

Canada's Founding Peoples

Founding peoples is a term used to describe the earliest communities in a country. They are the first groups to live in a certain place. Therefore, they have a strong influence on the type of society that develops there.

Canada has three founding peoples. From the earliest times, the land was occupied by its original inhabitants, the First Nations and the Inuit [IN-yoo-it] of the Arctic region. Hundreds of years ago, French people began arriving from Europe and settling along the St. Lawrence River. The French were followed by newcomers from Great Britain. Over the years, these three founding peoples combined to create a unique society in the territory that came to be called Canada.

In this chapter, you can learn about the earliest communities in Canada. As you discover their influence in shaping Canadian society, think about why it is important to respect the contributions of people who lived in Canada a long time ago.

The First Peoples

First Nations and Inuit have been living in North America for as long as anyone can remember. They are the original inhabitants of the territory we now call Canada.

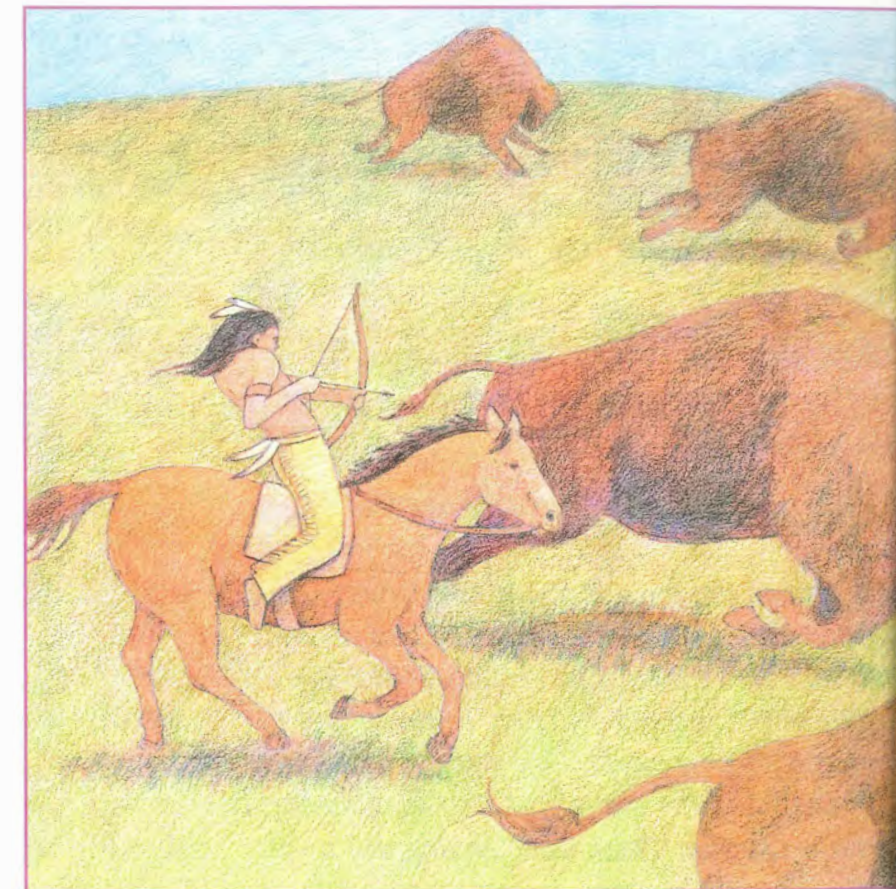
Can you imagine what it was like to be the first people? This was long before the time of modern technology. There were no cities, no highways or automobiles, and no factories or mines. Thundering herds of buffalo still stampeded across the Plains. The lakes were filled with fish, and the forests were filled with wild animals.

The people made their living from the land. They built their houses out of wood from the trees or from the skins of animals. They made clothing from woven bark or from furs and tanned animal hides. They obtained food by hunting for deer, buffalo, and other animals, by fishing in the lakes and rivers, and by gathering wild plants.

