

CHAPTER 7

The Great Migration and the Push for Democracy

What's Chapter 7 About?

In this chapter, two key developments take place that affected Canada's future.

Between 1815 and 1850, waves of **immigrants** from Britain began to arrive in British North America. This period, called the Great Migration, shifted the demographics of British North America. Until the 1840s, Canadiens made up the majority of the population of Upper and Lower Canada. By the 1850s, people of British descent made up the majority of the population.

As this situation unfolded, leaders in Upper and Lower Canada, and in Nova Scotia, began to demand an end to Britain's colonial rule. They wanted British North America to have a more democratic form of government, so that the people living in British North America would have more control over the government that ruled them.

immigrant: a person intending to establish a home and citizenship in a country that is not their native country

emigrant: a person who leaves their native country to establish a home and citizenship in another country (*emigrant* and *immigrant* describe the same person at different points in the process of moving between countries)

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- What challenges of coexistence did the Great Migration create?
- Why did peoples in British North America want more democratic government?
- To what extent did demands for more democratic government reflect challenges of coexistence in British North America?
- How did the response to demands for more democratic government shape Canada?



The image on this page, "**Emigrants** at Dinner," appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in 1844.

What is the purpose of this image, in your opinion? To inform, persuade or entertain?

CHAPTER TASK

Reimagine the Past and Present

THE “CANADA MINUS ONE” PROJECT

The Virtual Museum of Canada plans to post a new interactive site called the “Canada Minus One” Project. The project focuses on the years 1815 to 1850, when British North America underwent some fundamental changes.

Who are the key events or people of this period? What if a key event had not happened, or a key person had not acted? How would Canada be different today?

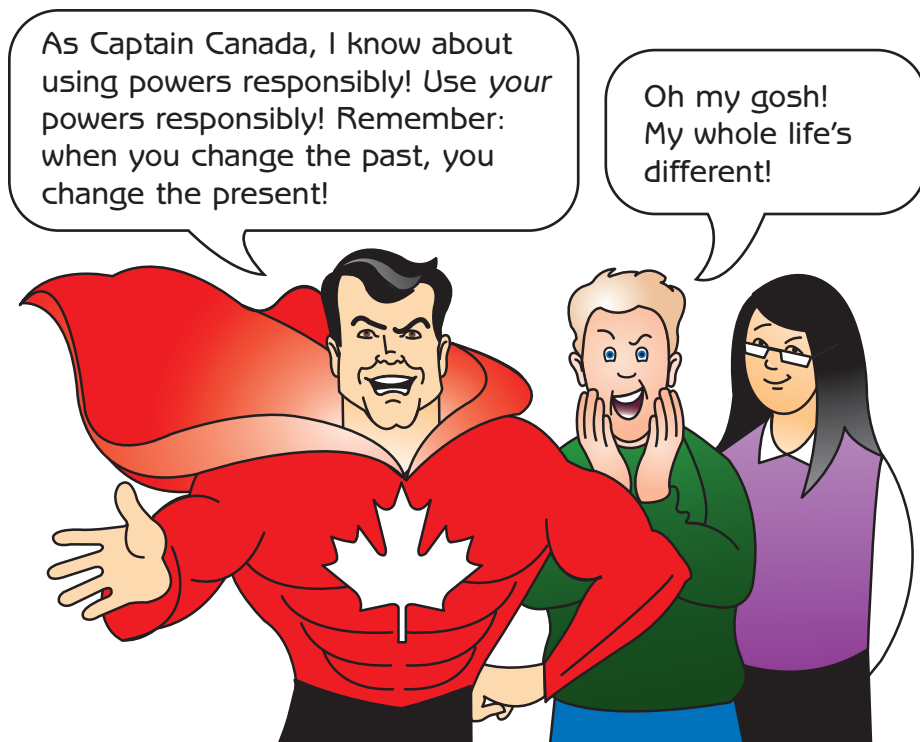
We want your ideas! **Choose an event or person that, in your opinion, fundamentally shaped the future of Canada.** Provide background information to support your choice.

Then, **think creatively!** What might Canada be like today if that one event had not occurred or if that one person had not acted? **What would Canada be like, “minus one”?**

Plan to **submit your ideas** to the “Canada Minus One” website in one of the following formats:

- Comic strip.
- Essay, poem or story.
- Live performance of a song or dramatic scene.

The site goes live next Canada Day! Get to it and have fun!



The Great Migration

GET READY

Between 1815 and 1850, British North America underwent an important **demographic change** as waves of people began to leave Britain seeking better lives.

This section provides information that answers the chapter-focus question:

What challenges of coexistence did the Great Migration create?

As you read:

- Summarize the change that took place.
- Predict some impacts this change had for First Nations peoples, Canadiens and English-speaking Canadians.

How could a mind map help you organize the key information in this section? Check out guidelines for mind maps in the Skills Centre at the back of this book.

What Triggered the Great Migration?

Poverty in Britain

People left Britain for economic reasons. Many had lost their livelihoods during the Industrial Revolution, as machines replaced their jobs. Many had lost their farms, as large landowners bought up small farms. A major conflict — the Napoleonic Wars — ended in 1815, causing an economic slowdown and more **unemployment**. In 1840, a **famine** hit Ireland, forcing many people to leave.

demographic change: change in the characteristics of a population

unemployment: having no work

famine: a shortage of food leading to starvation for many people



This illustration appeared in the Irish publication *The Pictorial Times* in 1846.

emigration: leaving one's country to establish citizenship and a home in another country

Opportunity in the Colonies

Britain's colonies provided places for people to move and start over. Britain encouraged **emigration** as a way to relieve its economic troubles, and to reinforce loyalty to Britain in its colonies. The cartoon below is about emigration. What do the labels "At Home" and "Abroad" refer to? How is the situation "Abroad" different from "At Home"?



This cartoon appeared in the British magazine *Punch* in 1848.

What Impacts Did the Great Migration Have?

More Farms

The new wave of colonists created new pressures in British North America. This painting from 1838 shows settlers clearing land for farms in Upper Canada.

British painter Philip John Bainbrigge created this image in 1838. What do you think this image tells us about Bainbrigge's opinion of the farm? Why? How might an Anishinabe person have viewed the same scene?

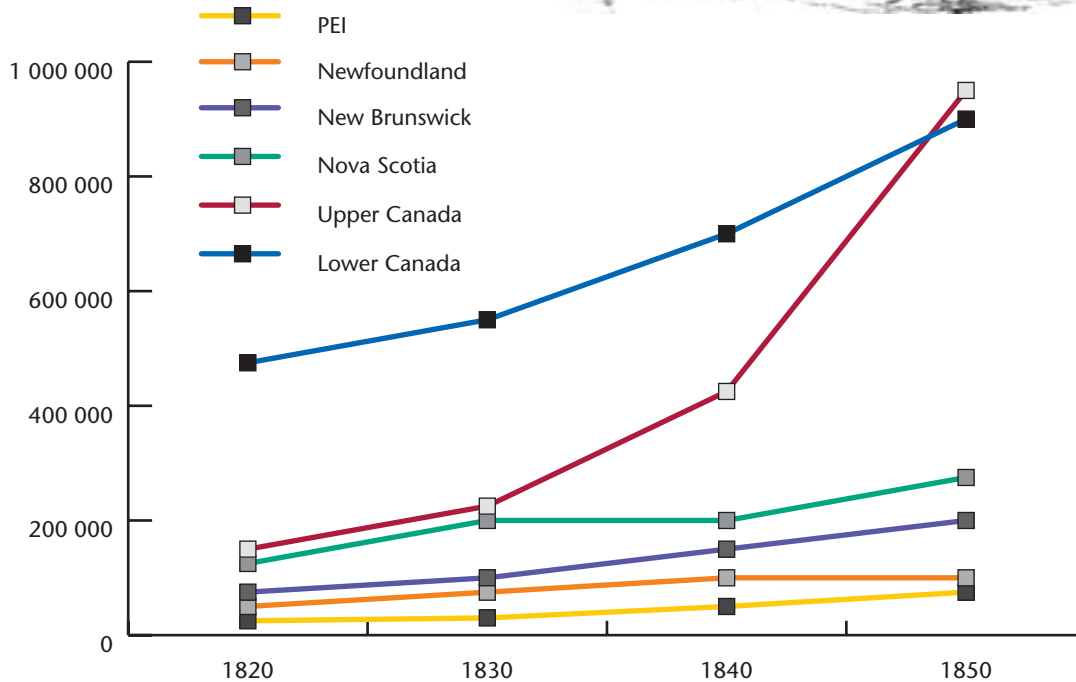


More British People

This image shows emigrants from Britain at a dock in Cork, Ireland, waiting to board ships to North America. Some are bound for Boston, some for New York, and some for Québec.



Population Growth of British North America, 1820s–1850s



RESPOND

1. Examine the cartoon on the previous page. What message does it convey about emigration? How realistic do you think this message is? Why?
2. Think about the painting of settlers clearing land. How would clearing land put pressure on First Nations such as the Anishinabe? Make a list of at least three ways clearing land would affect First Nations.
3. Think back to the Loyalist migration, which you learned about in Chapter 6. What similarities exist between the Loyalist migration and the Great Migration? How might the Great Migration pose a challenge for Canadiens in British North America?

