

# Canada Facts



## and History

A brief history of Canada and the Royal  
Canadian Air Force



# Famous Early Explorers In Canadian History

The Vikings are believed to be the first Europeans to set foot in Canada. Leif Ericsson is thought to have arrived in Newfoundland in about 1000 BC. He set up a colony, called Vinland, but the colony did not survive for long. Viking remains have been found in L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland. However, it is the English and French explorers who have had the greatest impact on the formation of Canada.



## John Cabot (1450-1499)

An Italian, who sailed for England, Cabot tried to find a short route to the Pacific. In 1497, after receiving permission from Henry VII to sail under the English flag, Cabot set sail across the Atlantic in his ship, the Matthew. Cabot reached the east coast of Canada, possibly Newfoundland, and claimed the region for England. John Cabot is considered to be the first European to explore mainland North America and to search for a Northwest Passage.

## Jacques Cartier (1491-1557)

In 1534, the King of France, Francois I, gave Cartier permission to explore for France. Cartier led three expeditions to Canada, in 1534, 1535 and 1541. Cartier, in his ship, the Grande Hermine, explored inland, down the St Lawrence River. He reached the native villages of Hochelega and Stadacona, (later Montreal and Quebec City). It is because of Jacques Cartier's error in understanding the aboriginal guides, that Canada was named after the word "kanata," the Huron-Iroquois word for village.

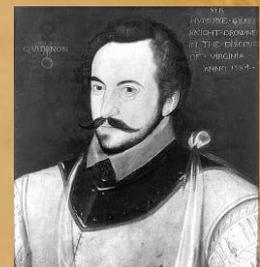


## Samuel de Champlain (1567-1635)

In 1602, a group of traders were given a monopoly to trade furs by the King of France. In 1603, Champlain joined the traders and set sail for Canada with the intention of setting up a colony for France. Champlain explored into Quebec, with the help of the Algonquins and Hurons, and founded the colony of Quebec, or New France.

## Sir Humphrey Gilbert (1539-1583)

In 1583 Gilbert, hoping to find the route to the Pacific, and to start a settlement in North America, set sail. He arrived in Newfoundland, and claimed it for England, setting up a colony. After this, Gilbert died in a storm, but because of his action, Newfoundland became a British colony.



## Captain James Cook (1728-1779)

Sailing for England, Cook made three trips, trying to map the Pacific route. On his third voyage, Cook landed in Vancouver, the first European to land on the west coast of Canada, in 1778. Cook continued exploring up to the coast of Alaska and is responsible for mapping most of the western coastline of North America.

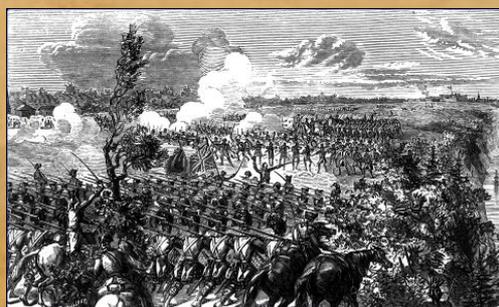
# The Battle For Canada

During the 1700s, France and England fought for control over the New World. The French owned a large portion of what is now Canada, but lost many key battles to the English. The Seven Years War was raging across much of Europe and North and South America. Britain, France and Spain fought for control of land they all claimed. Britain formed an alliance with Prussia, and were able to gain control over the colony of New France.

- 1713** Port Royal (Nova Scotia) is lost to the English, as is much of Rupert's land (much of the northern and western part of Canada.)
- 1755** The French speaking Acadians in Nova Scotia are expelled from their homes for refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to England.
- 1759** The pivotal Battle of the Plains of Abraham (Quebec). The English General James Wolfe defeated the French Marquis de Montcalm. Both men die in battle.
- 1763** The Treaty of Paris ends the Seven Year's War. France loses all of its North American possessions except for two small islands off the coast of Newfoundland. St-Pierre and Miquelon still belong to France today. The Royal Proclamation, set guidelines for the relationship between Aboriginals and the government. Only the Crown was able to obtain land from the Aboriginals, through treaties, but Aboriginals retained the right to hunt and fish on these lands. This Proclamation has shaped the relationship between the government of Canada and Aboriginal nations to this day.
- 1774** Quebec Act is passed by British Parliament offering a Charter of Rights for the French colonists. This led to the recognition of the French language, culture and religion (Catholic).
- 1783** Loyalist from the 13 colonies (USA) moved to British North America (Canada), after the American Revolution.
- 1791** Quebec is divided into two colonies – Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada (Ontario) is where the Loyalists settle, and Lower Canada (Quebec) is where the Canadians live.



General Wolfe

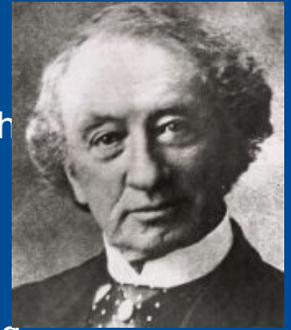


Plains of Abraham



Marquis de Montcalm

Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald was a lawyer from Glasgow, Scotland. He is known as the Father of Confederation for his work in bringing together the union of Canada. Sir John A. Macdonald used his vision of connecting the whole of Canada, from east to west, by railway, to entice British Columbia to join confederation.