In the Arctic, the Copper Inuit hunted seals. On the Pacific Coast, the Nuu-chah-nulth

[noo-CHAH-noolth] harpooned whales. In Eastern Canada, the Haudenosaunee [ha-duh-nuh-SAH-nee] raised crops of corn. Each part of the country provided its own way of making a living.

In the past, the Haudenosaunee were called the Iroquois [IR-uh-kwah].



Aboriginal peoples living on the Plains hunted the buffalo on the back. They also drove them over cliffs or chased them into pen. The meat was used for food, and the skins and bones for making tools and utensils.



A Closer Look

Origins of the First Peoples

Every Aboriginal group in Canada has its own creation story. A creation story is a story that explains how the world began and where the first people came from.

Here is a creation story from the Haida [HY-duh] who live on the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia. The story was told by the Haida artist Bill Reid.

One day soon after the great flood the Raven walked upon the beach. The mischievous Raven was bored. In frustration he complained to the empty sky. To his delight he heard a muffled squeak.

Right at his feet was a huge clamshell. He looked more closely and saw that it was full of little creatures.

Well, here was something to break the monotony [a lack of variety] of his day. But it wasn't much fun as long as the silly things stayed in their shell. So he leaned his great head close, and used his bell-like crooning voice to coax them to come out and play in the wonderful shining world. First one, then another of the shell dwellers clambered out, as curiosity overcame caution. These were the original Haidas, the first humans.

Excerpt from *Raven Steals the Light* copyright © 1988 by Bill Reid and Robert Bringhurst. Published in Canada by Douglas & McIntyre. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

A Different Understanding

Europeans who came to live in Canada developed their own understanding of how humans first came to America. They believed that the first people walked across the Bering Strait into America from Siberia. This happened many thousands of years ago, when the Bering Strait was dry land. (See the map on page 19.)

No matter which story you believe, both recognize that the First Nations and Inuit lived in America long before anyone else arrived.



This huge sculpture by Bill Reid is called *The Raven and the First Men*. It is on display at the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. The sculpture illustrates the creation story.

Find Out

The Haida story is one of many Aboriginal creation stories. You can find more creation stories in the library. Look for books about other Aboriginal groups in Canada. Another source of information might be an Aboriginal Elder. Some students may know stories that are told in their communities.

Write down the details of one of these stories. Bring it to class to share with your classmates. You may want to illustrate the story with a drawing.

Discuss how it is different from the Haida story about Raven and the "clam people." What things do the stories share? Do you believe that the events of the story actually took place? Why or why not?

Using the Right Name

Your name is a way of identifying yourself. It is an important part of who you are. You don't like it when someone says your name incorrectly or mixes you up with someone else.

In the past, Aboriginal groups were given names that did not belong to them. They were not the names used by the peoples themselves.

Take, for example, the Inuit of the Far North. For a long time, non-Inuit called them Eskimos. The word *Eskimo* means "eaters of raw meat" and was a term used by other Aboriginal groups. The northern people prefer to be called Inuit, a word that means "the people." Today, *Eskimo* is not heard very often.

Another example is the term *Indian*, which European explorers used to refer to the original

inhabitants of North and South America. When the explorers first arrived in America, they were lost and thought they were in India. So they called the people living here Indians, but this was a mistake.

The government still uses the word *Indian* to define some Aboriginal peoples under the Indian Act (see pages 89 to 90). In general, though, it has been replaced by the term **Aboriginal peoples**. *Aboriginal peoples* means the original inhabitants of Canada. It includes Indians, Inuit, and Métis [may-TEE]. **First Nations** refers to organized groups, or nations, of Aboriginal peoples who live in Canada—from the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia to the Haida in British Columbia. There are hundreds of First Nations in Canada, each with its own history and traditions, and each with its own local name.

Why do you think it is important to know that the First Nations and Inuit were the first inhabitants of Canada?



Bering Strait is a narrow sea passage that separates the eastern tip of Russia from Alaska and links the Arctic Ocean with the Bering Sea. During the ice age, the area formed a bridge of land between the two continents.



