

INTRODUCTION

If some countries have too much history, we have too much geography.
—Prime Minister Mackenzie King 1936

As an expat Brit, I know that Canada's history is much less complex than that of Britain. However, it is no less interesting. Perhaps, because it is more manageable, while still full of adventure, exploration, conflicts, and colourful characters—all against a backdrop of stunningly beautiful and varied land and seascapes.

It was a day in June 2013 that the idea for this book was born. My wife Jay and I were enjoying a happy hour glass of wine in a campground near Thunder Bay, Ontario, on the shores of Lake Superior. We had just spent the day at the Fort William Historical Park where we had been immersed in the history of Canada's fur trade. I said to Jay, "I have to write about the fur trade since it is another significant era in Canada's history." The idea of telling the story as five ages came later. On a trip two years earlier, we had begun learning about the first inhabitants in Canada at a site in Baie-Comeau, Quebec, on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River. So the fur trade—and its importance to the exploration and eventual settlement of our west—was another "era" to write about. However, my interest in Canada, and by extension its history, started much earlier in my life.

I was born in England, and my high school was a co-educational boarding school—where Jay and I first met (it would be another forty years before we became husband and wife). History has always been one of my favourite subjects, although in retrospect, school history lessons always left something to be desired. We learned the basics of Canadian history, but not the details. When I say we learned the "basics," I mean we learned about the heroic efforts of

General Wolfe and his defeat of the French under the command of General Louis-Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham in 1759, which was a critical event in Britain gaining control of New France. However, we did not learn much else about Canadian history.

My enthusiasm for Canada began in my mid-twenties. After three years, representing the Marconi Company of the UK at the Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle, I immigrated to Canada to join the Canadian Marconi Company in Montreal. For the next sixteen years I was part of a core team that developed a new and international market for Canadian Marconi aircraft avionics. By the time I left, more than fifty of the world's airlines were using our long-range navigation system. This was no small feat for a small Canadian company whose competition were much larger US avionics firms. While I was excited with the contribution we were making to the company's bottom line, I was even more enthusiastic with the fact we were contributing to Canada's exports.

For years I had wanted to represent Canada. My opportunity came when I won a national competition to be the Canadian Space Program representative at the NASA-led Space Station Program Office, on the outskirts of Washington, DC. In 1988, I began fulfilling my ambition to represent Canada. When the Space Station Program Office was moved to Houston in 1994, I set up the first Canadian Space Agency office in Washington. I spent twenty-two years in Washington, the final seven of which I served as Canada's Counsellor for (US) Space Affairs at our Embassy, as well as the Canadian Space Agency's representative. It was both a challenging and rewarding twenty-two years. I was doing what I wanted to do, which was to represent and promote Canada abroad. I gave many presentations. The one that made me most proud to be Canadian was showing the sheer breadth of Canada's Space Program despite our very modest budgets. I subtitled this presentation, "How to Play with the Big Guys!"

While in Washington, Jay joined me from the UK, and two years later we were married. Such was (and is) our passion for Canada that I proposed to her during a canoe camping trip in Algonquin Park, Ontario. Even though our wedding was in February, we honeymooned in Quebec City and Mont-Tremblant (I got lucky as it was not too cold).

We returned to Canada in 2010 and set up our home in downtown Ottawa. I retired eighteen months later, after fifty-years in the workforce. We had finally found the camper van of our dreams at a price we could afford: a 2004 Roadtrek Popular 190. At 5.7 m (19 feet) it is small enough to go on the roads-less-travelled. Now we had the time, and the vehicle, to explore Canada thoroughly.

Jay, like most Brits of our generation, liked the idea of Canada because it is part of the Commonwealth and culturally similar to our country of birth (and where she had spent most of her life). So, she came to Canada with much enthusiasm. You should have seen the smile on her face when she received her Certificate of Canadian Citizenship in January 2015. During my time living in Montreal, I had seen much of Canada, including a visit to the Inuit community of Arctic Bay in northern Baffin Island; in my thirties, I had flown there along with forty others to run the world's northernmost marathon. I had taken Jay to

Montreal, Toronto, Quebec City, Vancouver, and the Rockies during trips from Washington, DC, but I was as anxious, just as she was, to show her “all” of Canada.

The year following our Baie-Comeau experience, after learning about the first inhabitants, we spent two months touring Quebec and the Maritimes. During this tour, I immersed myself in the history of New France, Samuel de Champlain, Acadia, the French–English battles for dominion in the New World, and the subsequent British settlement of the Maritimes. It is perhaps no wonder that on that evening on the shores of Lake Superior, after visiting the Fort William Historical Park, I was burning to tell the story of Canada.

Our stopover in Thunder Bay was part of a two-month trip from Ottawa to Tofino, which is on the west coast of Vancouver Island. During these two months, I learned more about the fur trade, our First Nations, Louis Riel and the Métis rebellions, the creation of the North-West Mounted Police (later to become the Royal Canadian Mounted Police), and the settlement of the west. In the summer of 2014, we spent some two months in Newfoundland, and in 2015 another two months in the Gaspésie, the New Brunswick Acadian Shore, Prince Edward Island, and Îles de la Madeleine. These travels completed our five-year odyssey coast-to-coast. There is still much of Canada we want to—and will—one day visit.

I should add, that in addition to my passion for Canada’s history, Jay has taught me much through her passions, which are flora, wildlife, geology (she’s a “rock-hound”), palaeontology, and art.

