinces: Ontario and Quebec.**

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- Scholar Malcolm Ross published *Poets of the Confederation* in 1960. These are the 4 key poets:
- Charles G.D. Roberts
- Bliss Carman
- Archibald Lampman
- Duncan Campbell Scott

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- Your copy of *The Stone Angel* is a part of this series.
- Ross was the general editor of the NCL
- *Poets of the Confederation* was the NCL's first anthology
- Ross single-handedly began the construction of a national literature by providing Canada with a cohesive literary and anticipating the future of Canadian literature.



# Confederation Poets

- **There were good reasons for grouping them together and calling them the first school of writers:**
  - In the 1880s and 1890s, they were the first really good poets writing in the new Dominion
  - All were born in early 1860s and knew one another
  - Most of their poetry was inspired by Canadian nature
  - They were trained in the classics and the British literary tradition, but were willing to create their own traditions, as well as borrow from the American ones
  - Examined important subjects and themes in Canadian setting
  - Wanted to avoid “regional” poetry and write poetry that reflected all of Canada

# Charles D. Roberts

- “Like most of the young fellows about me I had been under the depressing conviction that we were situated hopelessly on the outskirts of civilization, where no art and no literature could be...”

# British Romanticism

- Romanticism has very little to do with things popularly thought of as "romantic," although love may occasionally be the subject of Romantic art.
- Rather, it is an international artistic and philosophical movement that redefined the fundamental ways in which people in Western cultures thought about themselves and about their world.
- 1770s-1830s

# Romanticism



# Imagination

- The imagination was elevated to a position as the supreme faculty of the mind. This contrasted distinctly with the traditional arguments for the supremacy of reason. The Romantics tended to define and to present the imagination as our ultimate "shaping" or creative power, the approximate human equivalent of the creative powers of nature or even God.
- Imagination is the primary faculty for creating all art. On a broader scale, it is also the faculty that helps humans to constitute reality, for (as Wordsworth suggested), we not only perceive the world around us, but also in part create it.

# Romanticism

- The early Romantic period thus coincides with what is often called the "age of revolutions"—including the American (1776) and the French (1789) revolutions--an age of upheavals in political, economic, and social traditions, the age which witnessed the initial transformations of the Industrial Revolution.
- A revolutionary energy was also at the core of Romanticism, which quite consciously set out to transform not only the theory and practice of poetry (and all art), but the very way we perceive the world.

# Nature

- "Nature" meant many things to the Romantics. As suggested above, it was often presented as itself a work of art, constructed by a divine imagination, in poetic language.
- While particular perspectives with regard to nature varied considerably—nature as a healing power, nature as a source of subject and image, nature as a refuge from an artificial civilization—the prevailing views accorded nature the status of an organically unified whole.
- It was viewed as "organic," rather than, as in the scientific or rationalist view, as a system of "mechanical" laws.

# Nature

- “As well, we are a part of this Nature, and it can inspire us poetically, spiritually, imaginatively.
- William Blake, “Sir Isaac Newton” (1799).





# Symbolism and Myth

- Symbolism and myth were given great prominence in the Romantic conception of art.
- They were valued too because they could help express the inexpressible (ideas such as beauty) .

# Individualism: The Romantic Hero

- The Romantics asserted the importance of the individual, the unique, even the eccentric.
- In style, the Romantics preferred boldness over the preceding age's desire for restraint, maximum suggestiveness over the neoclassical ideal of clarity, free experimentation over the "rules" of composition, genre, and decorum, and they promoted the conception of the artist as "inspired" creator.
- How else could Lampman write a two page poem about frogs!

