

Territorial Evolution



This series of maps presents the history of the political boundaries in Canada. Boundaries are conceptualized for many different reasons. Boundaries can be used to demarcate changing climate zones, or economic regions, but most commonly we think of them as being lines on the land that delineate political jurisdictions.

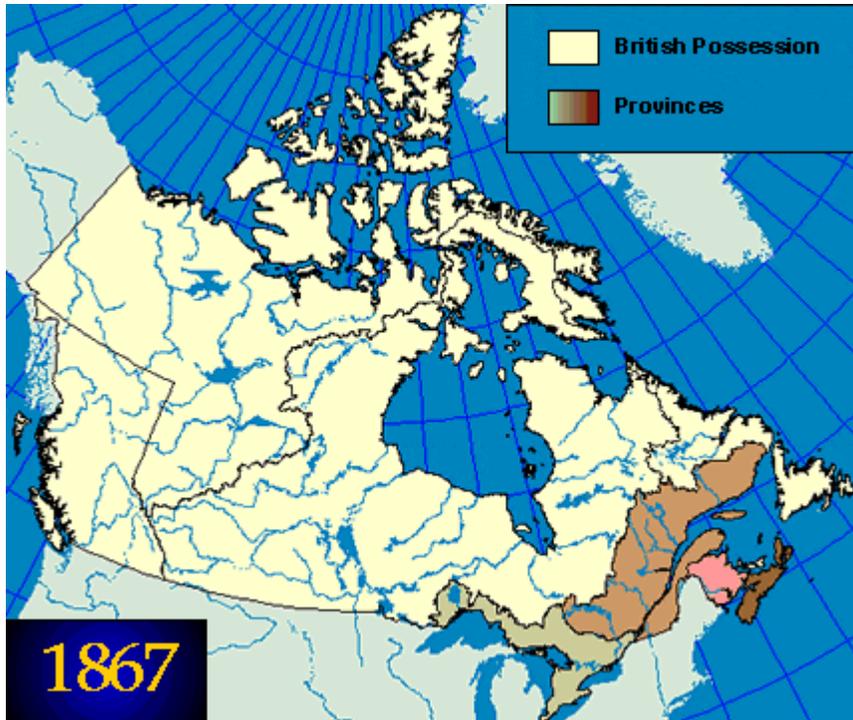
Canada's boundaries are dynamic political structures that reflect the changing political, economic and cultural conditions of the country through time. Canada's long and diversified settlement history is reflected in the two distinct patterns of boundaries that differentiate eastern and western Canada. In the east, the evolution of the Atlantic provinces' boundaries are the outcome of 200 years of colonial competition for both land and resources. Similarly, Quebec and Ontario grew from frontier settlements to industrialized economies between 1760 and the early 1900s. As well, in the boundaries of eastern Canada closely conform to natural features such as drainage basins.

In contrast, the boundaries of western and northern Canada reflect the administrative organization of these lands by, first, the Hudson's Bay Company and, later, the Government of Canada. Here, geometric lines radiate northward from the 49th parallel, creating boundaries that often divide communities and regions into two different provincial jurisdictions. Each of the western provinces has a unique history and rationale for their boundaries. Manitoba evolved from the first Riel Rebellion as a "postage stamp" province, and only later achieved its present-day boundaries. Alberta and Saskatchewan earned provincial status with an eye to creating equal land areas. On the Pacific coast, the British colonies had to act quickly in response to the explosive gold mining frontier to organize and solidify their territorial claims to present-day British Columbia, and later to help establish the Yukon Territory in response to American encroachment.

In the North, the boundaries of the existing Territories were redrawn in 1999 to create Nunavut. The boundaries of this new territory respect the traditional Aboriginal concept of territoriality. As we enter the new millennium, this represents a new direction on the government's approach to the evolution of the boundaries within Canada.

Animation of the territorial evolution of Canada from 1867 to 1999

The animation, *Territorial Evolution 1867 to 1999_e.gif* is located in the animated gif folder.



Canada's boundaries are dynamic political structures that reflect the changing political, economic and cultural conditions of the country through time. This animation shows sequentially the history of boundary changes in Canada from Confederation to the creation of Nunavut.