

Canada's natural divisions run north and south but the vast St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes system cuts 1,900 miles into the heart of the country, providing the strongest link between the west and east. Hudson Bay, a narrow 500 mile wide and 1,000 mile long (including James Bay) outlet from the west, the Laurentian Shield into Quebec and Ontario. Although the heavy rivers of the west empty into it and it has several natural harbours, this northern route to Europe is only navigable for from three to five months of the year.

The most recent Canadian census, taken in 1941, recorded Canada's population as 11,508,632 -- less than that of New York State. This figure represents a growth, however, of 8,000,000 in the last 70 years. About 90% of the people live within 200 miles and 50% within 100 miles of the United States border. Montreal is the largest city, with a population of 1,139,381.

The largest racial groups in Canada's population are as follows:

British (English, Scottish, Irish)	5,715,304
French	3,488,088
German	484,882
Ukrainian	308,982
Scandinavian	244,802

White people of British stock are spread all over Canada, the French have concentrated in Quebec, with considerable French-Canadian settlements in Manitoba, around Winnipeg, and in northern and eastern Ontario. A census of the French colony in 1794 showed a population of 25,000; this group has grown to nearly three and a half million, or about 30% of the population of Canada. With their own language, Church, and -- in Quebec -- their own laws and educational system, the French Canadians have maintained intact their own way of life.

The other ethnic groups, though tending to settle in their own communities, mainly in the prairie provinces, are gradually being assimilated into English-speaking Canada.

The first settlers in Canada, excluding the Indians, were the French who came originally as fishermen and founded colonies on the Atlantic coast and along the St. Lawrence River at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Through their activity as fur traders they began the opening up of Canada. English settlements later in the century tended to centre along the Atlantic seaboard to the south. But as the English also established trading posts farther into the interior, they came into a series of conflicts with the French which culminated in the Seven Years' War.

With the Treaty of Paris in 1763, French ascendancy in the new world was at an end and their North American settlements fell under British rule. Only 11 years later, England guaranteed the French way of life and enabled French Canada to preserve its customs and the unity by passing the Quebec Act which has been called the French-Canadian "Bill of Rights".

The influx of British settlers (the United Empire Loyalists) across the border after the war changed the whole future of Canada. Settling mostly along the St. Lawrence in what is now Ontario, and in the Maritime Provinces, they began turning Canada into a multi-national and bi-lingual country. With them they brought their belief in representative government and other British institutions. After the turn of the century, immigrants