



The Origins of Canada: Who discovered it? Who first settled it? When did it stop being part of the British Empire? Where was the capital first established, and how do we react when we hear the name John A. Macdonald?

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July 1, 2021

INTRODUCTION: DIVERGING NARRATIVES OVER FOUNDING OF CANADA

What do Canadians know about the origins of the country? For the better part of Canada's post-Confederation history the country and its people were weaned on the notion that there were two founding peoples, the British and the French. But since the beginning of the 21st century, that idea has gradually given way to a narrative that sees Indigenous peoples as both the discoverers and the first settlers of a Canada that was born prior to 1867. As seen in the June 2021 ACS-Leger poll, the latter view of Canada's historic narrative has not taken hold amongst the country's francophones of which the majority still maintain that the French discovered and first settled Canada. That divergence in opinion is not insignificant in contemporary discussions about Quebec's place in Canada and the French fact in this country.

WHAT THE HISTORY TEXTS SAY

When Europeans explored Canada they found all regions occupied by native peoples they called Indians, because the first explorers thought they had reached the East Indies. The native people lived off the land, some by hunting and gathering, others by raising crops. The Huron-Wendat of the Great Lakes region, like the Iroquois, were farmers and hunters. In 1604, the **first** European **settlement** north of Florida was **established** by French explorers Pierre de Monts and Samuel de Champlain, **first** on St. Croix Island (in present-day Maine), then at Port-Royal, in Acadia (present-day Nova Scotia). In 1608 Champlain **built** a fortress at what is now Québec City.

Discover Canada - Canada's History (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada)

ONE IN TWO CANADIANS BELIEVE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DISCOVERED CANADA WHILE ONE IN THREE THINK IT WAS JACQUES CARTIER; OLDER CANADIANS ARE MORE DIVIDED ON THE MATTER THAN THE YOUNGEST COHORT

Who discovered Canada?	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
Indigenous Peoples	50%	60%	51%	42%
Eric the Red/Vikings from Iceland	10%	7%	8%	14%
John Cabot (Giovani Caboto)	4%	1%	6%	4%
Jacques Cartier	31%	24%	29%	37%
Wolfe and Montcalm	1%	0%	1%	1%
John A. Macdonald	4%	7%	5%	2%

CANADA'S FRANCOPHONES ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO SAY CARTIER DISCOVERED CANADA RATHER THAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, WHILE OTHER CANADIANS SELECT INDIGENOUS OVER CARTIER

Who discovered Canada?	French	English	Others
Indigenous Peoples	25%	57%	52%
Eric the Red/Vikings from Iceland	4%	12%	7%
John Cabot (Giovani Caboto)	1%	4%	8%
Jacques Cartier	68%	20%	26%
Wolfe and Montcalm	1%	1%	0%
John A. Macdonald	1%	5%	6%

WHAT THE HISTORY TEXTS SAY

The Vikings from Iceland who colonized Greenland 1,000 years ago also reached Labrador and the island of Newfoundland. The remains of their settlement, l'Anse aux Meadows...

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MAJORITY OF CANADIANS SAY INDIGENOUS ESTABLISHED FIRST SETTLEMENT IN CANADA, WHILE ALMOST ONE IN THREE SAY IT WAS FRENCH

Who established the first settlements in Canada?	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
Indigenous Peoples	52%	50%	53%	52%
The English	15%	19%	15%	11%
The French	30%	26%	28%	34%
The Irish	1%	2%	2%	1%
Other	3%	3%	2%	3%

CANADA'S FRANCOPHONES SELECT FRENCH OVER INDIGENOUS WHEN ASKED ABOUT FIRST SETTLEMENTS, WHILE OTHER CANADIANS SELECT INDIGENOUS OVER FRENCH

Who established the first settlements in Canada?	French	English	Others
Indigenous Peoples	34%	58%	50%
The English	13%	16%	10%
The French	50%	22%	36%
The Irish	3%	0%	3%
Other	0%	4%	1%

1867 OR 1982? WHEN DID CANADA LEAVE THE BRITISH EMPIRE?

Country	Date of Dominion status	Date of final relinquishment of British powers
Canada	1 July 1867	17 April 1982

ONE IN TWO CANADIANS BELIEVE CANADA LEFT THE BRITISH EMPIRE AT CONFEDERATION WITH THE YOUNGER COHORT SOMEWHAT MORE LIKELY THAN THE OLDER ONE TO CHOOSE 1867