HISTORY HAPPENS

Nineteenth Century Edition
Global News

The “newspaper” from the past
for today’s reader.

Not a Pleasure Cruise

— by Beatrix Chronos, your time-roving reporter

QUÉBEC, 1832 — As immigrant ships continue to flood into Québec’s harbours, there have been increasing reports of terrible conditions on board. Every new arrival, it seems, has his or her own tale of filthy, overcrowded conditions, of disease, starvation and death.

“It was awful, I tell you, awful,” said one passenger, who arrived with his wife and six children from Ireland this morning. “Almost from the time we set sail, I began wishing we had never set foot on board. My own suffering was bad enough, but it nearly killed me to see my family in such misery. We’re here now, though, and all eight of us alive, thank God. Not everyone was so lucky. A lot of families buried husbands, wives and children at sea.”

**Conditions on board
are so poor, passengers
call them “coffin ships.”**

“When we left port, everyone seemed fine,” said another passenger from Liverpool. “But then one day later a poor woman took sick, and before long there were twenty, then forty. And the weather was terrible. Some days it would storm, and we would roll from side to side, everyone seasick and vomiting. The next day the wind would stop, and we would sit motionless in the hot sun, baking below decks in our own filth.”

Experts in the travel industry blame the problems on overwhelming demand. Thousands upon thousands of people are eager to emigrate to Canada, and there simply aren’t enough ships to carry them. As a result, unscrupulous captains are packing 150 or even 200 passengers on



Crowded conditions on ships spread hardship and disease, as shown in this sketch by C.W. Jeffreys (1869–1951). The artist himself emigrated to Canada from Britain in 1881.

boats designed to hold half that many. Others are cramming people into cargo holds, in ships that carried timber to Britain from Canada. By doing this, the captains make money on the return voyage to Canada, but their passengers suffer. The timber ships are not designed for passengers.



Cholera Plague, Québec/photograph © National Gallery of Canada, purchased 1959.

Officials in Québec have lit bonfires in the streets, hoping this will stop the cholera outbreak. Thanks to Canadian artist Joseph Légaré (1795–1855) for capturing this scene.

On many ships, passengers are expected to bring their own food, and to cook their meals in a small kitchen near the middle of the ship. Oatmeal, salt pork and beef, and potatoes are the most popular foods.

Unfortunately, if the weather doesn't cooperate, an expected voyage of five to six weeks can end up taking ten or even eleven weeks. By the end of the trip, families may have no food left, and ships may be forced to cut water rations to the bare minimum.

Amazingly, despite the ordeal, many immigrants don't express any regrets over leaving Europe. "This was our one chance for a better life," said a man from Britain. "Now that we've survived the voyage, I'm determined to make sure that it was all worth it."

Cholera Controversy

Cholera, which first reared its ugly head earlier this year in Lower Canada, has lately become more and more common. Many on the street fear that the disease has been brought here by the immigrants. Some go so far as to suggest that

the British may have deliberately sent cholera, to kill and demoralize the Canadiens. They point out that, despite a cholera outbreak in Britain, Britain has not taken any measures to slow the pace of emigration from its shores.

Local medical officials still have no clear idea what causes the disease, or how it spreads.

Some believe the disease is spread by contact between sick people and healthy people. The theory has prompted the government to set up a **quarantine** at Grosse Île, about 50 kilometres downstream from Québec. All immigrant ships must report to the island, and anyone who appears ill must remain there until they recover (if they recover).

Many of the ill arriving at Grosse Île are Irish, and the situation has created many Irish orphans. Canadiens families have begun adopting these orphans, who share their Catholic faith. "But we want these children to remember where they came from," remarked one adoptive mother, holding the hand of a young Irish girl. "She will keep her own family name." ■

cholera: a contagious disease that causes intestinal problems and dehydration

quarantine: a place where people with a contagious disease are required to stay, to separate them from healthy people and to prevent the spread of the disease

FOCUS ON INQUIRY

Why is Grosse Île important in Canadian history?



FOCUS SKILLS
Processing Information

Share and discuss your steps for processing information.

The Topic

Grosse Île is connected to the Great Migration as a place of hope and tragedy. Why?

This inquiry begins with a general question. As you retrieve and process information about that question, new questions will develop. New questions can help you delve more deeply into interesting topics. They will help you focus your inquiry.

Getting Started

Work with a group of classmates to plan your inquiry and to retrieve information. Here are some questions to get you started:

- What purpose did Grosse Île serve during the Great Migration?
- Why is Grosse Île remembered as a place of tragedy?
- What connection does it have to events in other parts of the world?
- Who visits Grosse île today? Why?

Your Goal

On your own, **record your experience with processing information to establish a focus.** Be sure to take these steps and answer these questions:

- Generate at least three new questions that your research sparks.
- Which of these questions personally interests you most? Why? Why are your interests an important consideration?
- How valuable are the new questions as a way to answer the original question? Stay on track! Compare the relevance of the new questions to the original question.
- Choose one of the new questions and explain your choice.
- Revisit the process of retrieving information. Do you have the information you need to answer your new question? What steps will help you retrieve more information?

Finishing Up

Find one interesting fact related to your focus and be prepared to share it in class.

The Push for Democracy

GET READY

During the 1820s and 1830s, colonists in British North America began to call for change — or reform — to their system of government.

Why did peoples of British North America want more democratic government?

As you read this section, look for:

- Who or what had decision-making power in British North America?
- Where did power come from?

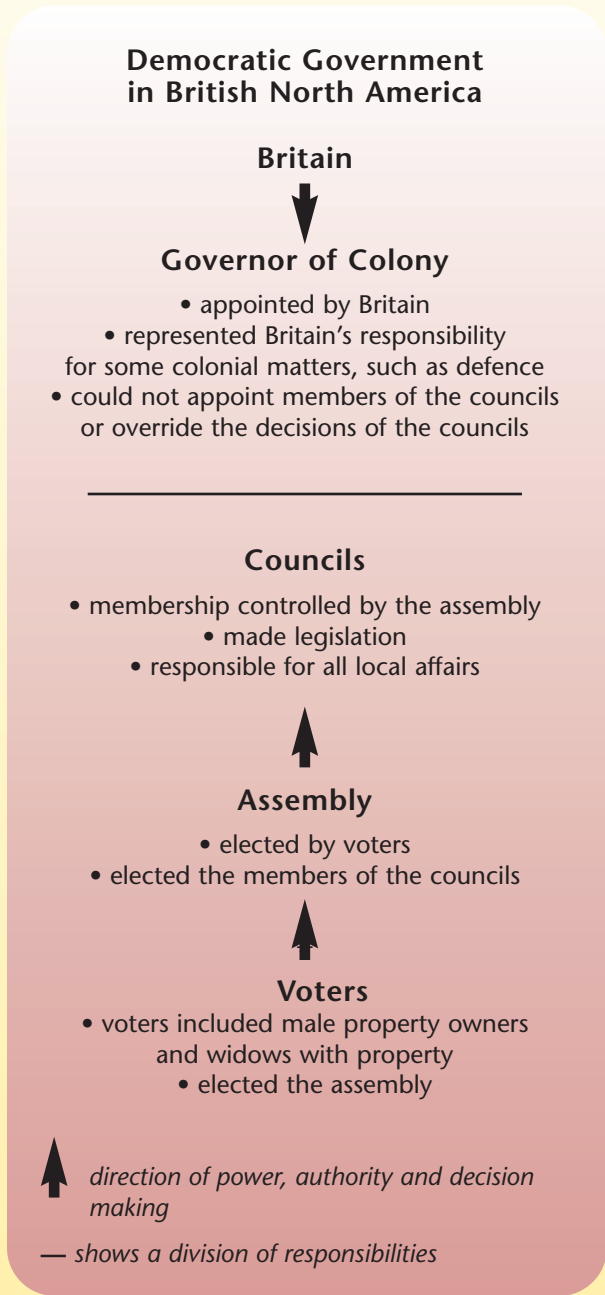
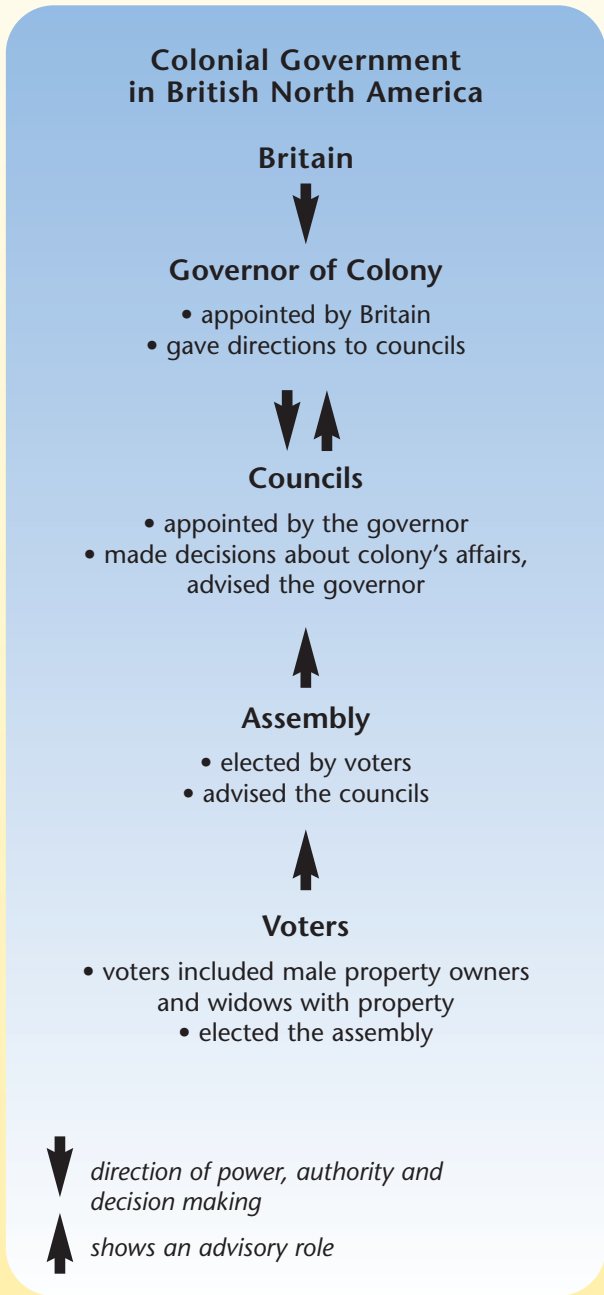
Before you begin to read this section, create a graphic organizer that will help you contrast information on two different systems of government: the system British North America had, and the system reformers wanted.

