

Archaic people, who followed the retreating glaciers into Newfoundland. The Vikings landed in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia in about A.D. 1000, and left behind the earliest known European buildings in North America. The settlement, on Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, is now designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

Nearly 500 years later, explorers sailing under the flags of Britain and France "discovered" the region anew and set off a struggle for dominance that would endure until the mid-eighteenth century, when Britain emerged as the victorious colonial power. In the process the Acadians — the French-speaking people of the Maritime provinces — were deported en masse to the United States and other locations, an exile that lasted eight years.

New Brunswick currently has the highest proportion of Francophones (33.6 per cent) outside Quebec and is Canada's first and only officially bilingual province. The English-speaking population is made up largely of descendants of Irish immigrants, and United Empire Loyalists who fled the United States in the wake of the American Revolution. Other ethnic groups include Germans, Scandinavians, Asians and over 7 000 aboriginal people, mostly Micmacs and Maliseets. The population of P.E.I. is 80 per cent British in origin, and most of these could be more properly described as Scots. There is a significant Irish contingent as well.

Around 17 per cent are of French descent.

Seventy-eight per cent of Nova Scotians are of British, mainly Scottish origin; there are many of Irish descent; and just over 10 per cent are Acadian. There is a large black population; other groups include Micmacs, Germans, Dutch, Greeks, Italians and Lebanese. Newfoundlanders are of mainly Irish, English and Scottish descent, with several thousand Inuit and other aboriginal peoples in Labrador and on the island.

Government

Atlantic Canadians take their politics seriously. Prince Edward Island has the highest voter turnout rate at over 80 per cent with the other Atlantic provinces close behind. These provinces have often known long periods of dominance by one or the other of the two main political parties, the Liberals and Progressive

Conservatives. The New Democratic Party has had some success periodically, especially in Cape Breton. Each of the four provinces has a single-chamber legislature, and all but P.E.I. have single-member constituencies. P.E.I. elects two members in each seat.

Resources and Economy

Traditionally, the economy of the Atlantic provinces was based on the region's abundant natural resources. They remain important, but service industries have become the biggest employers in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. One of the main elements of this sector is tourism, which ranks second to agriculture in P.E.I.

Overall, tourism is a billion-dollar industry in the region. Vacationers can surf in the breakers off Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast, or enjoy a more leisurely swim in the Northumberland Strait, which boasts the warmest salt water north of the Carolinas in the United States. Visitors can fish for salmon in New Brunswick's Miramichi and the rivers of Newfoundland, keep a lookout for whales in the Bay of Fundy, cruise Halifax Harbour on the schooner *Bluenose II* or go fishing for tuna off P.E.I. Western Newfoundland, northern New Brunswick and Nova Scotia offer alpine skiing in the winter. Historical sites and top-flight convention facilities draw people year-round.

The provinces are surrounded by some of the richest fishing grounds in the world, including the continental shelf, which makes the fishery a primary component of Newfoundland's economy. However, this resource must be managed wisely lest fish stocks decline even further than the low levels recently recorded.

Lobster, scallops, cod and other fish make up a third of Nova Scotia's exports and the province accounts for 26 per cent of the seafood exports of the entire country. Over 50 species of fish and shellfish are caught in New Brunswick, and the town of Shediac bills itself as the "Lobster Capital of the World." Lobster is the most important species in P.E.I., accounting for more than half the total fishery income.

The abundance of forest land is a major source of wealth, especially in New Brunswick where one of every seven jobs is based on forestry. In the days of wooden sailing ships, New Brunswick was a leader in shipbuilding. The resource is now

used primarily for pulp and paper, an important part of the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland economies as well. Mining is also a crucial component of the Atlantic economy and brings in more revenue in Newfoundland than fishing. The area around Labrador City provides 55 per cent of the country's iron ore. Nova Scotia is a major coal producer and is the source of 70 per cent of Canada's gypsum, and New Brunswick has a mining sector worth over half a billion dollars a year. Agriculture, too, is important in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and especially P.E.I., where potatoes are the island's major source of farm income.

Manufacturing is a significant sector of the economy, with products ranging from chocolates (St. Stephen, N.B., is the birthplace of the chocolate bar) to steel, aerospace equipment, and airplane and automobile parts. Other important economic sectors include hydroelectric power, offshore oil and gas exploration, transportation and shipping. The east coast is of obvious strategic importance, Halifax being known as the "Warden of the North," and the federal department of National Defence is a major employer in the region.

Education

With fewer than a million people, Nova Scotia has 14 universities and colleges whose curriculums include everything from art and design to robotics and world-renowned medical research. New Brunswick has the only French-language common law school in the world at l'Université de Moncton; Prince Edward Island, in addition to the University of P.E.I. and Holland College, has a veterinary college and a police academy; and Newfoundland's Memorial University has a number of facilities specializing in earth and ocean sciences and technology.

In a society based more and more on information, the Atlantic provinces may be on their way to an increasingly bright future. In terms of quality of life, many Atlantic Canadians will declare that they have already arrived.

