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Will Ferguson has lived and worked in every region of Canada, from the Okanagan Valley of B.C. to the farmlands of rural Québec, from Saskatoon to southern Ontario, from Manitoba to P.E.I.

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Introduction

Canadian history is a lot of fun. There are heroes and villains, tragedies and triumphs, great battles and sudden betrayals, loyal refugees and long struggles for social justice. Our history tells us who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. Any place as eclectic and mixed up as Canada will never be able to settle on a single unified, homogenous national history that will please everyone, but make no mistake: There *is* a history that we need to know. The interpretations may vary — radically, at times — but there are still core events and important leaders from our past that every Canadian should be familiar with.

History matters, and we forget this truth at our peril.

— historian J.L. Granatstein

About This Book

When the first edition of *Canadian History For Dummies* (published in 2000) appeared on *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* charts, a milestone had been reached. It was the first ...*For Dummies* book ever to appear on a general bestseller list — in Canada, the States, or anywhere else. It went on to win the Canadian Authors Association Award for History (another first for a ...*For Dummies* book).

But a lot has happened since 2000, and a brand-new, fully revised second edition was needed. From the terrorist attacks of September 11th to the war in Afghanistan, from Mad Cow to SARS, from the sponsorship scandal to Paul Martin's tenuous minority government, this second edition includes the key events of recent years.

It also includes new material on previous topics. Every chapter in this book has been expanded, edited, altered, or rewritten in some way for the second edition. I have added material on the 1760 Battle of Restigouche, on the role Chief Justice Osgoode played in ending the slave trade, and on the “bride ship” of colonial Victoria (sent to supply young ladies for lonely bachelors). I have added the story of Chief Isaac of the Klondike Han, who faced an onslaught of strangers during the Gold Rush of 1897, and the story of how the West almost became One Big Province. I have added more on how medicare was developed, along with a sidebar on Tommy Douglas, the “Greatest Canadian,” and I have

more than doubled the section on Canada's military contributions to World War II to include the invasion of Italy, the Scheldt Campaign, the Rhineland, and the liberation of Holland. All this — and more — has been added to the second edition.

Canadian History For Dummies is a crash course in Canadian literacy. It covers the essential dates, events, leaders, and historical themes from our past — and present. It also includes Web sites on related topics, so that you can expand and explore further the areas that interest you.

We all have those moments in life when we stop and look around and ask ourselves, “How on earth did I ever end up *here*?” And the answer lies, as always, in the contingencies of the past and the choices we made along the way. This book tries to answer that question on a national level: “*How on earth did we ever end up here?*”

*History is the record of an encounter between character and circumstance. . . .
And the encounter between character and circumstance is essentially a story.*

— historian Donald Creighton

History is about the impact of the decisions we make and the ripple effects that follow. It's a study of people and events, action and reaction, crisis and consequence. History can inspire us. It can anger us. It can teach us important lessons. It can be used as an alibi — or a weapon. But above all it is a story. In this case, the story of a country.

The “story” in history *is* important, and I have tried my best to give this book a narrative flow. I have also tried to introduce some lesser-known figures from Canada's past.

- ✔ People like Lizzie Cyr, the prostitute whose now-forgotten trial first set in motion a chain of events that led to the women's rights crusade of the Famous Five and the Persons Case that followed.
- ✔ Or the swashbuckling Sieur d'Iberville, whose exploits are worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster.
- ✔ Or the Canadian diplomat John Humphrey, who drafted the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN Declaration set both the standards and the ideals of today's global village. It has had a huge impact on world events. Yet, few Canadians have ever heard of John Humphrey or are aware of what he achieved.