What Did the Reformers Want?

Who makes the decisions that affect your life? As a young person, what authority do you have to make your own decisions? What authority do the adults in your life have? How do you expect this situation to change as you grow up?

In some ways, the **reformers** who sought to change the government of British North America wanted Britain to treat them like adults. They wanted complete authority to make the decisions that affected their own lives.

reformer: someone who seeks to change — to reform — established rules and arrangements in society



Who Had Power in British North America?

British North America had **colonial government**. This meant Britain appointed the people who had the power to make decisions. In each colony, these people included a governor and the members of the colony's governing councils.

Each colony also had an assembly, elected by people living in the colonies. The assembly had less power than the governor and councils. The assembly could not make decisions for the colony. It could only **advise** the governor and councils.

Who Has Power in a Democracy?

In a **democracy**, voters elect the people who have decision-making authority. This means that voters have a lot of power, because they can choose decision makers who reflect their values and attitudes.

In British North America, reformers wanted voters to have more power.

- They wanted the elected assemblies of the colonies, not the British-appointed governors, to control the membership of the councils.
- They wanted the councils, not the governors, to have full control of decisions about local affairs.

Some reformers advocated changing the power structure of government while maintaining ties to Britain. Some advocated ending British rule altogether and establishing a **republic** like the United States.

colonial government:

a government established in a colony and controlled by an imperial power such as Britain

advise: to give advice

democracy: a system of government in which citizens elect those who rule them

republic: a system of government that does not have a monarch (usually a democracy)

RESPOND

1. How do people show support for a cause? Make a list of all the ways you might show support for a cause in which you believe strongly.
2. In your opinion, are there circumstances that justify violence in support of a cause? Why or why not?

tyranny of the majority: in a tyranny, one person or group of people holds power in a society and uses power for their own interests. The phrase “tyranny of the majority” draws a parallel between power held by a tyrant, and power held by a majority in a democracy

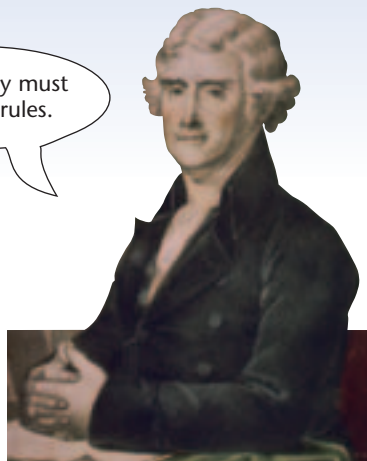
PERSPECTIVES ON Democracy

During the late 1700s and early 1800s, many European and American people wrestled with the principles of democracy, just like people in Upper and Lower Canada did. Thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson, John Stewart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville debated the issue openly. Here are some points of view based on their thoughts.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson wrote the American Declaration of Independence that established the United States as a democratic country. He believed everyone was equal, so no one person had the right to make laws for others. He advocated putting laws to a vote. According to Jefferson, only this would make rules and decisions in society fair.

The majority must make the rules.



John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill was a British political philosopher. One of his concerns about democratic government was the **tyranny of the majority**. Mill asked, how do you protect the rights of people who disagree with a decision made by a majority of people? Mill believed that it was wrong to force people to follow the majority’s opinion.

People who disagree with the majority need protection!



Alexis de Tocqueville

French thinker Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831 and wrote a critique of its government called *Democracy in America*. De Tocqueville thought that “ignorance and poor judgement” could lead voters to make unwise or unjust choices for society.

Can we trust voters to stay informed?



RESPOND

In a few years, you will have the right to vote in Canada. In a democracy, voting gives you power.

What responsibilities do Canadians have as members of a democracy? What responsibilities come with power?

1. To what extent do the concerns of Mill and de Tocqueville apply to Canada, in your opinion? For example:
 - What groups in Canada might have concerns about the “tyranny of the majority”?
 - How can knowledge of history help Canadians make good decisions today?
2. How can you answer the criticisms of democracy expressed in Mill’s and de Tocqueville’s thinking? As a class, create a list of responsibilities for voters.

The Rebellions of 1837 and 1838

GET READY

This section focuses on this chapter-focus question:

To what extent did demands for more democratic government reflect challenges of coexistence in British North America?

As you read this section, look for:

- Factors that led to demands for more democratic government in Lower Canada.
- Factors that led to the same demands in Upper Canada.

Use a Venn diagram to clarify similarities and differences between Upper and Lower Canada. Why might this comparison be important?

The Situation in Lower Canada

A struggle for power had developed between the governor-appointed council and the elected assembly. Cultural divisions aggravated this struggle, because Anglophone, Protestant people controlled the council, and Francophone, Catholic Canadiens made up most of the assembly.

- A group of wealthy English merchants — known as the “Château Clique” — held power in the councils appointed by the British governor. This meant that the governor had decided always to appoint members of this group to the councils.
- Starting in the 1820s, parties seeking more democratic government — first the Parti canadien, then the Parti patriote — controlled a majority of seats in the elected assembly. These parties drew most of their support from Canadiens.
- Fighting sometimes broke out between Canadien voters and English-speaking voters during elections for the assembly. In the most serious incident, in 1832, British soldiers, called in to break up a fight, shot three Canadiens.
- In 1832, Lower Canada experienced a **cholera** epidemic, brought by British and Irish immigrants who landed at Québec. The **epidemic** devastated Québec, killing nearly five thousand people.

This angered some Canadiens, who believed Britain should have halted emigration until the epidemic, which had begun in Britain, was over.

- Four years of **crop failures** had brought hardship to Lower Canada. By the winter of 1837, many farmers in Lower Canada faced starvation. Most farmers were Canadiens.

