

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 great sea 590 miles wide and 1,300 miles long (including James Bay) cuts down through the Laurentian Shield into Quebec and Ontario. Although the mighty 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 11,506,655 -- 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 its largest city, with a population of 1,139,921.

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

British (English, Scottish, Irish)	5,715,904
French	3,483,038
German	464,682
Ukrainian	305,929
Scandinavian	244,603

While 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 1754 showed a population of 55,009; this group has grown to nearly three and a half millions, 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 its unity by passing the Quebec Act which has been called the French-Canadian "Bill of Rights." Mainly as a result of this Act, the French refused to join the 13 colonies in the American War of Independence.

The influx of British settlers (the United Empire Loyalists) across the border after this war changed the whole future of Canada. Settling mostly along the St. Lawrence in what is now Ontario, and in the Maritimes, 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