

### *Arts and culture*

Before the First World War, a group of Toronto artists began experimenting with a new style of painting in the wilds of Algonquin Park, north of Toronto. J.E.H. MacDonald, Frederick Varley, Arthur Lismer, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Tom Thomson, Frank Johnston and Franklin Carmichael together established a landmark in the history of Canadian creative arts. Their bold use of colours and their depiction of the Canadian wilderness inspired a new confidence in Canadian artists and marked a break with European tradition in Canadian painting. Toronto was also the headquarters for the famous Painters Eleven (Jack Bush, William Ronald and Harold Town among others) in the 1950s.

The recent blossoming in the arts has been most evident in the field of literature. Ontario has a tradition of eminent writers, several of whom established important reputations earlier in the century: Stephen Leacock, who wrote about the humorous foibles of the residents of the fictional town of Mariposa; Mazo De la Roche, whose best-selling novels about the Whiteoaks of Jalna were translated into many languages; and Morley Callaghan, whose renown began in Paris in the 1920s, and who is still a major literary force today. Among contemporary Ontario writers whose works attract strong

followings are Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies. Among noted Ontario scholars whose writing and thinking have influenced many are Marshall McLuhan, communications theorist, and Northrop Frye, eminent literary critic. Both came to prominence at the University of Toronto, one of the foremost universities of North America.

Because Toronto is the most populous of English-speaking Canadian cities, it is at the centre of Canadian artistic and cultural activity. As the centre of English-language publishing, broadcasting and the live arts, it is the communications capital of the country. Toronto is home of the National Ballet of Canada, many of the 40 professional theatre companies in the province, and the Canadian Opera Company. Many Ontario cities have professional theatre companies, the largest being that of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Many smaller towns benefit from theatrical and other artistic tours financed and organized by government agencies like the Ontario Arts Council, established to promote the arts and make them accessible to the entire population.

Many regional theatres have sprung up in recent years. Each year, the renowned Stratford Festival, which attracts nearly half a million visitors from Canada and