The Situation in Upper Canada

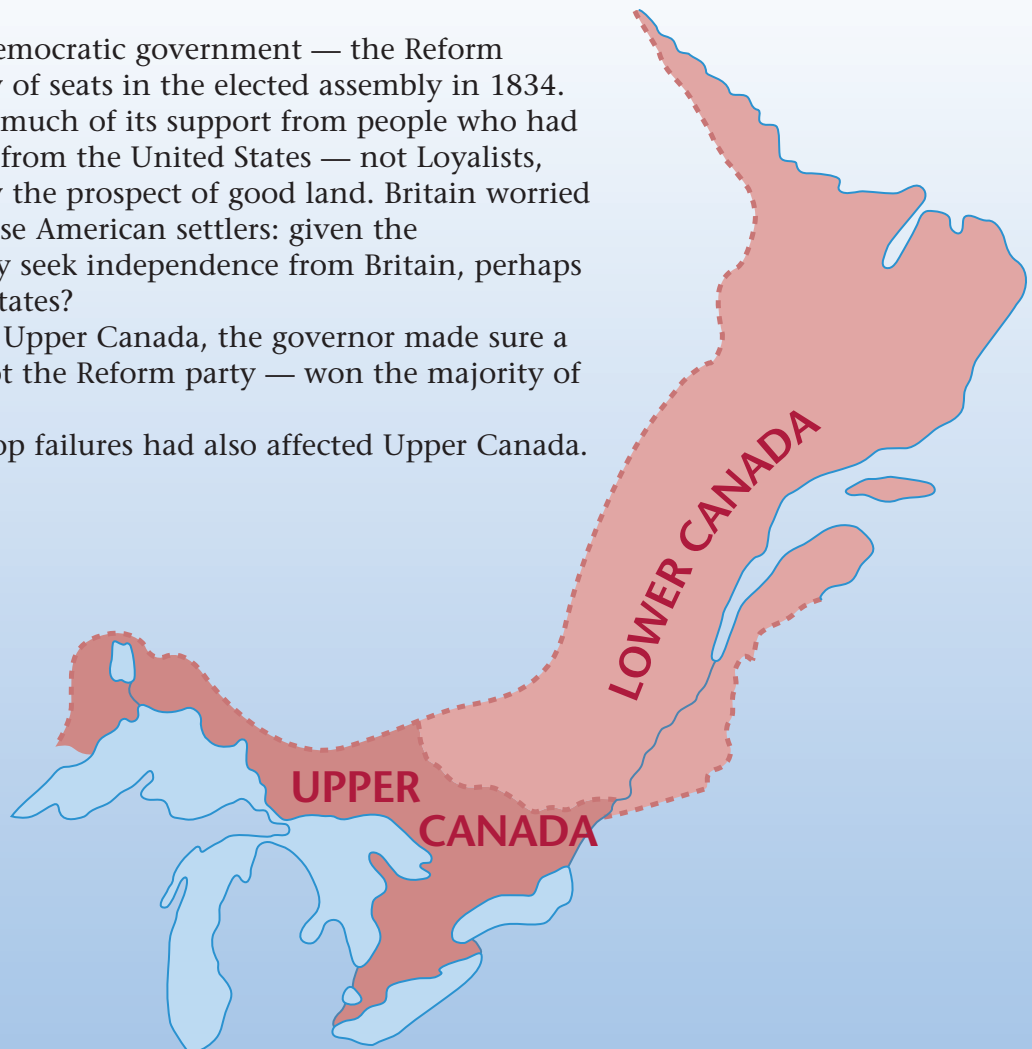
A power struggle between the council and the assembly had also developed in Upper Canada.

- A group of wealthy English Canadian families — known as the “Family Compact” — held power in the councils appointed by the governor.
- A party seeking more democratic government — the Reform party — won a majority of seats in the elected assembly in 1834. The Reform party drew much of its support from people who had come to Upper Canada from the United States — not Loyalists, but farmers attracted by the prospect of good land. Britain worried about the loyalty of these American settlers: given the opportunity, would they seek independence from Britain, perhaps by joining the United States?
- In 1836, in elections in Upper Canada, the governor made sure a party he favoured — not the Reform party — won the majority of seats in the assembly.
- By 1837, widespread crop failures had also affected Upper Canada.

cholera: a contagious disease that causes intestinal problems and dehydration

epidemic: the infection of a large population by a disease

crop failure: damage or elimination of a food crop, such as wheat, because of drought, insect damage or some other natural cause



outspoken: expressing an opinion clearly and directly



Papineau came from a family that owned a seigneurie along the Ottawa River. His family home, Manoir Papineau, is today a National Historic Site.



Mackenzie owned a newspaper in Upper Canada. He used his newspaper to voice his political ideas. What do you think about this situation? To what extent do newspapers and other news media today represent particular points of view, in your opinion?

Who Were the Reformers?

During the 1830s, three **outspoken** reformers emerged in British North America: Louis-Joseph Papineau in Lower Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie in Upper Canada, and Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia. All were, or had been, members of the elected assemblies in their colonies and all felt frustrated.

Louis-Joseph Papineau

I will strive my utmost against this government. I denounce it. It has the arrogance to call itself the protector of the English minority in Lower Canada. What about the Canadiens, who form the majority? The members of English minority act without a proper sense of citizenship when they cut themselves off from the people of Lower Canada and act only for themselves.

— Adapted from a speech to the assembly of Lower Canada, September 1835 in Alfred De Celles, *The Makers of Canada: Papineau, Cartier*. Toronto, 1904, pages 107–108 and 119–120.

William Lyon Mackenzie

People should elect their governments. Then, if the people do not elect good governments, it will be their own fault. But if they elect good ones, everyone will benefit.

Government is founded to benefit the people. If a government does not benefit the people, the people have a right to seek after and establish a new form of government that will give benefits to the greatest number of people.

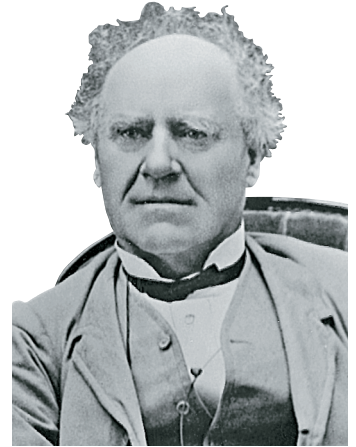
— Adapted from editorials in *The Colonial Advocate*, 16 May 1833 and 10 July 1836.

Joseph Howe

We ask for free institutions to truly reflect the feelings of the people, and to promote the happiness and prosperity of the country. We see no reason why we should not have the same rights as people in Britain. In Britain, when the people's representatives vote against the government, the government falls. Here, the people's representatives in the elected assembly can vote against the government a hundred times, and the government stays in place.

But the idea of "new institutions" — a republic, with no ties to Britain — never crosses my mind. I wish to live and die a British subject.

— Adapted from a speech to the assembly of Nova Scotia, 5 December 1836 in F.S. Chisholm, *The Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe*, Volume 1 (1804–1848). Halifax: Chronical Publishing Co, 1909, pages 104, 140; and from an editorial in the *Novascotian*, February 1837.



Another newspaper owner, Joseph Howe, called for reform in Nova Scotia. Under Howe's leadership, Nova Scotia was the first colony in British North America to move towards more democratic government.

RESPOND

1. As far as we know, Papineau, Mackenzie and Howe never met one another. What if you had to introduce them? Prepare some notes to make such an introduction. These reformers would be very interested to know the similarities and differences in their political outlooks and situations. In your notes, focus on this issue. What key similarities and differences can you identify?
2. Have you ever been outspoken on an issue? Why? What did you do? Share your experience with your class.

A Meeting in October

A Story about the Patriotes

— This representation of historical events is based on a news report in *La Minerve*, October 17, 1837.

Jean-Charles has never seen so many people in one place. There must be thousands here! What's happening now? He stands on his tiptoes to peer over the crowd. At the front, he can see a man motioning for silence. People begin hushing each other — Shh! Shh! He tugs his father's sleeve. "Shh! Stop talking to uncle! Look!"

The man begins to speak.

"Is that him?" Jean-Charles whispers urgently to his father. Like everyone else, Jean-Charles had come to hear Louis-Joseph Papineau, leader of the Parti patriote.

"No, it's another member of the assembly: Dr. Wolfred Nelson."

"An Englishman?" Jean-Charles gasps.

"Yes, but he and his brother believe in democracy and majority rule. Now quiet! I want to hear."

"I can't hear him. What's he saying?" Jean-Charles demands.

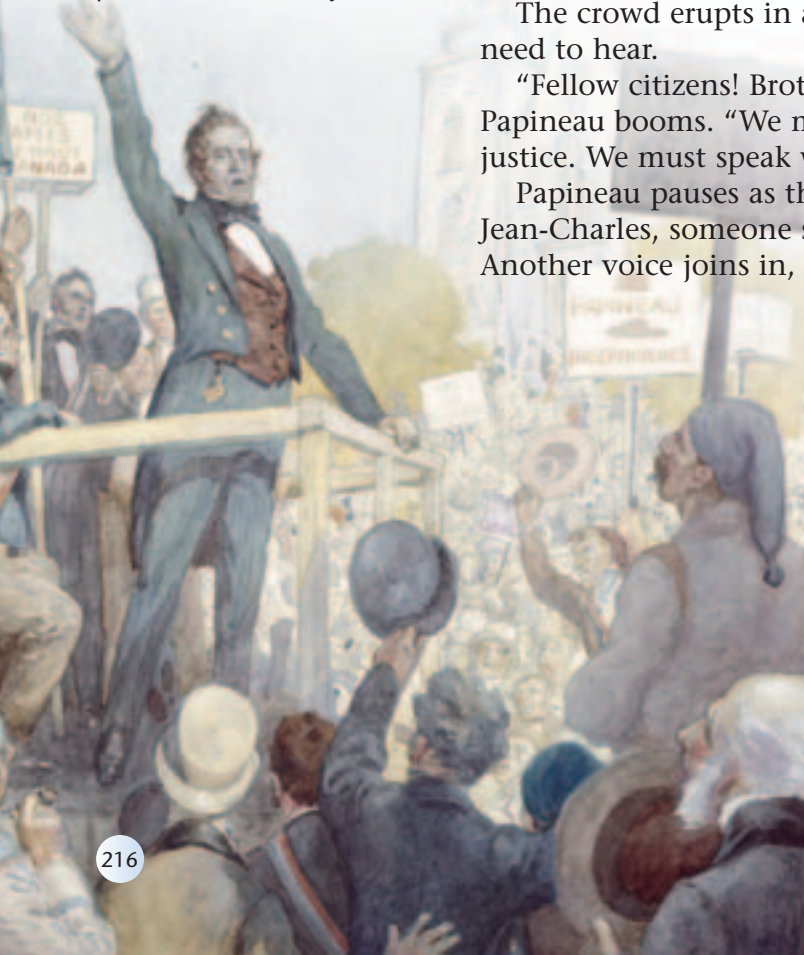
"He's introducing Papineau. Look, there he is now!"

