

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910957648303321
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Titolo	Britain and the origins of Canadian confederation, 1837-67 / / Ged Martin
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Vancouver, : UBC Press, c1995
ISBN	9786613131836 9781283131834 1283131838 9780774854320 0774854324
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (403 p.)
Disciplina	971.04/9
Soggetti	Constitutional history - Canada Canada History Confederation, 1867 Canada Politics and government 1841-1867 Great Britain Politics and government 1837-1901
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Preface -- Map -- 1 British North America on the Eve of Confederation -- 2 Canadian Confederation and Historical Explanation -- 3 The Origins of British Support for Canadian Confederation -- 4 The British and their Perceptions -- 5 Motives and Expectations of the British -- 6 The Role of the British in the Launching of Confederation -- 7 The Role of the British in the Achievement of Confederation 1864-1867 -- Conclusion -- Note on Sources -- Abbreviations -- Notes and References -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	In explaining why the British North American provinces united in 1867, historians have tended to see Confederation as a logical response to the internal and external challenges of the 1860s. With some ambiguity, they have also attributed a major role to the British imperial factor in forcing the Maritime provinces to accept their predestined place in the Canadian nation. In <i>Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-1867</i> , Ged Martin offers a sceptical review of claims that Confederation answered all the problems facing the

provinces, and examines in detail British perceptions of Canada and ideas about its future. The major British contribution to the coming of Confederation is to be found not in the aftermath of the Quebec conference, where the imperial role was mainly one of bluff and exhortation, but prior to 1864, in a vague consensus among opinion-formers that the provinces would one day unite. Faced with an inescapable need to secure legislation at Westminster for a new political structure, British North American politicians found they could work within the context of a metropolitan preference for intercolonial union.