When did Canada stop being part of the British Empire?	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
1867 - Confederation/British North America Act	50%	59%	52%	42%
1931 - Statute of Westminster for Canada	7%	10%	4%	6%
1945 - Canada joins the United Nations	3%	4%	3%	2%
1982 - Patriation of the Constitution	19%	12%	21%	23%
None of the Above	22%	15%	21%	27%

LANGUAGE IS NOT A VERY SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN DETERMINING CANADIANS' OPINION OF WHETHER CANADA LEFT THE BRITISH EMPIRE AT CONFEDERATION

When did Canada stop being part of the British Empire?	French	English	Others
1867 - Confederation/British North America Act	48%	49%	57%
1931 - Statute of Westminster for Canada	9%	6%	5%
1945 - Canada joins the United Nations	3%	3%	4%
1982 - Patriation of the Constitution	17%	20%	17%
None of the Above	22%	22%	17%

KINGSTON: CANADA'S FIRST CAPITAL

- The location of the capital city of the Province of Canada changed six times in its 26-year history. The first capital was in Kingston (1841–1844). The capital moved to Montreal (1844–1849) until rioters, spurred by a series of incendiary articles published in *The Gazette* and burned down Montreal's Parliament Buildings. It then moved to Toronto (1849–1852). It moved to Quebec City from 1852 to 1856, then Toronto for one year (1858) before returning to Quebec City from 1859 to 1866. In 1857, Queen Victoria chose Ottawa as the permanent capital of the Province of Canada, initiating construction of Canada's first parliament buildings, on Parliament Hill. The first stage of this construction was completed in 1865, just in time to host the final session of the last parliament of the Province of Canada before Confederation.

MOST CANADIANS CHOSE OTTAWA AS CANADA'S FIRST CAPITAL, WITH KINGSTON A CLOSE SECOND; BUT WHILE YOUNGER CANADIANS CHOSE OTTAWA OVER KINGSTON, THE OLDER COHORT DECIDED KINGSTON OVER OTTAWA

Where was the first capital of Canada established?	Total	18-34	35-54	55+
Kingston	30%	25%	26%	37%
Ottawa	37%	43%	39%	32%
Montreal	7%	6%	8%	7%
Toronto	8%	9%	7%	8%
Quebec city	18%	17%	19%	17%

FRANCOPHONES EQUALLY CHOSE OTTAWA AND QUEBEC CITY AS CANADA'S FIRST CAPITAL, WHILE QUEBEC CITY IS FAR LESS LIKELY TO BE CHOSEN AMONG NON-FRANCOPHONES

Where was the first capital of Canada established?	French	English	Other
Kingston	17%	34%	34%
Ottawa	33%	38%	42%
Montreal	13%	6%	6%
Toronto	4%	9%	9%
Quebec City	33%	14%	9%

JOHN A MACDONALD REMAINS POPULAR AMONGST CANADIANS

While there has been much recent discussion of the tragic discoveries of unmarked burial sites of Indigenous persons and a growing number of revelations about historic injustices severely affecting Indigenous lives, the Prime Minister with whom much of the failings have been associated is still seen positively by the majority of Canadians - as seen in the survey below.

DESPITE REVELATIONS ABOUT MACDONALD'S CHECKERED LEGACY MOST CANADIANS STILL REACT POSITIVELY WHEN THEY HEAR THE NAME OF CANADA'S FOUNDING PM

Do you have a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative or very negative of John A. Macdonald -	Total	British Columbia	Alberta	Prairies	Ontario	Quebec	Maritimes
TOTAL POSITIVE	61%	57%	61%	58%	66%	56%	68%
Very positive	13%	10%	22%	17%	16%	6%	5%
Somewhat positive	49%	47%	39%	41%	50%	50%	63%
TOTAL NEGATIVE	39%	43%	39%	42%	34%	44%	32%
Somewhat negative	29%	31%	32%	30%	26%	32%	24%
Very negative	10%	12%	7%	13%	8%	12%	8%

METHODOLOGY

Web survey using computer-assisted Web interviewing (CAWI) technology.

From, June 18-20, 2021 some 1542 Canadians were surveyed via web panel

Using data from the 2016 Census, results were weighted according to gender, age, mother tongue, region, education level and presence of children in the household in order to ensure a representative sample of the population.

No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample (Web panel in this case). However for comparative purposes, a probability sample of 1542 respondents would have a margin of error of $\pm 2.52\%$, 19 times out of 20.

The research results presented here are in full compliance with the CRIC Public Opinion Research Standards and Disclosure Requirements.