The crowd erupts in a cheer. Papineau will tell them what they need to hear.

"Fellow citizens! Brothers who share our suffering!" Louis-Joseph Papineau booms. "We must work together to press our demands for justice. We must speak with one voice!"

Papineau pauses as the crowd thunders its approval. Behind Jean-Charles, someone shouts, "Long live Papineau and democracy!" Another voice joins in, "Papineau and the assembly majority!"

Papineau was well known as an excellent public speaker. Why would this be an important skill for a politician during the 1830s? To what extent have electronic media such as radio and TV changed the skills that politicians need today?



Jean-Charles cranes his neck around to see who's shouting. Around the kitchen table at Jean-Charles's house, he has heard his mother and father, his uncles and aunts, say similar things. Everybody has been talking about the neighbouring county of Deux-Montagnes, where people have taken matters into their own hands. They have rejected government-appointed officials and elected their own. It's a bold step, maybe a dangerous one. What will the British governor do now?

There had been a lot of talk around Jean-Charles's table, but not a lot of food. That was part of the problem. Canadien farms and families had suffered years of poor harvests, but the government did not help them. In fact, Jean-Charles's father had said, the government stood in the way. It allowed thousands of immigrants from Britain into the colony — immigrants who brought disease and more suffering. It rejected the proposals of Papineau and the Parti patriote, even though the Canadiens held a majority of seats in the assembly. This must end, Jean-Charles's father had said last night, and his mother, his uncles and aunts had nodded, murmuring agreement. They had already reached the same conclusion. This morning, after a mouthful of breakfast, Jean-Charles and his father had left for the meeting.

Now Papineau's voice rises through the crisp October air. "I call on you to continue to **boycott** British goods. No one should buy anything from Britain. There is still much to be won. England will learn about the people's will. But now is not the time for **arms**. It is not yet time for arms."

The crowd hums with approval and disapproval, as people talk over what they have just heard. Then Jean-Charles sees Dr. Nelson pop up again.

"I disagree with Mr. Papineau!" he declares.

"What's he saying? Father, can you tell?" Jean-Charles puts a hand on his father's shoulder, leaning in to catch his words, but still watching Nelson. Behind them, someone cries, "Liberty or death!"

"He's saying we must melt our bowls and spoons into bullets," Jean-Charles's father says, and puts his hand over his son's.

boycott: to refuse something as a way to create pressure for change

arms: weapons

HISTORY HAPPENS

Nineteenth Century Edition
Canada Section

The “newspaper” from the past
for today’s reader.

Les Patriotes Fight British Troops in Lower Canada

— Beatrix Chronos, your time-roving reporter, covers the violence that has erupted in British North America.



SAINT-CHARLES-SUR-RICHELIEU, LOWER CANADA, Sunday, November 26, 1837 — Elation turned to despair for the Patriotes yesterday. Two days after their amazing triumph at the battle of Saint-Denis, their **insurrection** was dealt a severe blow at Saint-Charles. Although they fought with desperate courage, the Patriotes could not hold off the forces of Colonel Wetherall.

“Many of our brothers are dead, but our dream will not die with them,” maintained a local farmer who joined in the fight. “We will continue our struggle no matter what the odds, no matter what the cost.”

British artist Charles Beauclerk (1813–1861) captured this image of British troops and Canadien Patriotes firing on one another at the Battle of Saint-Eustache — the final battle of the Rebellion of 1837.

On Thursday, the **rebellion** in Lower Canada saw its first major battle. Colonel Gore led the British on an assault of Saint-Denis. The Patriotes held off the attack for hours, and the British eventually had to sound the retreat. News of the Patriote victory swept through the area. With

insurrection: an attempt to overthrow an established government

rebellion: a challenge to the authority of a recognized government

growing support from the local farmers and townspeople, the Patriotes had a sudden sense of momentum. Saint-Denis, they hoped, would prove to be the first of many victories to come.

That optimism was shattered today, when Colonel Wetherall led 350 soldiers in a determined, relentless assault on Saint-Charles. Nearly 100 Patriotes, mostly volunteers from the surrounding area, did their best to hold their position, but they were severely outnumbered and outgunned. With dozens of their compatriots dead or wounded, they were forced to abandon the town.

Although the Patriotes tried to put a brave face on the situation, military analysts agree that the defeat leaves the rebellion hanging by a thread. The British now control most of the regions the Patriotes held. They have also demonstrated their willingness to use overwhelming and deadly force to put down any show of insurrection.

Following a final defeat of Patriotes fighters by British troops at Saint-Eustache, rumours have it that Louis-Joseph Papineau and several other Patriote leaders are preparing to flee to the United States, to regroup their forces and to plan future attacks. Others within Lower Canada, however, maintain that Papineau never supported violence. They believe peaceful solutions offer the best hope for long-term reform.

Volunteers Rout Rebels in Upper Canada

YORK, UPPER CANADA, Saturday, December 9, 1837 — William Lyon Mackenzie dreamed of an American-style government for Upper Canada, but he got a rude awakening yesterday. His poorly trained, disorganized militia

scattered in confusion when faced by an onslaught of more than one thousand volunteers loyal to Britain. Mackenzie himself is said to have escaped to the United States.

For years, Mackenzie has been a vocal enemy of the Upper Canada establishment, the “Family Compact.” He believes that power should be taken out of the hands of the elite and put into the hands of ordinary citizens.

More recently, Mackenzie’s vocal protests have taken a turn towards open rebellion. Three weeks ago, he and his followers issued a document, similar to the American constitution, that they see as a model for a new Upper Canadian government. Then, early this week, rebel supporters began to gather at Montgomery’s Tavern, about 6 kilometres south of York. They planned to attack the city and seize control of the government.

“The timing seemed perfect,” said a local blacksmith, who joined the rebels. “Lieutenant-Governor Bond Head had sent all the troops to stop the rebellion in Lower Canada. So we thought we’d have our own little rebellion while all the army was gone.”

The blacksmith was among several hundred rebels who marched on the city early Tuesday evening. “We were going up Yonge Street, when all of a sudden someone opened fire on us. Those of us in the front fired back, and then dropped to the ground so that the lads in the next row could fire over us. As soon as we fell, though, the boys behind us took off back towards the tavern. They thought we were all dead!”

Over the next three days, hundreds of volunteers loyal to the British converged on the city from the surrounding area, eager to defend the Crown. Yesterday, in their triumphant march on the tavern, they did just that. ■

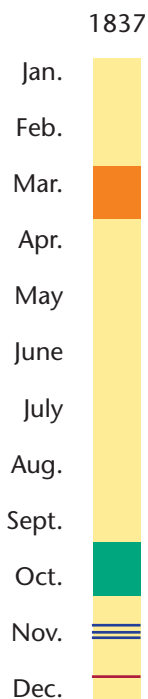
amnesty: a general pardon

The Chain of Events

When we look at the past, we see situations that we can't change. Yet, at the time, change was possible. What if you could change the chain of events in 1837 and 1838? What events would you target and why?

From what point of view will you approach this task? How do you think people with different perspectives might react to your choices?

Timeline of Key Events in Lower Canada, 1837–1838



March 1837: Britain rejects a petition for reforms prepared by the Parti patriote — the Ninety-Two Resolutions. Papineau begins to organize rallies against the government.

October 1837: Britain moves troops into Lower Canada, leaving Upper Canada without troops.

November 16, 1837: The government tries to arrest Patriote leaders, including Papineau. The leaders escape to the countryside. The Patriotes prepare to fight the British troops that they know will soon follow.

November 23, 1837: The Patriotes win a battle against the British troops at Saint-Denis.

November 25, 1837: British troops defeat Patriote fighters at Saint-Charles. The troops return to Saint-Denis and burn it.

December 14, 1837: British troops capture Saint-Eustache from Patriote fighters. Papineau and other Patriote leaders flee to the United States. British troops and volunteers loot and burn many Canadian settlements.

Events in 1838: Patriotes based in the United States organize a second rebellion in November 1838. The government defeats the rebellion within a week, and British volunteers again attack Canadian settlements.

Britain offered a reward for the capture of Papineau and of Mackenzie. Papineau remained in exile in the United States and France until 1844, when Britain granted him **amnesty**. It granted Mackenzie amnesty in 1849.

Both reformers returned to Canada and resumed their political careers, but they had lost their influence as leaders. New, more moderate reformers had taken their places.



