



# 3

## Canada's Historical Geography

### Learning Objectives

- To summarize important events in Canada's historical geography
- To describe the First People of Canada, culture areas, the arctic migration, and the timeline of contact with Europeans
- To describe the Second People and colonization of Canada by the French and the British, settlement of the west, and territorial evolution
- To describe the Third People and additional immigration waves to Canada
- To outline the history and character of the four faultlines in Canadian society and to link these four faultlines to Canada's regions
- To introduce the notion of "One Country, Two Visions" and describe the two power struggles: economic and political

## Chapter Overview

"History and geography explain the nature and complexity of contemporary Canada" (p. 118). Chapter 3 includes:

1. A summary of the settlement and territorial evolution of Canada
2. Observation of critical events in Canadian history
3. Description of the historical and geographical development of the four faultlines introduced in Chapter 1.

### The First People

The first North Americans arrived approximately 40,000 years ago. Except for the short-lived Viking settlement in Newfoundland around 1000 BC, the Aboriginal peoples remained the sole inhabitants of North America until the late fifteenth century with the arrival of French settlers followed by two waves of British settlers.

### The Second People

The first large contingent of British immigrants to Canada consisted of Loyalists who had supported Britain during the American War of Independence (1775–83). The second wave of British immigrants occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century.

### The Third People

A third group of immigrants who were largely from Ukraine and Central Europe began to arrive around the turn of the twentieth century. In the last half of the century, immigration from Asia fuelled population growth in Canada.

### The Territorial Evolution of Canada

Canada's territorial evolution is an important aspect of Canada's historical geography that has implications for Bone's six regions. Vignette 3.2 (p. 72), on the "Manifest Destiny" doctrine, offers

insight into Confederation: it is suggested that one of the motives behind Confederation was the desire to ensure that the United States did not take over British North America.

### Faultlines in Canada's Early Years

Each of the four faultlines has specific geographic dimensions. In fact, one might argue that Canada's geography has helped to shape its faultlines. The vast expanse of the country, for example, clearly contributes to centralist/decentralist tension. As Bone notes, "regionalism is a fact of life in Canada"; it may even be "the most telling characteristic of Canada's changing national character over the centuries" (p. 78). Historical events helped change the nature of the faultlines, including the two federal government initiatives of the late 1800s: the building of the CPR to overcome Canada's vast east-west distances, and the National Policy intended to help develop a national core.

### The Centralist/Decentralist Faultline

In 1980, the federal Liberal government imposed the **National Energy Program** on oil-producing provinces. The National Energy Program deepened western alienation and was instrumental in causing the Liberal Party to lose its western base for the next 35 years and perhaps longer.

### The Indigenous/Non-Indigenous Faultline

Bone states that the Indigenous/non-Indigenous divide represents the most complex and troubling one facing the nation and an important element is redefining of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the nation-state of Canada (p. 81).

### The Immigration Faultline

Bone traces the history of immigration to Canada from the eighteenth century, through the Red River Rebellion, Robinson treaties, and Northwest Rebellion, through the integration of the settlement of the Doukhobors in the Prairies.

### The French/English Faultline

Differences between the two Charter cultures—British and French—have come to represent a major faultline in Canadian society. Canadian unity depends on the continuation of this relationship and the need for compromise, which has become a feature of modern Canadian political life and is a basic aspect of Canadian tolerance between the two official language groups and towards newcomers.

## Challenge Questions

1. Why did the doctrine "terra nullius" cause Europeans to consider North America unoccupied territory and therefore open to European settlement?
2. Why did Britain encourage its North American colonies to unite?
3. What were Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's four goals for the Canadian Pacific Railway?
4. Why was the Doukhobor settlement in the Prairies a failure?
5. What are the centrifugal forces trying to pull Canada apart?
6. What is the basis of the centralist/decentralist faultline?

7. What did the Truth and Reconciliation Commission lead to with respect to the relationship of Aboriginal peoples with the federal government?
8. What is meant by the “accommodation” issue of the newcomer/old-timer faultline?
9. Why are there two visions of Canada—two founding peoples or as 10 equal provinces?
10. Henri Bourassa was a strong advocate of cultural dualism. Would Bourassa approve of the House of Commons’ recognition of Québécois as a nation within Canada?
11. Bone considers the role played by Canada’s geography as a “determinant” of its history. How has the nation’s geography affected the broad sweep of Canadian history? Can the nation’s history be understood without a detailed knowledge of its geography?

