

Four Billion Years, four hundred weeks and four hundred people (give or take): the story of a popular book on the geology of Canada

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In 2003, based on several factors, including success of a previous book, *The Last Billion Years*, on the geology of the Maritimes, we proposed the idea of a popular book on the geology of Canada. The early planning stages involved a special session at the GAC/MAC conference in Halifax in 2005, shortly after which we consolidated an editorial board of seven geologists and a group of experts across the country to pull together regional and topical stories that we could ultimately weave together into a single narrative. Concurrent with the writing of regional and topical drafts, we proactively sought photographs to illustrate the story, funding for the book, and a publisher to produce it. It became compelling too that we needed also to have a French edition. By 2008, the project had been officially adopted by the Canadian Committee of the International Year of Planet Earth (2009). Through fundraising efforts by this Committee and the generosity of the Canadian Geological Foundation, Nexen and other supporters, we accumulated sufficient funds to develop an English edition (*Four Billion Years and Counting*), a French edition (*Quatre Milliards d'Années*), and a bilingual website. By then too we had developed working agreements with two publishers, Nimbus for the English edition and Éditions MultiMondes for the French, with the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences co-publishing both. One setback was that by 2010 the manuscript was getting too large, so we had to reduce the text by about 40 percent, a surgery that was painful and caused delays but was ultimately beneficial. The book was now taking its final shape, with the text divided into three parts: Foundations (outlining geological fundamentals from a Canadian perspective); Evolution of Canada (unravelling the history of Canada's land mass); and Wealth and Health (exploring the ways in which geology impacts our daily lives). The English edition was published in late September 2014 and the French in November 2014: the accompanying website is expected to go live in early 2015. Both editions are large format books, the English with soft cover and the French with hard. The books are packed with colour photographs, accessible graphics and lively artwork. Reactions from readers so far indicate that we are satisfying our target audience of interested non-specialists; and sales are progressing such that we will probably have to reprint the English edition in 2015.