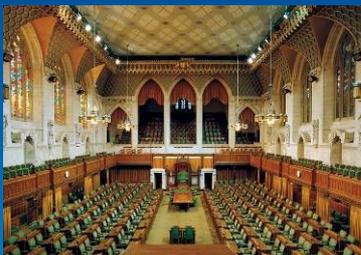


Canada's democratic government is a constitutional monarchy. It has an elected House of Commons and a government appointed Senate based on the Westminster Parliament. All bills must be considered and passed by both the Senate and the House of Commons before receiving Royal Assent from the Governor General.

The currently reigning British monarch continues to act as Canada's Head of State and is represented in Canada by the Governor General. This is a position now appointed by the Prime Minister of Canada as the monarch's official representative.



In 1868, Queen Victoria granted Canada its first Coat of Arms, representing only the original four provinces. Since that time, the government has revised the Arms to reflect the growing nation. Represented on the Arms are the symbols of England, Scotland, Ireland and France; reflecting the people who contributed to the settlement and development of Canada. The Latin motto reads, *A Mari Usque Ad Mare* - From Sea To Sea.



# Canada at War

## The First World War

When the First World War broke out in 1914, Canada had no Air Force. Canadians who wanted to become pilots had to enlist in another service and then transfer to the Royal Flying Corps or the Royal Naval Air Service, or sail to Britain and enlist there, at their own expense.



Billy Bishop

A total of 22,812 Canadians volunteered to serve with the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Air Force. Of those, 1,563 gave their lives in the war.

In 1917 the RFC opened training airfields in Canada to recruit and train Canadian airmen.

In 1918, the Canadian government created the Canadian Air Force to take charge of two newly formed Canadian squadrons (1 bomber, 1 fighter), under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Bishop. Billy Bishop was the highest scoring ace of the British Empire and the first Canadian pilot awarded the Victoria Cross. By the end of the first World War, up to 30% of the RAF pilots were Canadian. The Canadian Air Force, attached to the Royal Air Force in England was disbanded after the war.

Of the top 12 flying aces in the Great War, from both sides, four are Canadians – Billy Bishop, Raymond Collishaw, D. MacLaren and William George Barker. Other top Canadian Aces included Roy Brown and Wilfrid “Wop” May.

## The Inter-war Period

In 1920 another Canadian Air Force was formed and renamed the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1924. From 1920 until the 1930s, Canada's Air Force became part of a civilian Air Board. Their operations included forest fire patrol, forestry surveys, aerial photography and anti-smuggling patrols.



Collishaw



Roy Brown – best know for chasing the Red Baron

## The Second World War



The RCAF began the Second World War with only 23 squadrons and 270 obsolete aircraft. By the end of the war, Canada ended up having the fourth largest air force with over 200,000 personnel. 48 RCAF squadrons participated in wartime operations in Britain, north-west Europe, North Africa and south east Asia.

The RCAF played vital roles in the war, including the Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic, bombing raids of German industries and support of the Allied forces in the Battle of Normandy. Canada volunteered to host the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), which trained over 130,000 Allied aircrew.

Canada led and directed number 6 bomber group, where most overseas RCAF members served. Eventually 14 RCAF squadrons belonged to the group, the exception being 405 Pathfinder squadron. Not only did Canada provide air and ground crew, but Canadians also built Lancaster bombers in southern Ontario.



## The Cold War

At the end of the Second World War, the RCAF significantly reduced its numbers. However, the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower meant that Canada, as a NATO partner, deployed an entire air division to Western Europe for 40 years. 1950 marked the start of the Korean War where RCAF pilots flew combat missions while on exchange with US Air Force squadrons. As a part of the UN force, the RCAF Air Transport Command moved over 13,000 personnel and 3500 tons of freight to the Korean front.

Canada established its home defence, with the creation of the North American Aerospace Defence (NORAD), in partnership with the USA. Furthermore, Canadian maritime patrol aircraft tracked Russian submarines off all three of its coasts.

## Canada's Air Force Today

The Suez Canal Crisis marked the first time the UN created a peacekeeping force of which the RCAF was at the forefront. Since this time, the Canadian Air Force continues to be involved in peacekeeping operations throughout the world. In addition to peacekeeping roles, Canada's Air Force has been actively involved in providing humanitarian assistance, both in Canada and to nations across the globe.



1968 formally marked the end of the Royal Canadian Air Force, as it became absorbed, along with the Royal Canadian Navy and Canadian Army, into the new, unified Canadian Forces. Canadian Air Force members continue to honour and pay tribute to their RCAF heritage.

# The Canadian Air Forces Monument



## The Dedication

*In honour of those who serve past and present in Canadian and Commonwealth Air Elements*



## High Flight

*Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds, - and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and  
swung*

*High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air. . .*

*Up, up the long, delirious burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew -  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrodden sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.*

- John Gillespie Magee, Jr

## Description and Symbolism

The whole monument is designed to look like it is placed upon a Canadian Air Force roundel. The outside ring, made up of thirteen stone markers, represents each of the provinces and territories. The central monolith is assembled from 3 individual granite blocks that, together, represent the red/white/red of the Canadian Flag as it would drape from a horizontal flag staff. On the top of the monolith is a maple leaf, which has been an enduring symbol of Canada for over three centuries; most significantly with Canadian military units.

On two faces of the monolith are short histories of Canadian Air Force history in English and French. The remaining two faces have the poem, High Flight, in both official languages.

Underneath the history, is inscribed, *PER ARDUA AD ASTRA* which is the Latin motto of the RAF and many commonwealth air forces. It translates as "Through adversity to the stars."