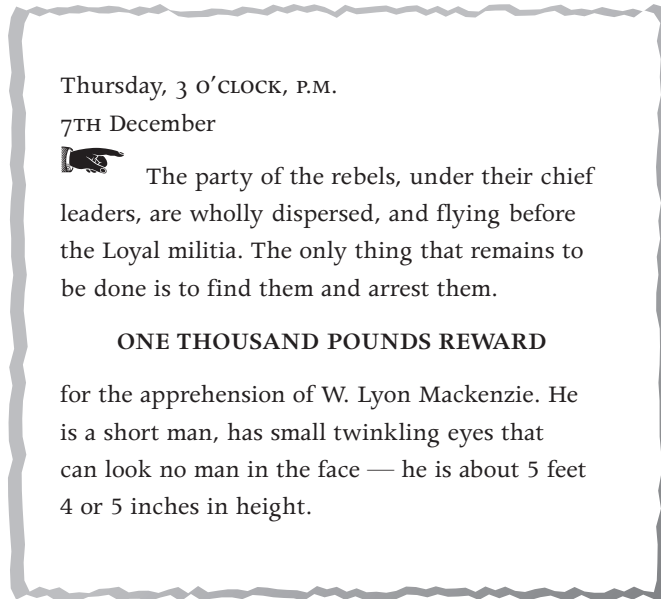
Timeline of Key Events in Upper Canada, 1837–1838

December 2, 1837: After hearing news of the battle of Saint-Charles in Lower Canada, Mackenzie begins to organize a rebellion in Upper Canada.

December 5, 1837: Mackenzie leads a disorganized attack on York (Toronto), which breaks up in confusion after a confrontation with fighters loyal to the government.

December 7, 1837: The government arms volunteers in Upper Canada to fight Mackenzie and his followers. The volunteers quickly defeat the rebels. Mackenzie flees to the United States.

Events in 1838: From the United States, Mackenzie continues to organize raids on Upper Canada. He captures Navy Island near Niagara Falls, where he declares a “Republic of Upper Canada.” British troops and volunteers push back the raids each time.



— From the *Upper Canada Herald*, 7 December, 1837.

1837

Jan.
Feb.
Mar.
Apr.
May
June
July
Aug.
Sept.
Oct.
Nov.
Dec.



RESPOND

1. Here’s an experiment for you. Try putting different coloured transparencies — blue or red — over the image on the right. What happens?

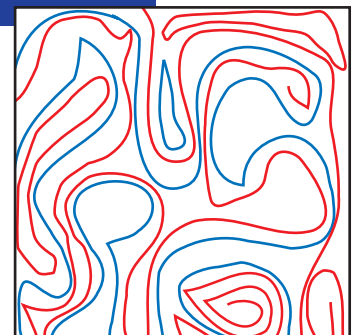
The past is like the image, in a way. It is a collection of facts that can be viewed through different lenses. A “blue lens” highlights different points than a “red lens.”

Consider what happens if you view the chain of events in Lower Canada and Upper Canada from different perspectives — or through different “lenses.” List facts that might emerge as important from:

- The perspective of an Upper Canadian loyal to Britain.
- A Canadian perspective.

2. Consider the question at the beginning of the timeline. If you could change events in this timeline, what events would you target?

3. To what extent do you think your choices are influenced by a “lens” on the past?



Britain's Response to the Rebellions

GET READY

This section provides information that answers the chapter-focus question:

How did the response to demands for more democratic government in British North America shape Canada?

It describes: 1) the solution recommended to Britain, 2) the solution Britain tried to enact, and 3) the way events actually played out.

As you read:

- Summarize each step. Give each step a name.
- Decide whether each step supported or opposed more democratic government in British North America.
- Note the impacts of each step on the Canadiens and on English-speaking Canadians.

rebellion: a challenge to the authority of a recognized government

royal commission: an official investigation established by the government (the Crown)

The Durham Report

After using violence to put down the **rebellions**, the British decided to investigate why the rebellions had taken place. They did not want to lose Upper and Lower Canada the way they had lost the Thirteen Colonies. They wanted to find a solution that would keep peace in the colonies, and keep them under British rule.

In 1838, Britain set up a **royal commission** to study problems in Lower Canada and Upper Canada. The leader of the royal commission was the newly appointed governor of the Canadas, Lord Durham. After five months in the Canadas, Lord Durham made some recommendations.

Recommendation #1 — Union of Lower and Upper Canada

I believe that tranquility can only be restored by subjecting the Province [of Lower Canada] to the vigorous rule of an English majority; and that the only [effective] government would be that formed by a legislative union [of Upper Canada and Lower Canada].

Recommendation #2 — More Democratic Government

Lord Durham believed Britain should have less of a role in the affairs of the colony, and that the colonists should have more power to govern themselves.

Such a union would ... enable all the Provinces [Upper Canada and Lower Canada] to cooperate for all common purposes; and, above all, it would form a great and powerful people, possessing the means of securing good and responsible government for itself.

Recommendation #3 — Assimilation of the Canadiens

Lord Durham described the Canadiens as “a people without history or literature.” He did not believe they had a culture worthy of protection.

The language, the laws, the character of the North American Continent are English; and every race [other than] the English ... is in a condition of inferiority. It is to elevate them from that inferiority that I desire to give to the French Canadians our English character. ... [It] would appear, that the great mass of the French Canadians are doomed... to occupy an inferior position, and to be dependent on the English for employment.

— These three excerpts are from Lord Durham,
Report on the Affairs of British North America.

Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963, pages 149, 159 and 160.



Britain appointed John George Lambton, First Earl of Durham (1792–1840) as governor of British North America in 1838, and as head of a commission to report on the cause of the 1837 rebellions. Lord Durham’s report changed history for Upper and Lower Canada.

RESPOND

Lord Durham’s report reflected his vision of society for Upper and Lower Canada. What idea of citizenship shaped this society?

1. Who belonged and didn’t belong to this society? Use phrases from the Durham report to support your position.
2. The Durham report reflects its historical context. Historical context involves circumstances, and accepted values and attitudes, that shaped societies in the past. What would you say are some of the important features of the Durham report’s historical context?



assimilate: to become part of a different cultural group

The Act of Union

In 1841, Britain passed the Act of Union, based on the recommendations of the Durham report to pressure the Canadiens to **assimilate**. As you read this section, consider how the Act of Union created these pressures. What steps did it take to limit the power of the Canadiens in British North America?

The Act of Union:

- Combined Upper Canada and Lower Canada into a single province: the Province of Canada.
- Created a legislative council that the governor appointed.
- Created an assembly with an equal number of elected representatives from Canada West and Canada East, although Canada East had a bigger population than Canada West.
- Made English the official language of government in the new Province of Canada.

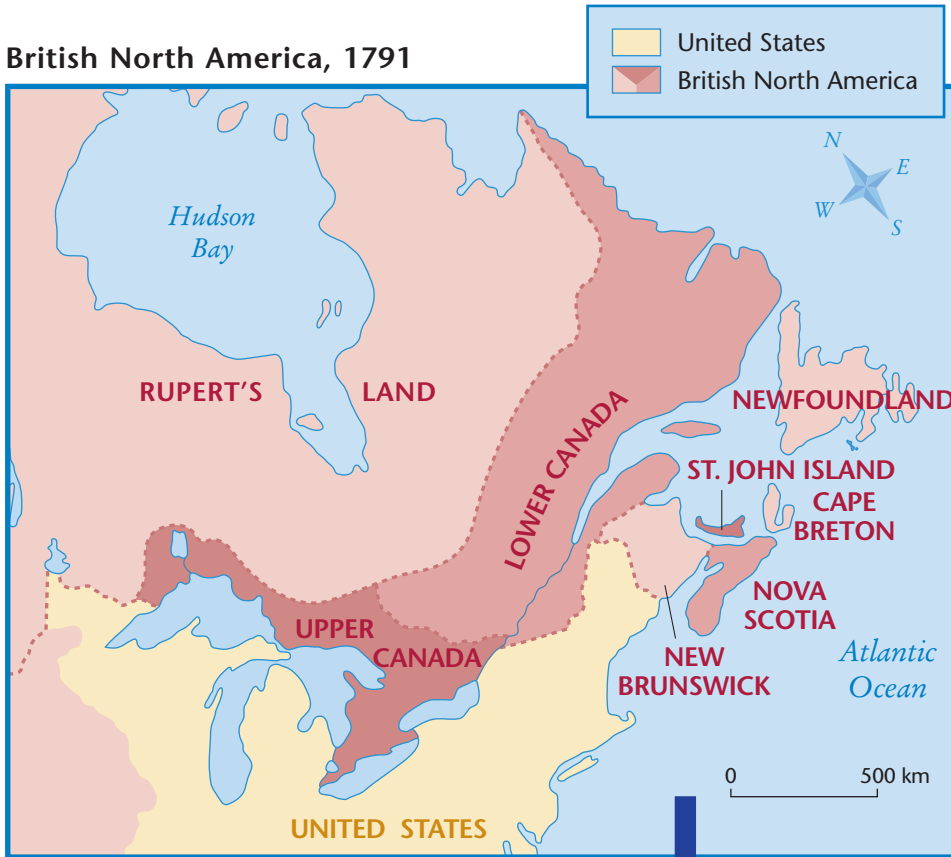
RESPOND

What idea of citizenship shaped the Act of Union? What do you base your conclusions on?

Government in the Province of Canada under the Act of Union



British North America, 1791



This was British North America before the Act of Union.

