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THE CANADIAN INDIAN

At the time of the first settlements in North America about four centuries ago, the Indian population of what is now Canada was, according to the best estimates of anthropologists, about 200,000. Shortly after the advent of the Europeans, the Indian population started to decline, and continued to dwindle until it became a common belief that the Indians were a dying race. In the last half century, however, there has been a steady increase and today the Indian population of Canada is over 190,000.

There are nearly 600 separate Indian communities, known as "bands". With the exception of certain nomadic groups inhabiting the outlying and northern regions, these bands are located on more than 2,200 "reserves", varying in size from a few acres to more than five hundred square miles, set aside by the Canadian Government for the use and benefit of Indians. A number of Indians in all parts of Canada have chosen to live off their reserves as members of the general community.

Among the Indians are to be found successful farmers, ranchers, lumbermen, fishermen and trappers, while others are pursuing careers as doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers, nurses, clergymen, soldiers, industrial workers, stenographers, mechanics, salesmen and tradesmen. The Canadian Indian has proven himself quick to learn and is well able to assume a place beside his fellow Canadians of non-Indian status.

Although the origin of the Indians remains uncertain, anthropologists believe that they came to America in successive migrations in pre-historic times from Northern Asia, probably by way of Bering Sea.

The Indians are not a single race, but are divided into a number of basic language groups that are, in turn, subdivided into tribal groups with many local dialects. There are ten linguistic groups, of which four are found east of the Rocky Mountains - Algonkian, Athapaskan, Iroquoian and Siouan, and six in British Columbia - Kootenayan, Salishan, Wakashan, Tsimshian, Haida and Tlinkit.

These groups are further subdivided into many tribes with widely differing physical and cultural characteristics. The Indians of Algonkian stock are the most numerous, covering an area from the Atlantic Ocean to the Rockies; they include such well-known tribes as the Micmacs of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the Montagnais of Quebec and the Ojibway, Crees and Blackfoot of Ontario and the Prairie Provinces.

Iroquoian stock, including the Hurons, is found mainly in Ontario and Quebec, Athapaskan stock inhabits the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, while tribes of Sioux inhabit parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.