

The Canadian Pacific Railway — Knowledge Organiser

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Key facts

- The Canadian Pacific Railway was finished in 1885, linking eastern Canada to the Pacific coast.
- It crossed thousands of kilometres of forest, prairie and the Rocky Mountains.
- The railway helped unite the country and was a promise made to British Columbia for joining Canada.
- Thousands of Chinese workers did the most dangerous work, often for low pay.

Key vocabulary

- Transcontinental — crossing an entire continent.
- Prairie — a large area of flat grassland.
- Navvy — a labourer who built railways.
- The Last Spike — the final spike hammered in to complete the railway.

At what cost?

The railway was an amazing achievement, but it came at a cost. Many Chinese workers died building the hardest mountain sections. The railway also opened Indigenous lands to settlers, with great impact on First Nations peoples. Understanding history means remembering both the achievement and its cost.