## Key Terms

**Assembly of First Nations** A national advocacy organization representing First Nation citizens in Canada. (p. 83)

**Big Bear** The last of the great chiefs—had a vision unite the Plains Cree against European settlers in order to sustain their culture. (p. 99)

**Château Clique** The political elite of Lower Canada; composed of an alliance of officials and merchants who had considerable political influence with the British-appointed governor; similar to the Family Compact in Upper Canada. (p. 105)

**Comprehensive land claim agreement** An agreement based on the territory claimed by Aboriginal peoples that was never ceded or surrendered by treaty. Such agreements invalidate Aboriginal land claims to vast areas in exchange for relatively small amounts of land, capital, and the organizational structure to manage their lands and capital. (p. 91)

**Culture area** A region within which the population has a common set of attitudes, economic and social practices, and values. (p. 61)

**Delgamuukw Case** This court challenge in 1997 concerned the definition, the content and the extent of Aboriginal title. The Supreme Court observed that Aboriginal title constituted an ancestral right protected by the Constitution Act, 1982. (p. 94)

**Eastern Townships** A tourist region and a former administrative region in southeastern Québec, Canada, situated between the former seigneuries south of the Saint Lawrence River and the United States border. (p. 67)

**Family Compact** A group of officials who dominated senior bureaucratic positions, the executive and legislative councils, and the judiciary in Upper Canada. (p. 105)

**First Nations people** As defined by Statistics Canada, those Aboriginal persons who report a single response of ‘North American Indian’ to the Aboriginal identity census question. (p. 87)

**Habitants** Early French settlers who farmed the land along the two shores of the St. Lawrence River and Gulf in what is now Québec (p. 104)

**“Hard” and “soft” countries** Portrayal by John Ralston Saul of countries as “hard” and “soft” in terms of their relationships with minority groups. Hard nations with homogeneous populations tend to treat minorities harshly. Soft nations have more diverse populations and as a result of a history of interaction among different cultural groups, the value of harmonious relations has taken root. (p. 59)

**Homesteader** A settler who obtained land in the Canadian West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. (p. 70)

**Indigenous rights** The practices, customs, and traditions that Aboriginal peoples practised prior to contact with or large-scale settlement by Europeans. One Aboriginal right, the right to hunt and fish on Crown lands, has legal status and is protected by the Canadian Constitution. Given the diversity among Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal rights vary from group to group. Indigenous people whose chiefs signed treaty agreements on behalf of their tribes also have treaty rights. (p. 75)

**Indigenous title** A legal term that recognizes an Aboriginal interest in traditionally occupied land. A property right to the land itself—not just the right to hunt, fish, and gather. Aboriginal title is a communal right; an individual cannot hold Aboriginal title. (p. 90)

**Inuit** People who are descended from the Thule. The Thule migrated into Canada’s Arctic from Alaska about 1,000 years ago. The Inuit do not fall under the Indian Act, but are identified as an Aboriginal people under the Constitution Act, 1982. (p. 87)

**Loyalists** Colonists who supported the British during the American Revolution. About 40,000 American colonists who were loyal to Britain resettled in Canada, especially in Nova Scotia and Québec. (p. 104)

**Manifest Destiny** The belief and subsequent political actions in nineteenth-century America that the United States, by divine right, should expand to the Pacific coast; in the view of some, this expansion was to include all of North America, thus incorporating Canada. The term was coined by journalist John L. O’Sullivan in 1845, in the context of the annexation of Texas and the Oregon Territory. (p. 72)

**Manitoba Act of 1870** This Act created Canada’s fifth province. Also known as the “postage stamp” province, its territory only encompassed that of the Red River Colony. The remainder of the former Hudson’s Bay lands became the North-West Territories. This Act provided substantial land grants to the Metis as well as guarantees for the French language and Roman Catholic schools. (p. 95)

**Métis** People who have a mixed biological and cultural heritage, usually either French-Indian or English/Scottish-Indian. This “mixing” between Indians and Europeans took place during the fur trade and continues today. Originally the term was more narrowly applied to French-Indian people who settled in the Red River area and who developed a distinct hunting economy and society based on the French language and the Roman Catholic religion. (p. 68)

