



The Confederation Chronicles

Lesson 2

What Can We Learn from Primary-Source Documents?

Synopsis

Students will learn how to extrapolate information from primary-source documents as they read and research to create a whole-class timeline of events leading up to 1867 and Confederation.

Specific Expectations

Students will

- increase their knowledge of the people, times and social and political activities of the British North American colonies in the 1860s;
- research and record information, about events leading up to 1867 in an organizer;
- help construct a class timeline of events relevant to Confederation;
- become more aware of the importance of primary-source documents as a source of information about the past;
- realize that there are many ways that events in history may be understood and interpreted.

Preparation

1. Bookmark the websites referred to in this lesson for the students to use in their research.
2. Draw a timeline outline on the board.
3. Download the primary-source documents about Confederation from the “[EvidenceWeb](#)” portion of Library and Archives Canada’s *Learning Centre*, along with their transcriptions or translations, if required.
4. Make copies of [Handout 2.1](#) (Timeline Data Organizer) for your students.



Time

50 to 60 minutes

Process

Introduction: (10 minutes)

1. Post and review the lesson agenda with your students:
 - Introduce the timeline concept
 - Find primary-source documents to get information
 - Create a timeline for Confederation
 - Answer the five “W” and “How” questions?
 - Learn the importance of events and people in history
2. Introduce the concept of a timeline by asking your students for the most important event for Canada that they can recall within their lifetime.
3. Ask students what kind of documents they would look for or where they would search for information if they wanted to get some primary-source documents (first-hand accounts) to tell more about these events. List these on the board. *[Newspaper accounts, magazines, television and radio reports, interviews with people involved, what parents, friends and neighbours remember about the events.]*

Body of Lesson (30-40 minutes)

1. Distribute a different primary-source document about Confederation (or a transcription or translation, if necessary) to every student. There are over 30 different primary-source documents available on the “EvidenceWeb”. Hand out copies of Handout 2.1, one per student.
2. Ask each student to read over his or her document if it is written text and to fill in Handout 2.1. Students with a photograph or illustration should conduct research to find out more about the person, event place or thing. They may use information from the following websites to help them fill in key dates, people, places, etc. in their Timeline Data Organizer:
 - *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/EN/index.html>
 - *Confederation for Kids*, <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/confederation/kids/>
 - *Canadian Confederation*, <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/confederation/>
 - *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>.
3. When the organizers are complete, call on the students to help create a large timeline across the board with key dates of Confederation events. Once all the key dates are in place ask the students to describe these events using the 4 “W” questions: What happened? Who were the important people involved? Where did it take place? Why did it happen and why is it important? You could also ask a “How” question. For



example, how is this important to Confederation or how did this event affect the course of events?

Conclusion (10 minutes)

1. Ask your students to pick out the one event that they would consider the most important and explain why. Write a few points for each event that they think is important. Hopefully they won't all agree and this will be an opportunity for the students to realize that everybody doesn't have to agree when interpreting history.
2. If time permits, you could have a similar discussion about who was the most important person.

Assessment Opportunities

1. Collect all copies of Handout 2.1 and assess them for completeness and thoroughness.
2. Observe who contributes and cooperates during the creating of the class timeline and who participates in the discussions.

Extensions

1. Have students identify the five most important events in their lives, not including their births, and discuss why those events are most significant. What primary- or secondary-source documents might they locate and research to study these events?
2. Have students create a display, perhaps for a school, local or regional Historical [http://www.histori.ca/fairs/default.do?page=.index] fair project, that shows the most important people associated with Canada's Confederation. In their display, students should identify which documents are primary sources and which are secondary.