A Closer Look

The Métis

When Europeans began arriving in America, they mixed with the Aboriginal peoples. European men often married Aboriginal women. The children of these marriages were a mixture of both backgrounds. They were known as “mixed bloods,” or by a French word, *métis*, meaning a mixture of backgrounds.

The Métis developed their own unique way of life. They worked in the fur trade and specialized in the buffalo hunt on the western Plains. Meat from the hunt was used to feed the traders at the fur posts. The Métis had their own language. It was called *michif* [mee-SHEEF] and was a mixture of Cree, French, and Ojibwa [o-JIB-wah].

The Métis in Western Canada saw themselves as a separate people. They wanted their own homeland where their culture, language, and traditions would be respected. Led by Louis Riel [loo-EE ree-EL], they organized themselves to protect their lands against the European settlers who were moving in.

In the end, the Métis were pushed aside by the newcomers. They lost most of their land. But they survived as a separate people with a proud history. In 1996, the census showed that there were 210 190 Métis living in Canada.



This painting of a Métis man and two women dates from the 1800s. It shows the unique clothing styles that were part of the Métis culture. What influences of European culture do you see in the painting? What influences of Aboriginal culture do you see?

Try This

The term *Aboriginal peoples* includes three groups: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. How would you compare these groups? In other words, in what ways are they the same and in what ways are they different?

Here’s a chart that you can use to make your comparison. Write the main questions in the first column.

If you need more information about any of these groups, do some research in the library.

	First Nations	Inuit	Métis
<i>In what part of Canada do they live?</i>			
<i>How did they find food in the past?</i>			
<i>How did they make clothing in the past?</i>			
<i>What other facts do I know?</i>			

Aboriginal Peoples Today

Aboriginal peoples are still an important part of Canadian society today. There are about 800 000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis living in communities across Canada. Aboriginal peoples make contributions in every walk of life.

In 1993, John Kim Bell, a famous Mohawk conductor and composer, set up the National

Aboriginal Achievement Awards. This annual ceremony honours the achievements of Aboriginal peoples in many fields, including medicine, the arts, and business. For instance, in 1997, a Métis doctor, Martin McLoughlin of Vancouver, received an award for his contribution to medicine.

Think about how often you see evidence of Aboriginal peoples' contributions in our society.



Susan Aglukark [uh-GLOO-kark] is an Inuit and an award-winning singer. Her songs are in English and **Inuktitut** [in-UK-ti-tut], the language of the Inuit.

The French in Canada

The next time you pour yourself a bowl of cereal, be sure to pay attention to the writing on the box. You have probably already noticed that it includes both French and English. But have you ever wondered why?

It is not just cereal boxes that have writing in two languages—so do all kinds of other containers, the labels on clothes, and the signs at the airport. Can you think of other examples?

A Bilingual Country

The writing on cereal boxes, clothing labels, and other items that you found is a sign that Canada is a bilingual country. This means that it has two official languages. An **official language** is one that is used by the government in conducting the business of the nation. Many languages are spoken in Canada, but only two have official status. The two official languages are French and English.

Bilingualism [by-LING-gwal-iz-um] means that Canadians

have the right to receive government services in French or English, no matter where they live in the country. Of course, they may carry on their daily lives in any language they choose. No one is forced to speak a certain language. But when dealing with their government, people can expect to receive service in one of the official languages.

French-speaking people live in communities all across Canada. It is common to see French names on the map of Canada. Most of us can watch French-language programs on television or buy French-language books in our communities.

Can you find other signs of bilingualism in your community and in your province?



The singer Céline Dion is probably the most well-known Canadian in the world. Her CDs sell millions of copies, and she has won many awards. Céline Dion is a Québécoise who was born in the city of Montreal. She made her first hit record when she was only 13 years old. She sings in records in both French and English.

New France was a **colony** of France. A colony is a territory that belongs to another country. Great Britain, France, and Spain all had colonies in North America.

The Arrival of the French

How did Canada come to have two official languages?

Almost 500 years ago, explorers came to North America from France. They were seeking new lands and the wealth they hoped to find there. The French built forts and began trading

for furs with the Aboriginal peoples.