**National Energy Program** A bold policy of the federal Liberal government that took the form of the National Energy Program in 1980. Its purpose was to keep Canadian oil prices lower than the rapidly rising world oil prices, provide manufacturers in Ontario and Québec with low-priced western oil, foster oil exploration in the Arctic, and increase federal government revenues from oil sales. In effect, the National Energy Policy kept domestic oil prices lower than global oil prices, thus forcing oil-rich Alberta to forgo market prices and, in doing so, subsidize oil consumers in the rest of Canada. (p. 80)

**National Policy** A policy of high tariffs instituted in 1879 by the federal government of John A. Macdonald to insulate Canada's infant manufacturing industries from foreign competition and thus create a national industrial base. (p. 80)

**Non-status Indians** Those of Amerindian ancestry who are not registered as Indians under the Indian Act. (p. 86)

**Oregon Territory** Territory in the Pacific Northwest comprising parts of British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. (p. 76)

**Paleo-Indians** Considered by archaeologists the first people of North America because they shared a common hunting culture, which was characterized by its uniquely designed fluted-point stone spearhead. (p. 61)

**Poundmaker** Political leader of the Plains Cree in the 1880s. (p. 99)

**Provisional Government** Government formed in 1869 by the Métis, under the leadership of Louis Riel, in order to negotiate the terms to permit the Red River Colony to join Canada as a province. Ottawa accepted the terms and they were incorporated into the Manitoba Act of 1870. (p. 95)

**Quiet Revolution** A period in Québec during the Liberal government of Jean Lesage (1960 to 1966) that was characterized by social, economic, and educational reforms and by the rebirth of pride and self-confidence among French-speaking members of Québec society, which led to a resurgence of francophone ethnic nationalism. During this time, the secular nationalist movement gained strength. (p. 109)

**Red River migration** The Hudson's Bay Company had about 1,000 settlers migrate from Fort Garry to Fort Vancouver in 1841 to shore up the British claim to the Oregon Territory. (p. 76)

**Reserve** Under the Indian Act, reserves are defined as lands "held by her Majesty for the use and benefit of the bands for which they were set apart; and subject to this Act and to the terms of any treaty or surrender." (p. 88)

**Robinson treaties** Two 1850 treaties signed between the Crown (Canada West) and the Ojibwa Indians of Lake Superior and the Ojibwa Indians of Lake Huron. (p. 98)

**Scrip** Under the Manitoba Act of 1870, certificates issued by Ottawa to the Métis to settle their land claims and to allow them to obtain land. This scrip was issued to individuals and was redeemable in Dominion lands in Manitoba. (p. 88)

**Seigneurs** Members of the French elite—high-ranking officials, military officers, the nascent aristocracy—who were awarded land in New France by the French king. A seigneur was an estate owner who had peasants (*habitants*) to work his land. (p. 105).

**Sovereignty-association** A concept designed by the Parti Québécois under the Lévesque government and employed in the 1980 referendum. This concept was based on a vision of Canada consisting of two “equal” peoples. Sovereignty-association called for Québec sovereignty but with an economic partnership with Canada. (p. 110)

**Status (registered) Indians** Aboriginal peoples who are registered as Indians under the Indian Act. (p. 86)

**Terra nullius** During the eighteenth century, Europeans believed that this doctrine gave legal right to claim ownership of land occupied by Indians and Inuit because the land was not cultivated nor were there permanent settlements. (p. 64)

**Treaty Indians** Aboriginal peoples who are the descendants of those Indians who signed a numbered treaty and who benefit from the rights described in each treaty. All treaty Indians are status Indians, but not all status Indians are treaty Indians. (p. 87)

**Treaty rights** Specific rights that apply to only to the First Nation(s) that signed the treaty in question. While no two treaties are identical, the list of rights always included land (reserves). These rights are protected in the Constitution Act. (p. 88)

**Western alienation** Feeling on the part of those in Western Canada and BC—derived from past government actions and a natural periphery response to the core—that they have little influence on federal policy and that Central Canada controls the government in Ottawa. The perspective that the Western provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba—have been alienated, and in extreme cases excluded, from mainstream Canadian political affairs in favour of the central provinces of Ontario and Québec. (p. 81)