

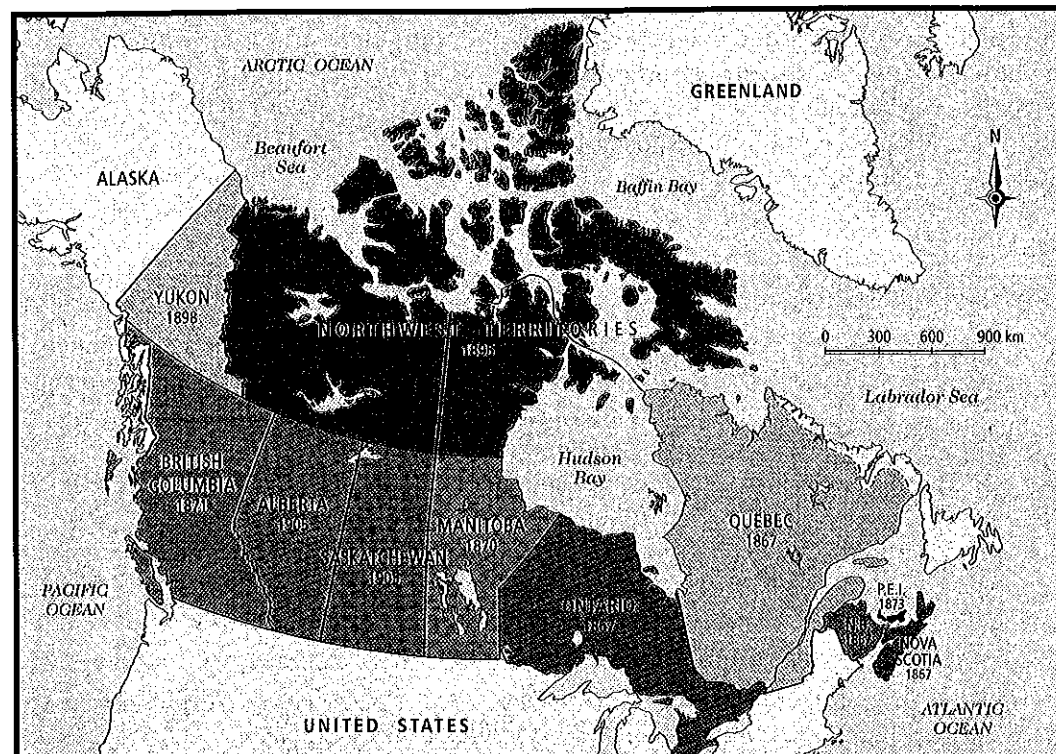
Canadians at the Turn of the Century

The People

What was Canadian life like in 1900? Try to place yourself back in time. Your life would have been quite different from what it is today. As you read this section, consider whether life at the turn of the twentieth century was better or worse than life at the turn of the twenty-first century. Try to note the major differences and similarities. Would you consider changing places with a young Canadian in 1900?

In 1900, Canada consisted of only six provinces. Most Canadians lived on farms. Many young people left school early. In the country, they were needed on the farm. In the city, their wages helped pay for the family's food and rent. The work was hard, and the hours long. People tended to marry young and start raising families early. Adult responsibilities came quickly. As well, Canada began to receive waves of immigrants, many of whom chose to settle and develop

the vast stretches of the fertile, but underpopulated West. Canada's Aboriginal peoples faced new challenges as they struggled to maintain their identity, lands and rights in a world dominated by European arrivals. Canadian women began to claim new roles and respect for themselves as fuller partners in Canada's changing society. When one looks back, it is clear that the turn of the twentieth century was a new beginning for Canada and Canadians.



This map of Canada shows what the country looked like at the turn of the twentieth century. How is it

Life revolved around such institutions as the town band, the local baseball or hockey team, and the church.



1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950

A Rural Society

By 1900 the population of Canada was 5,200,000. Toronto, Montreal and Halifax were the largest cities. Vancouver was the boomtown of the West Coast, but not many people lived west of Winnipeg. Regina, Calgary and Edmonton were still small pioneer cities.

was an important occupation in the coastal areas of the Maritime provinces. Still other people worked in construction—on the rapidly expanding railways or on the roads, sewers and buildings of the new cities. Women worked in factories, as servants for the rich, as teachers and store clerks, and on their own farms and in their own homes.



A "caboose" taking children to school one wintry morning in the early part of the twentieth century.

Most people still earned their living by the sweat of their brow. The hours were long, salaries were poor and conditions difficult. Farming was the main occupation in 1900. Other Canadians worked in logging camps to provide lumber for the growing cities, the

Living Close to Home

Most people depended on the horse and buggy for local travel and the train for long journeys. By 1885, Canada was linked from sea to sea by railroads.

Automobiles were so rare that people did not have driving licences. There were no speed limits, no stop signs and no traffic lights. People usually spent their lives close to home where interest was centred on the local community. Life revolved around such insti-

tutions as the town band, the local baseball or hockey team, and the church. There were few telephones, no supermarkets, no radios and no television. Many people did not have newspapers to bring them news from the rest of the world. The age of paid professional singers, comedians or athletes was still to



Women's hockey has deep roots in Canadian society. How "big" is hockey in your community?

come. Most people provided their own entertainment. A singsong around the family piano or dancing to a treasured violin or accordion brought from the old country—these were high points of any family gathering. A night out meant watching local talent in a play or a concert at the church hall. Opera and music halls were very popular in some parts of the country.

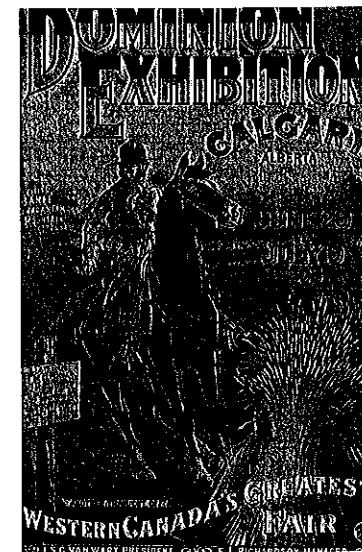
A New Century

The 1800s had been a period of gradual change. In 1900, most Canadians expected that the twentieth century would continue in the same way, but the years ahead would be stormy and fast-changing. Canada would take part in two world wars and the Korean War—

make dramatic strides forward in technology, communications, transportation and medicine. Our population would swell with new immigrants, and the country would become renowned for its rich, multicultural diversity by the end of the twentieth century. Aboriginal people would make great advances in the areas of self-determination and land rights. French Canadians would move to control their own destiny. Canadian astronauts would fly into space, while people at home would gain a global perspective. Natural resources would play

a vital role in the country's economic and social growth, and Canada would develop its unique national character and heritage.

Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier once said: "The nineteenth century has been the



century of the United States.... The twentieth century shall be the century of Canada." Perhaps this century did not develop quite as he expected. Canada at the end of the twentieth

...different place from the