British North America, 1841



Under the Act of Union, Upper Canada was renamed Canada West. Lower Canada was made smaller and renamed Canada East. Canada East and West became the United Province of Canada. The region had one colonial government, instead of separate governments.

What Pressures Did First Nations Face during the 1840s?

By 1841, the year Britain passed the Act of Union to assimilate the Canadiens, many peoples in British North America faced pressure to change.

The Mississauga Nation — an Anishinabe people — were in the process of deciding whether to relocate. British settlers had moved onto their lands — lands that include the site of present-day Toronto. The Mississauga people could no longer move through their lands from summer to winter in their traditional way, in tune with the cycle of seasons and resources.

The Mississauga people had formed a permanent settlement of their own and taken up farming to survive. They petitioned Britain for the right to own their settlement and farms under British law. But Britain proposed to move the Mississauga people to Manitoulin Island — a rocky island in Lake Huron that British farmers did not want.

Mississauga leader Nawahjegezhegwabe rejected this idea. “If we went to Manitoulin, we could not live. Soon we would be extinct as a people. We could raise no potatoes, corn, pork, or beef. Nothing would grow on the smooth rock.”

In 1847, after seven years of careful consideration, the Mississauga people decided to move to land offered to them by the Haudenosaunee people at Grand River.

LANGUAGE LIVES!

The Mississauga people named their new settlement New Credit. It still exists today. The name comes from their original settlement at Credit River, where French fur traders established a post in the 1720s. This post had a tradition of trading “on credit.” *Credit* means “paying for things later.”

In Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq people also faced a desperate situation. One of their leaders wrote a letter to Queen Victoria in January 1841.

Madame:

I am the leader of my People, the Mi'kmaq in your Province of Nova Scotia.

I cannot cross the ocean to talk to you, for my canoe is too small and I am old and weak. I cannot look upon you, for my eyes cannot see so far. You cannot hear my voice across the ocean. I therefore send this Wampum and this letter — this paper talk — to tell you I am in trouble. My people are in trouble.


When I was young I had plenty: now I am old, poor and sickly too. My people are poor. No Hunting Grounds — No Beaver — No Otter — nothing. All these woods were once ours. Our fathers possessed them all. Now we cannot cut a tree to warm our wigwam in winter unless the white man please. The white man has taken all that was ours. Let us not perish.

My head and my heart shall go to One above for you.

Pasamayji'j Pimina'uwit

— Adapted from a letter by Pasamayji'j Pimina'uwit to Queen Victoria in Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us: Excerpts from Micmac History 1500–1950*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1991, pages 218–219.

Pasamayji'j Pimina'uwit:

 bah-suh-my-jeej
bim-meen-aw-oo-weet

RESPOND

1. The traditional decision-making processes of First Nations involve building consensus. In a declaration in 1980, the Anishinabe people said: “We have never accepted the concept that a majority has the right to force others to follow its ways. We have concluded instead that we can take the time to seek solutions that will be acceptable to all our people. In our tribal communities, we cannot live in ways that divide us: we are one people.” In what way does the 1846 decision of the Mississauga people to relocate reflect this tradition?
2. In what way does building consensus build a sense of belonging among the members of a society?
3. Talking to people and listening carefully to people are important skills in building consensus. How does the letter from Pasamayji'j Pimina'uwit reflect the importance of these skills in the traditions of the Mi'kmaq people?

coalition: an alliance among different groups

amnesty: a pardon

self-government: government that does not answer to an imperial power



Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine refused to recognize the provision in the Act of Union that made English the only language of government. In the assembly, LaFontaine defiantly spoke French. Britain eventually withdrew the provision.

The LaFontaine-Baldwin Alliance

The Act of Union sought to assimilate the Canadiens, and keep Canada East and West under firm British control. As it turned out, an East-West partnership emerged that did exactly the opposite.

Two politicians who wanted more democratic government joined their political parties in a **coalition** — a group working together — that dominated the assembly of the united Province of Canada for much of the 1840s. Robert Baldwin, an English Canadian, came from Canada West. Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine, a Canadien, came from Canada East.

LaFontaine and Baldwin were reformers who wanted more democratic government, but not a complete break with Britain.

With Baldwin, LaFontaine successfully pressured Britain to recognize French as an official language of the assembly. The coalition also took other important steps, such as establishing Université Laval in Québec City and the University of Toronto in Toronto, and securing **amnesty** for the rebels of 1837–1838.

Through the leadership of LaFontaine and Baldwin, Britain granted the Province of Canada **self-government** in 1848.

The Rebellion Losses Bill

One of the most difficult collaborations LaFontaine and Baldwin faced involved the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849, after the Province of Canada had achieved control of its affairs from Britain. It proved a trial by fire — truly — of Britain’s commitment to let the colony govern itself.

The bill, drafted by LaFontaine, sought compensation for people in Lower Canada who had suffered property damage during the Rebellions of 1837–1838. A similar bill had already compensated people in Upper Canada.

What’s a Political Party?

A political party is a group of people who advocate the same ideas about how to run society, and who seek to form the government.

Parties have territories. For example, Alberta has separate political parties from Saskatchewan, because Alberta and Saskatchewan are separate “political territories.”

LaFontaine and Baldwin might have formed a powerful, single political party, except the Act of Union prevented this. Canada East and Canada West were separate political territories within the united Province of Canada. By forming an alliance across this divide, however, LaFontaine and Baldwin were able — together — to control a majority of seats in the province’s legislature.

Conservative members of the assembly, who opposed the reformers, hotly denounced the new bill. They said it rewarded “traitors.” The reform alliance forged by LaFontaine and Baldwin, however, held a majority of seats. The bill passed.

Conservatives then called on the British governor of the colony, Lord Elgin, to refuse to sign the bill into law. Lord Elgin, however, respected the decision of the assembly, despite his own personal opposition to the bill.

Lord Elgin’s action affirmed in a concrete way that the voters of the Province of Canada, through their representatives in the elected assembly, controlled those who governed them. The province had achieved a democratic form of government, with the authority to make key decisions independent of Britain.

Because of his decision, an angry mob of English Canadians attacked Lord Elgin in the streets. Lord Elgin, however, did not change his mind.



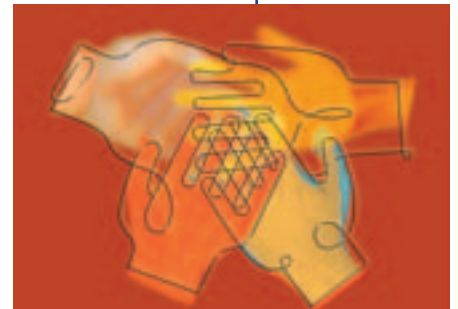
Robert Baldwin helped LaFontaine secure a seat in the assembly in 1841. LaFontaine returned the favour in 1843, offering Baldwin a seat in a by-election, which Baldwin won. The two men became good friends.

RESPOND

What effect does more democratic government have on the idea of citizenship?

Use the history in this book about the LaFontaine-Baldwin alliance and the Rebellion Losses Bill to help you answer the following questions:

1. What evidence is there that LaFontaine and Baldwin wanted a more democratic form of government?
2. What evidence says they wanted to include people with different collective identities as members of society?
3. Who objected to the government they created? Why?



Because of the Rebellion Losses Bill, protestors set fire to the parliament buildings, then located in Montréal. Canadian artist Joseph Légaré (1795–1855) did this painting of the event.



BUILD THE BIG PICTURE

demographics: data about the characteristics of a population, such as number, origin and age

Anglophone: a person whose first language is English

Francophone: a person whose first language is French

The Act of Union became law just as the Great Migration changed the **demographics** of British North America. To what extent was this coincidence important? Use the information on this page to formulate answers to that question.

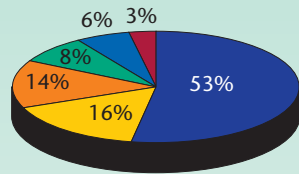
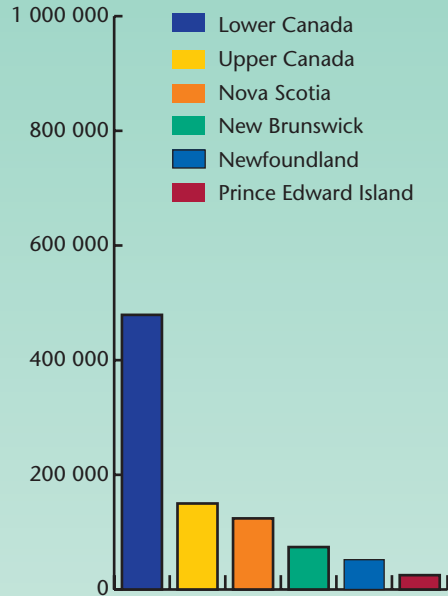
Check page 386 of the Skills Centre for tips on reading maps.

