

**Georges-Étienne Cartier: The Lion of Québec  
Teacher's Guide**

**This film is ideal for use in high school classes in Canadian and Québec history.**

**Running Time: 27:58**

**Historical Context**

Twenty-five years after the events of 1837-1838, the Province of Canada was once again facing a number of problems. Between 1854 and 1864, no fewer than 10 governments came to power. Ministers were playing musical chairs with their portfolios.

The dominant political view was conservative. In Canada West, John A. Macdonald was head of the Liberal-Conservative Party (which would shortly drop "Liberal" from its name). The Bleu leader in Canada East was Georges-Étienne Cartier. The other two parties in the Canadian Legislature were the Grits, from Canada West, led by George Brown, and the Parti Rouge of Canada East, led by Antoine-Aimé Dorion.

Faced with the inefficiency of the political system put in place in 1840, members of Parliament began to consider a political reorganization. The most frequently discussed plan called for the confederation of the British colonies in North America.

**Film Synopsis**

This film highlights Georges-Étienne Cartier's battle to bring a new system of government to Canada, during the stormy years leading up to Confederation.

In 1858, cabinet member Alexander Galt put the idea of a federation to Parliament. Cartier became an avid supporter of the plan. In mid-1864, Parliament was paralyzed by a constitutional crisis. A new and bold initiative was needed to break the impasse. Cartier confronted Macdonald, and his sworn political enemy, Brown — managing to make peace between them. Brown was now willing to work towards constitutional reform.

In June 1864, an alliance (which came to be known as the Great Coalition) was formed among three political parties: Bleu (led by Cartier), Conservatives (led by Macdonald) and Grits (led by Brown).

The plan for a federal union of the Province of Canada with the Maritime colonies was sketched out at the Charlottetown Conference, in September 1864, and finalized at the Québec Conference, held in October.

### Activities

- Why was Cartier known as “The Lion of Québec?”
- Place yourself in the shoes of Joséphine, Cartier’s daughter. Write a letter to a friend describing your daily life (your house, furniture, clothing, recreational activities and so on). In your letter, describe the reasons your father is participating in the Charlottetown Conference.
- What form of urban transport do the politicians in the film use?
- Identify the political parties associated with the following politicians: Cartier, Macdonald, Brown and Dorion. Outline each one’s opinion on the plan for a federal state.
- What agreement did Cartier, Macdonald and Brown reach in order to end the impasse of 1864?
- The politician whose face is found on the \$10 bill strongly favoured a legislative union. Who is he? What is the difference between a legislative union and a federal union?