A Concise History of Canada

Margaret Conrad’s history of Canada begins with a challenge to its readers. What is Canada? What makes up this diverse, complex, and often contested nation-state? What was its founding moment? And who are its people? Drawing on her many years of experience as a scholar, writer, and teacher of Canadian history, Conrad offers astute answers to these difficult questions. Beginning in Canada’s deep past with the arrival of its Aboriginal peoples, she traces its history through the conquest by Europeans, the American Revolutionary War, and the industrialization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to its prosperous present. As a social historian, Conrad emphasizes the peoples’ history: the relationships between Aboriginal and settler, French and English, Catholic and Protestant, and rich and poor. She writes of the impact of disease, how women fared in the early colonies, and the social transformations that took place after the Second World War as Canada began to assert itself as an independent nation. It is this grounded approach that drives the narrative and makes for compelling reading. In the last chapter, the author explains the social, economic, and political upheavals that have transformed the nation over the last three decades. Despite its successes and its popularity as a destination for immigrants from across the world, Canada remains a curiously reluctant player on the international stage. This intelligent, concise, and lucid book explains just why that is.

Margaret Conrad is Professor Emerita at the University of New Brunswick in Canada. Her publications include Atlantic Canada: A History, with James K. Hiller (2010); History of the Canadian People, with Alvin Finkel (2009); No Place Like Home: The Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771–1938, with Toni Laidlaw and Donna Smyth (1988); and George Nowlan: Maritime Conservative in National Politics (1986).
This is a series of illustrated “concise histories” of selected individual countries, intended both as university and college textbooks and as general historical introductions for general readers, travelers, and members of the business community.

Other titles in the series are listed after the index.
A Concise History of Canada

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I am indebted to almost every historian of Canada, living and dead, whose research made this book possible. *A Concise History of Canada* is dedicated to their hard work and scant acknowledgement in this and in many other publications. I owe more than I can adequately express to Alvin Finkel and James Hiller, coauthors with me of survey textbooks on Canadian and Atlantic Canadian history. Their wisdom and even their words are embedded in every chapter. In a lifetime I would be lucky to have had one happy collaboration; to have had two is nothing short of a miracle. It is also a miracle that I answered the life-changing e-mail that arrived on 24 September 2007 from Marigold Acland, Senior Commissioning Editor for Cambridge University Press. Given the unfamiliar name, I came mighty close to deleting it as just another piece of unwelcome spam. Her invitation to write the Canadian volume in the Cambridge Concise History series clinched my decision to take early retirement and get on with various writing commitments. It was the best decision I have ever made, and working with Cambridge University Press has been yet another happy collaboration. I am especially indebted to Janis Bolster, who saved me from embarrassing errors and bad writing, and what’s more, agreed to everything I asked of her. It was a great pleasure to work with such an experienced and generous editor. Diana Witt, who developed the index, Joe LeMonnier, who drew the maps, and Joy Mizan, who pursued permissions for illustrations, endured with great patience my endless tinkering. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript, who read it so carefully.
As my friends can attest, I describe producing a history of Canada in ninety thousand words as akin to writing haiku. Sometimes the sentences are so freighted with nuance that an editor's change of one word throws everything off. Like aging, writing national history is not for wimps.

Marion Beyea, Gail Campbell, Gwendolyn Davies, Lyle Dick, Gerry Friesen, Don Fyson, Naomi Griffiths, Gregory Kealey, Linda Kealey, and Gillian Thompson – historians all – have helped me at one time or another with answers to questions. So, too, have people involved in several networks in which I participate: Jocelyn Létourneau and everyone associated with the Canadians and Their Pasts project; Penney Clark and others involved in THEN/HiER; my colleagues on the Advisory Board of the LaFontaine-Baldwin Symposium, spearheaded by John Ralston Saul and Adrienne Clarkson; and those working with me on the National Capital Commission Advisory Committee. Canada’s History Society, especially the Chair of its Board of Directors, Charlotte Gray, and its President and CEO, Deborah Morrison, have kept me grounded on issues relating to Canada’s past. Steven Schwinghamer, Research Coordinator at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, deserves a special thank you for finding the last photo used in this book. Finally, I want to acknowledge my ninety-five-year-old mother, who wonders what exactly it is that absorbs so many of my waking hours. She will not likely read this book, but she will be pleased that I have written it.

January 2012