French explorers travelled far into the interior of the country, looking for new places where they could trade. Soon they declared that they owned the whole region. Settlers arrived to build communities and begin farming. They called this area New France.



This map shows New France in 1712, when it reached its largest extent. From then on, the area controlled by Britain grew larger, and the area controlled by France shrank until it was roughly the size of the province of Quebec today.

Life in New France

On pages 25 to 27, you will find evidence of the life led by the colonists in New France. As you

examine this evidence, create a chart like the one shown here to record your findings:

What did the colonists eat?	How did they get the food they ate?	What were some of the occupations they had?	What hardships did the colonists face?

"The colonist eats two pounds of bread a day and six ounces of bacon."
—Intendant Radot, 1636

"In 1737, the famine was so terrible that colonists were reduced to eating buds of trees, potatoes, and other foods never intended to be used as food for human beings."
—Pehr Kalm, 1753



The colonists of New France were called *habitants* [AB-ee-tah(n)]. This painting shows a *habitant* who has been hunting. Describe his clothing. Which items of clothing do you think were borrowed from the Aboriginal peoples?



This view of Quebec City shows the marketplace and different street activities. It also shows the cathedral.

Type of Craft	Number of Craftspersons
miller	1
baker	16
butcher	18
mason-stonecutter	32
woodworker	42
carpenter	84
roofer	1
chimney sweep	4
shipwright	2
cooper	26
tailor	20
tanner/currier	6
shoemaker	26
saddler	3
blacksmith	30
locksmith	3
armourer/gunsmith	3
silversmith	6
surgeon	6
wigmaker/barber	11

“When a family begins to build a place to live, it needs two or three years before it has enough to feed itself. People also need clothing, furniture, and many little things. When these first difficulties are past, they begin to live comfortably, and may become rich with time. In the beginning, they live on their cereals and vegetables and on wild game, which is plentiful in winter. To get clothing and other things for the house, they make roofing planks and cut timber which they sell at a high price.”

—Marie de l’Incarnation, a nun who lived in New France from 1639 to 1672

This chart shows the type and number of craftspeople in Quebec City in 1744. You might have to use your dictionary to find out what some of these crafts are. Which jobs are still done today in your community?

Goods Traded for Furs	Furs Traded
guns	beaver
gunpowder	lynx
hatchets	marten
cloth	fox
kettles	bear
string	otter
knives	wolverine
beads	mink
blankets	wolf
tobacco	

This chart shows the type of goods that the French traded for furs from Aboriginal peoples.

“Fisheries of all kinds are in operation, the rivers being very rich in fish, such as salmon, brill, perch, sturgeon, herring, and cod. They are prepared both fresh and dried, and much is sold in France, which makes us richer. The seal fishery furnishes the whole country and much is sent to France. This year, we are shipping overseas fresh and dried codfish, salted salmon, eels, peas both green and white, fish oil, staves [sticks or poles] and boards, all produced in the country.”

—A letter from a Jesuit priest

Try This

Look at the variety of information on pages 25 to 27. Some of it is contained in charts. Some of it can be found in the photographs. Using all the information, make a list of the goods that were exported from New France to Europe. List the items they imported from France. What important items did the colonists produce for themselves?

Items Exported to France	Items Imported from France	Items Produced for Themselves



This painting gives a view of the countryside of New France. Why were most farms located next to a river? The white house is the main farmhouse. The plank building on the right is the barn. Do you see the stakes in the river? Those are weirs (a type of trap) for catching fish.

Think For Yourself

Imagine that you are a colonist living in New France. How would you prefer to make your living? Send a letter home to France, explaining your decision.

The French Presence Today

Eventually, France lost control of its colony in North America. New France became a possession of Great Britain and became known as Quebec. But French-speaking people continued to live in Quebec and to play an important role in the development of Canada.

There are many ways in which Canada's French heritage lives on in Canada. Today, one Canadian in five traces his or her ancestry back to France. One in four speaks French as a **first language**. All across the country, students learn French as a second language.