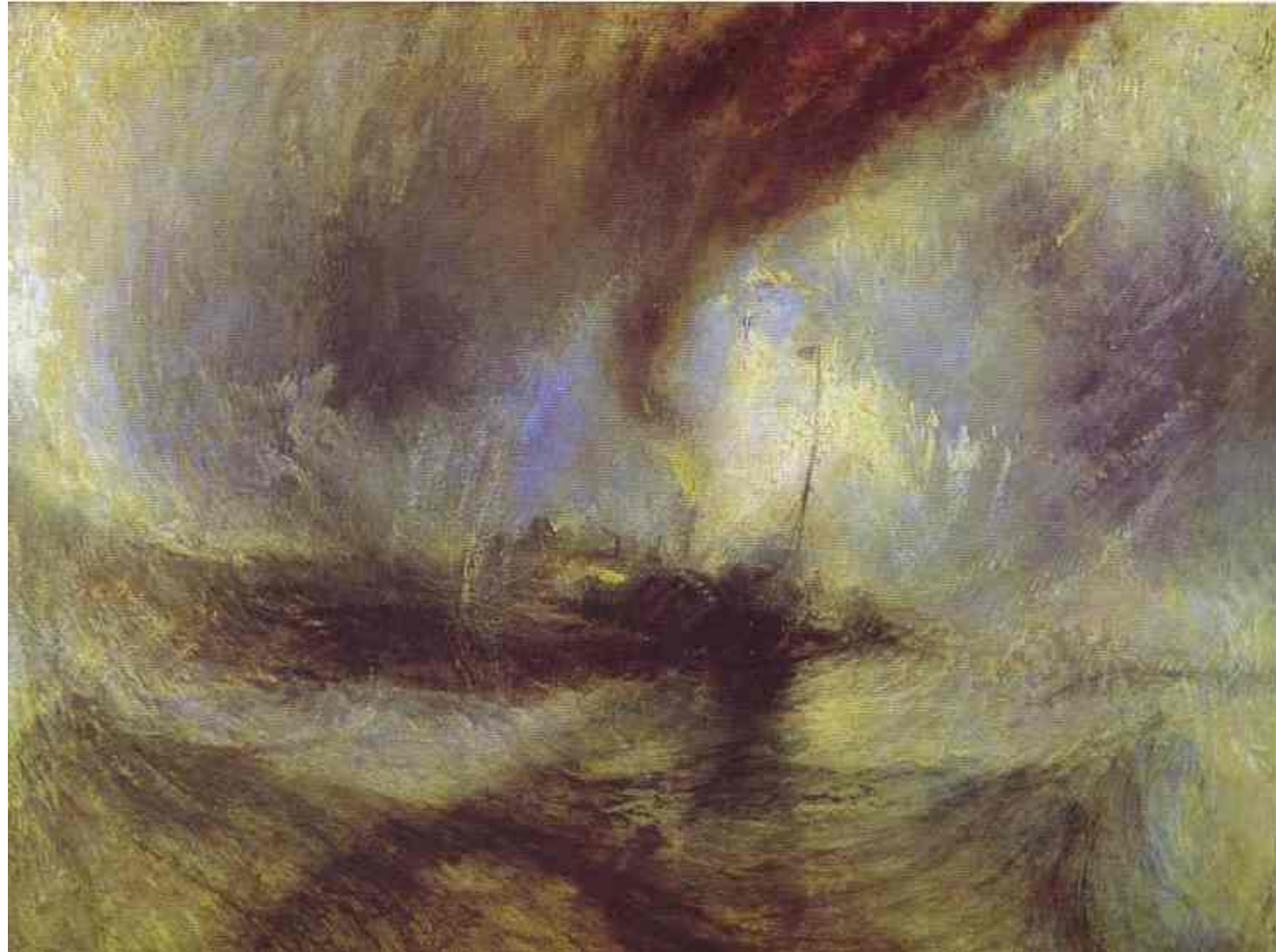
# Individualism: The Romantic Hero

- The Romantics were ambivalent toward the "real" social world around them. They were often politically and socially involved, but at the same time they began to distance themselves from the public.
- So artists sometimes took public stands, or wrote works with socially or politically oriented subject matter. Yet at the same time, another trend began to emerge, as they withdrew more and more from what they saw as the confining boundaries of bourgeois life.
- In some ways, the opposite was true for the Romantic-influenced Confederation poets.

# Sublime

- The sublime the quality of transcendent (beyond comprehension) greatness, whether physical, moral, intellectual, metaphysical or artistic. The term especially refers to a greatness with which nothing else can be compared and which is beyond all possibility of calculation, measurement or imitation.
- This greatness is often used when referring to Nature and its vastness, or the depth of emotion when one encounters beauty in art.
- Now we use the term pejoratively (out of its original context and in a more vulgar fashion):
  - Did you try the chocolate cheesecake? It is absolutely sublime!

J.W. Turner: *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth. 1842*



# Canadian Poetry

- Colonial poets of merit sought to describe local experience using universal frames of reference—i.e. traditional forms of poetry such as the sonnet.
- However, much of Canada's early verse (1840-1860) was excessively nationalistic and patriotic, as poets sought to play a part in the burgeoning country.

# Canadian Poetry

Thomas D'Arcy McGee (1825-1868)

“Home-sick Stanzas”

- Twice had I sailed the Atlantic o'er,
- Twice dwelt an exile in the west;
- Twice did kind nature's skill restore
- The quiet of my troubled breast—
- As moss upon a rifted tree,
- So time its gentle cloaking did,
- But though the wound no eye could see,
- Deep in my heart the barb was hid.