British North America, 1820s–1850s



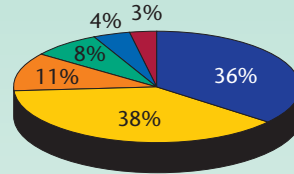
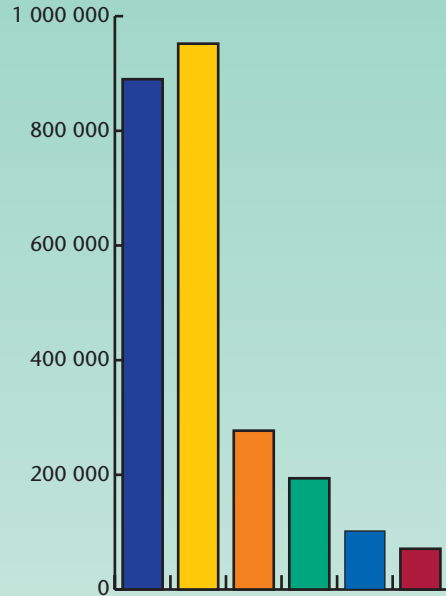
This map shows British North America before 1841. In 1841, the Act of Union combined Upper and Lower Canada into the united Province of Canada. Upper Canada became Canada West and Lower Canada became Canada East.

Population of British North America, 1820s



Approximate total population, 1820s:
900 000

Population of British North America, 1850s



Approximate total population, 1850s:
2 486 000

RESPOND

Compare the demographic information about British North America in the 1820s and the 1850s.

1. What has happened? Describe the changes in your own words.
2. The Act of Union in 1841 pressured the Canadiens to assimilate in several ways. One way involved giving the minority English population equal power compared to the majority Canadian population in the elected assembly for the united Province of Canada.
 - By 1850, how had the English-French demographics in the united Province of Canada changed? What group formed the majority?
 - What challenges might these demographic changes have posed to the political arrangements of the Act of Union? What rights do you think English-speaking Canadians would want? What rights do you think Canadiens would want to protect?

oppression: unjust or unfair use of power

Conquest: the British takeover of New France in 1763, under which New France became the British colony of Québec

PERSPECTIVES ON

The Act of Union

An Historians' Roundtable

Remember the “lens on history” experiment earlier in this chapter? Here’s another example of how the same event can look different from different perspectives.

What if you could listen to historians debate this question:

How did the Act of Union affect French-English relations in Canada?

Historian #1

The Act of Union was an act of **oppression**. It was a new **Conquest** of the people of Québec. The act ended the use of the French language in government. It also gave the Canadiens in Canada East and Anglophones in Canada West the same number of seats in their joint assembly at a time when the population of Canada East was larger than Canada West.

Historian #2

The Act of Union created a government in which Canadien and English-speaking politicians cooperated. This fundamentally influenced Canada’s future. A good example is the LaFontaine-Baldwin alliance — a Francophone-Anglophone alliance that helped the people of British North America establish effective elected assemblies.

Historian #3

The Act of Union tried to assimilate the Canadiens, but it backfired. It made the Canadiens more determined to keep every right they had gained in 1774 and 1791.

The Act of Union gave the Canadiens the means to do this, too. It gave the Canadiens in Canada East the same number of representatives as English-speaking Canadians in Canada West.

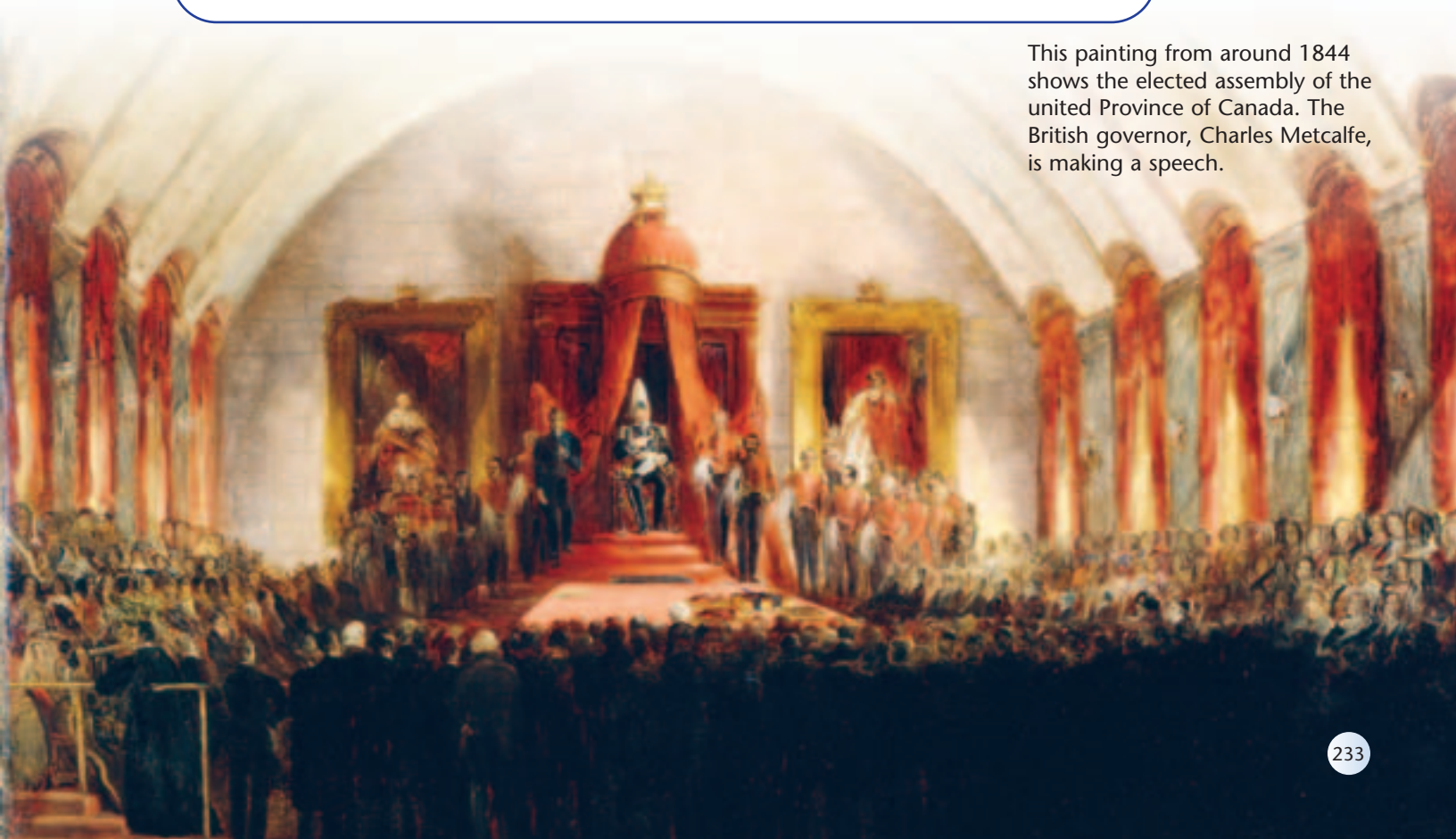
At first, this was a disadvantage for the Canadiens, because it made their majority population only as powerful as the British minority population.

Soon, however, that situation changed. By 1850, the British population of Canada West surpassed the Canadien population of Canada East, but the equality of power under the act remained the same.

RESPOND

Think about your chapter task: to reimagine the present if an event in the past had not happened. How do you think Canada might be different today if the Act of Union had not happened? Use the points of view on pages 232 and 233 to generate some scenarios.

This painting from around 1844 shows the elected assembly of the united Province of Canada. The British governor, Charles Metcalfe, is making a speech.



Chapter 7 Review

WHAT DID CHAPTER 7 EXPLORE?

- How the Great Migration affected the demography of British North America, and First Nations peoples and the Canadiens.
- Why the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838 took place.
- How the Act of Union affected the way issues raised by the rebellions were resolved.

Check for Understanding

1. Give an example of the impact of the Great Migration on one of these groups of people:
 - The Anishinabe.
 - The Mi'kmaq.
 - Canadiens.
2. Give an example of a similarity and a difference between the rebellion in Upper Canada in 1837 and the rebellion in Lower Canada in 1837.

Demonstrate your Knowledge

3. Imagine this. You are visiting Montréal, using the city's subway system — le Métro — to get around. One day, on the Green Line (one of the four main Métro lines of Montréal) you pull into a station called “Papineau.” The station has colourful murals that tell of an event in history. The friend you are with points to the central mural, which shows the date 1837. Your friend says: “What’s that about?” How would you explain Papineau Station to your friend?

Apply your Skills

4. A perspective includes opinions and ideas shared by people with a common language, culture and history. In this chapter, you considered how perspectives — different “lenses” — might influence interpretations of the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838. In what way might perspectives influence interpretations of the Act of Union?

Give examples of what might be important about the Act of Union from the perspective of:

- An English-speaking person living in Canada West.
- A Canadien living in Canada East.
- A First Nations person living in Canada East or West, such as a Haudenosaunee, Kichesiprini, Innu or Anishinabe person.

Take Stock

5. Being able to make and interpret timelines is an important skill in understanding history, because timelines help clarify cause-and-effect relationships among events. In this chapter, you worked with timelines about the Rebellions of 1837 and 1838. What went well for you in that work? What could have gone better? Describe two steps you could take to streamline your process of analyzing timelines.