The ancestors of these Acadian dancers in Prince Edward Island came from France.

A **first language** is the language that a person first learns at home.

The British in Canada

If you take some coins out of your pocket and spread them on the desk, what images do you see? Canadian coins are decorated with pictures of different animals. There is an elk, a beaver, and a polar bear on the two-dollar coin (if you are lucky enough to have one of those!). And on the reverse side of every coin there is a portrait of Queen Elizabeth II.

Have you ever wondered why the image of the queen is so common in Canada? She is also pictured on all our paper money and on some stamps. Her portrait hangs in many public buildings. There is probably a picture of the queen hanging in your school.

Queen Elizabeth II is the queen of England, and she is also the queen of Canada. This means that Canada is a **monarchy**. In the old days, a monarch (a king or queen) had absolute power to do whatever he or she chose. Today, the role of the monarch is mainly ceremonial (for the sake of tradition). Government is carried on by elected parliaments, not by monarchs.

Still, the queen is an important person in our system of government. All the laws are passed in her name. She has her own representative in Canada, called the **governor general**. The governor general carries out many duties on behalf of the queen.

The monarchy is one sign of how important British traditions are in Canada.

Queen Elizabeth II has reigned since 1952. When she dies, or steps aside, her eldest son Charles, the Prince of Wales, will become king. Both Queen Elizabeth and Prince Charles have made several visits to Canada.



The queen's image on stamps, coins, and so on is a symbol of the monarchy in Canada.

Think For Yourself

The images that appear on Canadian coins and stamps are important symbols of our society. They represent our pride in our country. What symbol is on the Canadian flag? What does this symbol say about the country? As a class, talk about the role symbols play in society.

Create your own symbol for Canada. Working with a partner, decide on a symbol. Then explain to the rest of the class what you want your symbol to say about the country.

Draw a stamp or coin that illustrates your symbol.

Great Britain is made up of four countries—England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland—that joined together 200 years ago. They are sometimes simply called Britain or the United Kingdom.

Migrating to Canada

Before 1763 Canada was a French colony. France and Great Britain were rivals for power and wealth around the world. In many places, their competition brought them into conflict. Their rivalry came to a head in the Seven Years War, which lasted from 1756 to 1763. During this long war, British troops came to Canada and drove out the French. In 1763, France signed the Treaty of Paris giving Canada to the British.

With Canada in British hands, many people from Scotland, Ireland, and England began crossing the Atlantic Ocean to live here. Scots were attracted to Nova Scotia in particular. Between 1800 and 1815, there were 10 000 new arrivals in Nova Scotia from Scotland. One popular place for the newcomers to settle was in Cape Breton Island, where the rugged hills and the sea reminded

them of home. Today, Gaelic [GALE-ik] (a language spoken in Scotland) is still used there, and Cape Breton Island is known as a centre of Scottish music in North America.

Irish newcomers preferred to settle in Ontario. The Irish were driven from their country by a terrible famine. They arrived in Canada poor and starving. They found jobs in the logging camps or in construction, building roads and canals. By 1871, almost one-quarter of all Canadians were of Irish origin.

During the 19th century, by far the largest number of immigrants to Canada came from Great Britain. As a result, Canadians of British background became the largest group in the country. They joined with the earlier French colonists to be one of Canada's founding peoples.

The British Presence Today

Canada is much less British today than it was 50 or 100 years ago. Newcomers from around the world have arrived to transform Canadian society into a mix of many cultures.

Still, the British heritage is evident in many ways, for example, in our type of government. Our systems of

Parliament and elections are modelled on the British systems. So is our system of courts and law. The fact that English is one of the official languages of Canada is another example of British influence. Three Canadians out of every five learn English before any other language.

Can you think of other examples of British heritage in your community?

The Stratford Festival takes place each year from May to October in Stratford, Ontario. This theatre festival, which began in 1919, is another example of Canada's British heritage. The festival puts on plays mostly by the English playwright William Shakespeare. It is modelled on a similar drama festival in Stratford-upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace in England.