## Canadian Poetry 1860-1900

- Apart from nationalistic verse, poets attempted to project a social, economic, and political vision of Canada, leading often to rather didactic poetry.
- It was the Confederation Poets, among others, who really forged a separate, vibrant and vital poetry that was used traditional forms, but were intent on making the poetry stand on its own merits.



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- It was the Confederation Poets, among others, who really forged a separate, vibrant and vital poetry that was used traditional forms, but were intent on making the poetry stand on its own merits.
- They were fully aware of creative developments in London and New York, but were bent on using Canada as their subject and imagery, despite the lack of reception.

# Canadian Poetry 1860-1900

- Poetry often fell into 3 categories:
- NATIONALISTIC/PATRIOTIC
- NATURE
- ROMANTIC/SUBLIME

## Canadian Poetry 1860-1900

- Poetry often fell into 3 categories:
- Nature poetry became more advanced and complex, as we see with “The Flight of the Geese.”
- Nature was no longer simply topographic. Poet Charles Sangster saw it as “an embodiment of the spirit of being informing all human reality and around which human consciousness was shaped.”
- Nature was immediate and profound, and the fundamental perception, apart from the form, was not borrowed or channeled through other centres of culture.

# Canadian Poetry 1860-1900

- Romanticism/Sublime
- Literature was capable of inspiring spiritual force immanent not only in the forms of nature, but "in the mind of man" (Wordsworth)
- The belief in the goodness of humankind, who in a state of *nature* would be unaffected by civilization.
- Canada was a perfect place for the sublime, not only because of the "noble savage," but because its raw Nature could inspire nobility of thought.

**NATION**

**IDENTITY**

# How do we define and configure *nation*?

- A people who share common customs, origins, history, and frequently language; a nationality. A relatively large group of people organized under a single, usually independent government; a country.

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- A people who share common customs, origins, history, and frequently language; a nationality. A relatively large group of people organized under a single, usually independent government; a country.
- Is this a valid definition, or are there problems with it?

# How do we define and configure *nation*?

- The reflections of the unique character and experiences of the nation
- The unique experience of national life forms a collective consciousness (or one could say unconsciousness) marked by a distinct set of values, tensions, and myths. The hockey player is a nationalistic character.



- The hockey player is a nationalistic character. Ken Danby's "The Hockey Player"
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- Is it political, ideological, cultural?
- Are there such things as national identities? Are we clear about what it means to be Canadian, American, South African?

# What is an imagined community or nation?



Choose your Canada.



- “Canada” as a word does not necessarily have any meaning—it is “empty.” It is the cultural knowledge that you bring to “Canada” that determines its significance.
- Each political party offers you an ambiguous slogan that allows you to “fill” Canada with the values that you see fit.
- You “imagine” the “Canada” that the party is offering and decide whether it agrees with you.



Choose your Canada.



# How do we define and configure *nation*?

- Is it an imaginary construct, or is it a real place?
- Is it political, ideological, cultural?
- Are there such things as national identities?
- The act of drawing up borderlines defining a nation-state and a national identity is deeply problematic. On what criteria do you define a nation's essence? shared language? hair colour? average height? Who belongs and who is excluded, and who decides? Nations like to see themselves as natural phenomena, but are in fact imagined communities or nations.

# Nation

- Or, is it possible that there is no longer any determining body or group?
- We are fragmented, and each group tries to make its voice heard.
  - Religion
  - Science
  - Ideology
  - Politics



# What is essential to the function of a *nation*?

- Is law necessary to nation? What is the effect when law is imposed on citizens?
- How does confederation signify nation, and how does the literature reflect this?

# Poets

- Look at how poems contribute to nation

# IDENTITY

- A very general definition:
- the distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity

# IDENTITY

- But nation can also form identity. Thus, one's relationship to, and understanding of nation can determine or shape one's identity.
- What is the identity of Traill or Moodie?"

# OTHER ISSUES THAT FORM IDENTITY

- Religion
- Class
- Corporate Identification
- Gender
- Sexual persuasion

# OTHER ISSUES THAT FORM IDENTITY

- Education in particular is meant to form identity and keep children working toward a common goal. However, this is not always the case.
- What do we do when there is no school, or it has been destroyed?

# OTHER ISSUES THAT FORM IDENTITY

- The difficulty in discovering identity in a war-stricken or postcolonial state can be attributed to a certain lack of self-confidence or cultural uncertainty.
- How can one hold on to one's cultural traditions with pride if it appears to have no value or potential?
- Is this why the grandmother is so important?

# SUBJECTIVITY

- The combination or negotiation of identity and national belonging.
- Something to think about when we discuss Canadian literature over the next few weeks.
- Maybe this is so many countries such as Canada have “neighbourhoods.” They allow for the negotiation between identity and nation. You can be at home in your new home.