

## Victoria, Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; Empress of India



Victoria, nee Alexandrina Victoria, was born May 1819 and became Queen of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in June 1837, after only recently turning 18. Her father was Prince Edward, and King George III was her grandfather. King George III was King of Great Britain during the Seven Years War, notable because it is the war in which Great Britain defeated France in North America and claimed New France (now Quebec) as its prize.

Victoria's father died in 1820 when she was less than a year old, and she was raised under close supervision by her German-born mother and Princess, also named Victoria. The young Victoria inherited the throne months after turning 18 when her father's three elder brothers all died without leaving surviving, legitimate heirs to the throne. By then, the United Kingdom had become a fully entrenched constitutional monarchy, much like today's UK and Canada, meaning that she held little in the way of direct political power.

Still, Queen Victoria worked hard behind the scenes to attempt to influence government policies and appointments to ministerial positions. She was very popular among the public, and was seen as being a disciplined and principled public figure—a motherly figure for all of the British Empire, it is commonly said.

In 1840, when she was 21, Queen Victoria married her first cousin, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. Together they had nine children and 42 grandchildren, who all married into royal and noble families across the continent, earning the Queen the nickname “the grandmother of Europe.” In 1861 when Prince Albert died suddenly at the age of 42, Queen Victoria went into a deep mourning that would last the rest of her life, and she began to avoid many public appearances that defined her early years as Queen with Prince Albert by her side.

In 1887, the entire British Empire celebrated Victoria's Golden Jubilee in recognition of her reign as Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland for 50 years, and in 1897 her Diamond Jubilee was treated as a festival of the British Empire, including here in Canada. Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald traveled to London for the occasion to honour the longest reigning British monarch.

Victoria maintained her role and responsibilities as Queen until 1901, when she died at the age of 81. Her reign of over 63 years is the longest of any British monarch, and it is the longest reign of any female monarch in history. The term “the Victorian era” is named after her because of the cultural, industrial, political, and scientific advancements that took place throughout her reign.

Queen Victoria was a strong imperialist and took a strong interest in all the British Colonies. Queen Victoria is in fact the individual with the most public buildings, streets, populated places, and physical geographic features named after her in Canada.