# Nova Scotia

The Land

Nova Scotia's 580-km-long peninsula is surrounded by four bodies of water — the Atlantic Ocean, the Bay of Fundy, the Northumberland Strait and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Its geographic location, together with large, ice-free, deep-water harbours, has been a key factor in the province's economic development.

With an area of 55 491 km^2, Nova Scotia is larger than Denmark, although somewhat smaller than Scotland, after which it is named. Its average width of 128 km means that no part of the province is far from the sea.

Nova Scotia is a mosaic of rugged headlands, tranquil
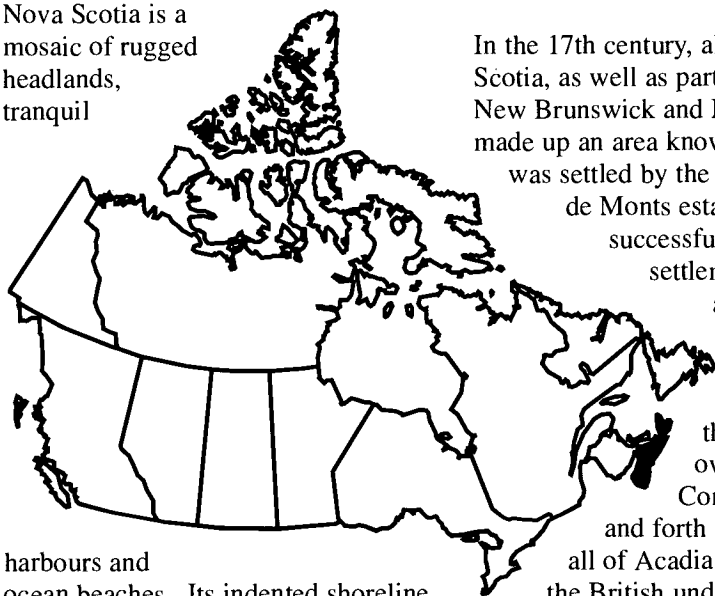
harbours and ocean beaches. Its indented shoreline stretches 10 424 km, while inland is a myriad of lakes and streams. The land is framed by the rocky Atlantic Uplands, the Cape Breton Highlands and the wooded Cobequid Hills. The agricultural areas of Nova Scotia are predominantly lowlands. When the glacial ice withdrew from coastal Nova Scotia 15 000 to 18 000 years ago, the ocean flooded ancient river valleys and carved out hundreds of small protected harbours which later became fishing ports.

Nova Scotia lies in the northern temperate zone and, although it is almost surrounded by water, the climate is continental rather than maritime. The temperature extremes of a continental climate, however, are moderated by the ocean.

The History

The Micmac Indians inhabited Nova Scotia long before the first explorers arrived from Europe. The first visitors were Norsemen in the early 11th century, and, in 1497, Italian explorer John Cabot had noted the rich fishing grounds in the area.

In the 17th century, all of Nova Scotia, as well as parts of Quebec, New Brunswick and Maine, which made up an area known as Acadia, was settled by the French. Pierre de Monts established the first successful agricultural settlement in Canada, at Port Royal in 1605. In the next century, the British and the French feuded over the area. Control passed back and forth until 1713, when all of Acadia was ceded to the British under the Treaty of Utrecht.

Conflict between Britain and France continued. The Acadians, mainly settlers from France, tried to convince both sides of their neutrality, but by 1755 the British had decided that the Acadians posed too great a security threat. They expelled all Acadians who would not swear allegiance to the British Crown. Many returned to France, some settled in New France and many others moved to the United States.

In 1783, thousands of United Empire Loyalists from the newly independent New England states immigrated to Nova Scotia. They wanted to remain British despite the formation of the United States of America. The influx of the Loyalists doubled Nova Scotia's population; and in 1784, it was partitioned to create the colonies of New Brunswick and Cape Breton Island.

In 1848, largely through the efforts of newspaper owner and patriot Joseph Howe, Nova Scotia became the first British colony to win responsible government. Nova Scotia was one of the four provinces that constituted the new federation called the Dominion of Canada in 1867. At that time, the province was in the forefront of international shipbuilding, and the lumber and fish trades. Confederation helped to finance the railroad to Quebec City, which opened the province to the interior of the continent. The first and second world wars emphasized the importance of Halifax, Nova Scotia's capital, as a staging point for convoys and confirmed it as one of the world's major military ports.

The People

Over 80 percent of Nova Scotia's population of 920 000 trace their ancestry either wholly or partly to the British Isles. Those with French origin rank second: 18 percent of residents have some French ancestry. The next largest groups by ancestry are German and Dutch.

Residents of Nova Scotia are also of Polish, Italian, Jewish and Lebanese