

Communications: The Canadian Experience



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Introduction

"Canada is a Distant Early Warning System for the American experience." The words belong to communications theorist Marshall McLuhan who in the 1960s revolutionized everyone's understanding of the social impact of communications. Canadians are conscious of the pervasive implications of modern communications media since few countries in the world are as dependent as Canada on telecommunicating for their existence as a nation.

About 23 million Canadians occupy the northern half of North America — an area comprising 9,976,139 square kilometres (3,851,809 square miles) and extending from roughly the same latitude as Rome in the south to far beyond the Arctic Circle in the North. In the far north Canadians live in small communities, separated by hundreds of miles of wilderness and forbidding terrain. More than three-quarters of Canadians live in cities close to Canada's southern border in a narrow strip stretching about 6,500 kilometres from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Even these urban Canadians, however, are divided from each other by vast distances and such formidable geographic barriers as the Canadian Shield and the Rocky Mountains.

Because of the continuing Canadian preoccupation with communications as an instrument of national will, the country is developing new communications technologies which together are creating the global information revolution.

Canadian communications scholar Marshall McLuhan. Through books such as The Gutenberg Galaxy, Understanding Media and The Medium is the Message (the latter with Quentin Fiore), Mr. McLuhan has revolutionized popular and critical thinking about the mass-media.