When I was living in the Loyalist town of St. Andrews, New Brunswick, I used to drive by a small island almost every day. I never gave it much thought until one day, just in passing, I noticed a historical marker up from the shore. When I pulled over, I discovered that right there — right there in front of me — was the legendary St. Croix Island (once known, for grim descriptive reasons, as “Bone Island”). It was on that tiny tuft of land that a band of French colonists

first suffered through a horrific winter 400 years before. It was there, on that small island, that Acadia was born: the first permanent European presence on mainland Canada. And here I was, driving by it, week after week, blissfully unaware. I was surrounded by ghosts, and I never even knew.

Strangers in their own land . . .

— author Robertson Davies on the relationship many Canadians have with their country and its history

How This Book Is Organized

It's very simple. I took a straightforward chronological approach, with each part representing another step in Canadian development. You can jump around if you like, though I do recommend reading the chapters in any given part in the order they appear.

Part I: When Worlds Collide

This part deals with Canada's First Nations and their initial contact with Europeans, beginning with the Vikings and ending with the first tentative colonies in Newfoundland, the Maritimes, and along the St. Lawrence. The Native societies of Canada prior to first contact were incredibly complex and varied: ranging from the military and political alliances of the Iroquois to the northern trade empire of the Ojibwa; from the small-band subsistence hunters of the northern forests to the austere lifestyle of the plains; from the intricate arts and social caste system of the Pacific Coast to the survival techniques and adaptive genius of the Arctic Inuit. This wasn't an empty continent that the European explorers first stumbled upon. Far from it.

Part II: The Rise of New France

Here I talk about the formative years of 1608 to 1701. It begins with Samuel de Champlain and the founding of French fur-trading colonies in the Maritimes and along the St. Lawrence. We look at the rise of an elaborate French culture in Canada, a sort of "Paris-in-exile," as well as its ongoing frontier war with the Iroquois Confederacy. Jesuit missionaries travelled deep into Native territory spreading both germs and the gospel among the Huron and other nations. A new breed of trader was born — the voyageurs and woodsmen of New France — even as England outflanked France to the north, in the Hudson Bay. A fierce rivalry between the two European countries erupted, and battles raged from Arctic seas to the outports of Newfoundland.

Part III: The Fall of New France

I cover the fateful years of 1701 to 1766, which deals with the conquest of New France by Britain, something that has been described as the “Big Bang” of Canadian history. During the Seven Years’ War, Britain and France battled it out for final control of the continent. The Acadian colonists of the Maritime region were forced into exile, and the French fortress of Louisbourg, perched on the windswept coast of Cape Breton, was captured — and systematically destroyed. On the Plains of Abraham, outside the walled city of Québec, two armies faced off against each other: one British, one French. In a fierce 15-minute battle, the fate of Canada was decided.

Part IV: Canada: The Failed Republic?

Here you’ll read about the tumultuous years of 1766 to 1838. When the American colonies broke free of Great Britain, the northern ones stayed loyal. In this, the American Revolution ultimately created not one, but *two* new countries. In 1812, the Americans tried to finish the job and conquer Canada, and in 1837 rebellions within Upper and Lower Canada again tried to break the colonies free. Both attempts failed, and Canada remained independent of the United States. Meanwhile, in the vast interior of the continent, explorers were pushing their way overland — all the way to the Pacific.

Part V: The Roads to Confederation

This part looks at the energetic years of 1838 to 1891. This was an era of nation-building that marked the birth of modern Canada, as three colonies joined together to form a new Confederation. Under the terms of the 1867 British North America (BNA) Act, Canada’s essential character was set. And soon after, the Canadians purchased the vast North-West and invited B.C. into the fold. On the plains, the Métis (of mixed Native and European background) led an armed rebellion against the government — and the last spike of the CPR was driven home, joining Canada “from sea to sea.”

Part VI: The End of “English” Canada

The years between 1891 and 1929 were ones of optimism and disillusionment. It was an era that marked the high point of English-Canadian imperial pride — and its decline. The events discussed in this part include the opening of the Canadian West, the Klondike Gold Rush, World War I, and the fight for women’s rights. Canada’s multicultural character (neither French, English, nor Native) first began to take shape during this time, as waves of newcomers arrived in