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THE CENSUS OF CANADA

(Based on a booklet issued by Statistics Canada, Ottawa.)

The modern census originated in Canada. And Canada is still regarded as a world leader in many aspects of census-taking.

The word "census" comes from the Latin *censere* ("to assess"). In ancient days the word was apt, because the primary purpose was to collect taxes.

The Roman Empire made regular and frequent use of censuses for this purpose, as well as to list the names of men eligible for military service, to raise forced labour and to marshal the resources to finance the Empire.

Censuses today have nothing to do with assessment or taxation. A modern census is the complete listing or cataloguing of a people and many of the things that affect their lives. Censuses are taken to provide information about people so that governments, business and industry, social organizations and many other agencies can know more about the basic structure of our society as it is -- not as we hope or guess it might be.

The modern idea of a census originated in the middle of the seventeenth century. The year was 1666. The place was New France. The man who organized it was Jean Talon, the Great Intendant.

Talon's first census listed 3,215 persons, with details of age, sex, marital status and occupation. Two years later his census asked additional questions about livestock and cultivated property. In 1671 he took a census in Acadia. By 1754, 15 censuses had been taken in New France and Acadia. With each new census, questions were added about crops, buildings, churches, grist-mills, saw-mills, firearms and swords.

Upper Canada took its first census in 1824 -- and then conducted a census *annually* until 1842, the year of union with Lower Canada. The Act of Union required a census every five years. Meanwhile, censuses had been taken in New Brunswick in 1824, Assiniboia (later Manitoba) in 1831, and Prince Edward Island in 1841.

Under the British North America Act of 1867, a census was to be taken in 1871 and "every tenth year thereafter". This decennial census was extended to the territories and to new provinces as they joined Confederation.

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