There are many books about the history of Canada. However, the large majority deal with a particular era, person, or region. Those that deal with the entire history of Canada are largely based on research rather than firsthand exposure, and many are academic tomes. I wanted to take a different approach and tell the story of Canada to Confederation based—to the extent possible—on what I learned while travelling our country coast-to-coast. During these trips, we visited well over two hundred historic sites as well as large and small museums. Also, I wanted to tell the story of Canada succinctly, with photos I—or in some cases, Jay—had taken (although we are not professional photographers).

At the end of each day, I wrote a detailed account of what I learned. My journal entries were based, in part, on the photos of explanatory text that accompanied the displays at the sites, townships, and museums we visited. Some 30% of the day’s photos were of signage (which drove Jay crazy when we downloaded the day’s photos on our own computers). This book is based on these sources, along with my journal entries. Of course, I could not learn at historic sites all I needed to know to write this book. So, I have supplemented this knowledge by reading several books—five of which I highly recommend¹—

¹ My top five books are: *As Near To Heaven By Sea: A History of Newfoundland and Labrador* by Kevin Major; *Champlain’s Dream* by David Hackett Fischer; *Epic Wanderer: David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West* by D’Arcy Jenish; and *John A: The Man Who Made Us—Volume One and Nation Maker: Sir John A. Macdonald—Volume Two*, both by Richard Gwyn. I have chosen to highlight these books because

and through online research. I have included a comprehensive bibliography, since I did not want to clutter this book with numerous footnotes.

And so I come to a confession: I am not an academic historian. I had been writing this book for two years, and I thought I was finished. Jay, my friends, and colleagues graciously agreed to read my draft narrative. Their invaluable comments resulted in much restructuring and many rewrites. Several pointed out that I had randomly used “I” and “we,” which they found confusing. I had used these pronouns because Jay and I had travelled together. Anyway, I have tried to fix most of the confusion, although you will still find “We drove to . . .” or “During our visit to . . .” This was a small point compared to a comment from one respected colleague, who is also a successful author. He pointed out that although my aim is to write a history, I had not chosen the accepted path of historical scholarship. I do have a passion for history. If I do not, then why would I visit well over two hundred historic sites, as well as countless museums? I am just not an “academic” historian.

During my research, I read Tom King’s book *The Inconvenient Indian*. Through his book, Tom King introduced me to Ezra Pound. While, like King, I do not agree with Pound’s politics, I like his thinking about how we learn history: “We do not know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anaesthetized on the table with dates pasted here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals.”² When I read this quote, I knew I had my excuse for telling a version of Canada’s story to Confederation in terms of five ages—well, that is my excuse, and I am sticking to it.

I know this approach will not suit everyone. But, I have attempted to tell a version of our nation’s story to Confederation that allows you, the reader, to understand specific important eras in our history even though there is some overlap chronologically; they are “ripples and spirals.”

That said, my contribution to the “lay it out anaesthetized on a table with dates pasted here and there” strategy is the two-page spread at the end of this introduction, as well as the list of the major milestones in Canada’s history outlined in the Appendix.

While I am on the matter of “ripples and spirals,” there will be some of you who will question my choice of Newfoundland as my Second Age of Canada, versus New France, which I have elected to call the Third Age. In simple terms, I had to make a choice. I could have tossed a coin, since there is much overlap in the chronology of their settlement. In the end, I chose Newfoundland to come first, because Europeans came to Newfoundland and Labrador to fish long before the French explored and settled New France. I admit: the fishermen only came during the spring and summer months, and then returned with their

while they are based on superb research, they are—at least for me—highly readable. Where appropriate, I have referenced other books; the only reason they are not in my top five is because they either deal with more recent history, or they are academic books/articles (which are not everybody’s favourite reading).

² Ranker, “*The Best Ezra Pound Quotes*”, accessed January 11, 2016, http://www.ranker.com/list/a-list-of-famous-ezra-pound-quotes/reference?utm_expId=16418821-111.f9BrhYpfQp-L43k6_9ljnQ.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.ca%2F

catches to Europe. However, many set up shore facilities, which would form the basis of settlements some one hundred years later. Settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador began—as it did in New France—in the early 1600s, and therein is the overlap.

Another confession: this is not intended to be the “complete” history of Canada to Confederation coast-to-coast. For example, I only mention the importance of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. I do not dwell on its construction, or the political scandals it caused, as there are already heaps of books on the subject.

The approach I have taken is to try to tell the story from a personal perspective, and by only using the essential facts. My hope is that by dividing Canada’s history into five ages it makes it easier to digest. You could even chose to read it in any sequence that suits you, since other than the chronological sequencing, each part stands alone. I hope that by taking the succinct approach, it will encourage you to want to learn more through research on subjects of your own choice.

One may ask about this book, “Why now?” Well, in January 2015, we celebrated two hundred years since the birth of John A. Macdonald, the principal—although not the only—Father of Confederation. In February 2015, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the maple leaf Canadian flag, and on July 1 of the same year, we celebrated the thirty-fifth anniversary of our national anthem. Most importantly, in 2017 we celebrate Canada’s 150th anniversary—but we should remember that on July 1, 1867, the Dominion of Canada only comprised Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario. Other provinces were created and joined relatively soon thereafter. It would take eighty-two years for us to become the nation coast-to-coast—the one that John A. Macdonald envisaged—when in 1949 Newfoundland and Labrador joined Confederation. However, I would suggest we only became a nation coast-to-coast-*to-coast* (as we like to say) in 1999, when Nunavut was created.

How we started, and how we became a nation coast-to-coast-to-coast through five significant ages (of my own defining), is the story I have attempted to tell. I hope you enjoy my account of the *Five Ages of Canada*.

—Graham