

Canada

CANADIAN FLAG

The National Flag of Canada, also known as the Maple Leaf, and l'Unifolié (French for "the one-leafed"), is a red flag with a white square in its centre, featuring a stylized 11-pointed red maple leaf. Its adoption in 1965 marked the first time a national flag had been officially adopted to replace the Union Flag. The Canadian Red Ensign had been unofficially used since the 1890s and was approved by a 1945 Order-in-Council for use "wherever place or occasion may make it desirable to fly a distinctive Canadian flag"

ETYMOLOGY

The name Canada comes from a St. Lawrence Iroquoian word *kanata*, meaning "village" or "settlement". In 1535, inhabitants of the present-day Quebec City region used the word to direct explorer Jacques Cartier toward the village of Stadacona. Cartier used the word 'Canada' to refer to not only that village, but the entire area subject to Donnacona, Chief at Stadacona. By 1545, European books and maps began referring to this region as Canada.

The French colony of Canada referred to the part of New France along the Saint Lawrence River and the northern shores of the Great Lakes. Later, it was split into two British colonies, called Upper Canada and Lower Canada until their union as the British Province of Canada in 1841. Upon Confederation in 1867, the name Canada was adopted for the entire country, and Dominion was conferred as the country's title.

POLITICAL DIVISION

Canada is a federation composed of ten provinces and three territories; in turn, these may be grouped into regions. Western Canada consists of British Columbia and the three Prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba). Central Canada consists of Quebec and Ontario. Atlantic Canada consists of the three Maritime provinces (New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia), along with Newfoundland and Labrador. Eastern Canada refers to Central Canada and Atlantic Canada together. Three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut) make up Northern Canada. Provinces have more autonomy than territories. Each has its own provincial or territorial symbols.

CANADIAN DOLLAR

The first paper money issued in Canada denominated in dollars were British Army Bills, issued between 1813 and 1815 in denominations between 1 and 400 dollars. These were emergency issues due to the War of 1812. The first banknotes were issued in 1817 by the Montreal Bank. Large numbers of chartered banks were founded in the 1830s, 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, although many issued paper money for only a short time. Others, including the Montreal Bank (later called the Bank of Montreal), issued notes for several decades. Until 1858, many notes were issued denominated in both shillings/pounds and dollars (5 shillings = 1 dollar).

GOVERNMENT

Canada is a constitutional monarchy with Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, as head of state and the Prime Minister as the head of the government. The country is a parliamentary democracy with a federal system of parliamentary government and strong democratic traditions. Executive authority is formally and constitutionally vested in the monarch. However, by convention, the monarch and her appointed representative, the Governor General, act in a predominantly ceremonial and apolitical role, deferring the exercise of executive power to the Cabinet, which is made up of ministers generally accountable to the elected House of Commons, and headed by the Prime Minister, who is normally the leader of the party that holds the confidence of the House of Commons. Thus, the Cabinet is typically regarded as the active seat of executive power.

ECONOMY

Canada is the home to the ninth largest economy in the world, is one of the world's wealthiest nations, and a member of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and Group of Eight. As with other developed nations, the Canadian economy is dominated by the service industry, which employs about three quarters of Canadians. Canada is unusual among developed countries in the importance of the primary sector, with the logging and oil industries being two of Canada's most important. Canada also has a sizable manufacturing sector, centred in Central Canada, with the automobile industry especially important.

TOURISTIC PLACES

Canada is a land of great natural beauty, and Canadians identify with the vastness of the country and the splendour of its landscapes. Our country is also known for the liveliness and safety of its cities, its fascinating history and remarkable museums. Tourists come from inside and outside of the country to enjoy its diversity.

HOCKEY: NATIONAL SPORT

Canada's official national sports are ice hockey in the winter and lacrosse in the summer. Ice hockey is a national pastime and the most popular spectator sport in the country. It is the most popular sport Canadians play, with 1.65 million active participants in 2004. After hockey, other popular spectator sports include curling and football; the latter is played professionally in the Canadian Football League (CFL). Golf, baseball, skiing, soccer, volleyball, and basketball are widely played at youth and amateur levels, but professional leagues and franchises are not as widespread.

CANADIAN FOOD

Canadian cuisine varies widely from region to region. Generally, the traditional cuisine of English Canada is closely related to British and American cuisine, while the traditional cuisine of French Canada has evolved from French cuisine and the winter provisions of fur traders. Canadian cuisine is a mosaic of styles from all around the globe reflecting its population's

multicultural makeup. Canada's native people have heavily influenced this nation's cuisine. There's pemmican (dried meat mixture), buffalo meat, wild turnips and wild rice to name a few. The traditional method of preparing these dishes has been abandoned but not forgotten. Some of the traditional meals at Canada are a fine meal of smoked fish, meat pies, fries with cheese curds and gravy, and layered chocolate buttercream squares.

POPULATION

Canada is the second largest country in the world in terms of land area (9 012 112.20 square kilometres), yet it ranks only 33rd in terms of population. According to Statistics Canada, Canada's population in 2000 was estimated to be 30 750 100. This represents a growth of 3.6% since the 1996 estimate of 29 671 900. Almost all of Canada's population is concentrated in a narrow band along the country's southern edge. The population is also concentrated by province: Ontario and Quebec contain between them 62% of the total population.

QUEBEC: CAPITAL OF CANADA

Québec City, the capital of the province of Quebec, is located on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River where it meets the Rivière Saint-Charles. Here the St Lawrence narrows to a width of just over 1 km and navigation is made difficult by a group of islands, the largest of which is Île D'Orléans. Cap-Diamant, a promontory with an elevation of 98 m, dominates the site and was used effectively as a fortification, earning Québec City the name Gibraltar of North America. The name Québec is probably derived from an Algonquian word meaning narrowing of the river.

RELIGION

Religion in Canada encompasses a wide range of groups, and Canada has no official religion. The preamble to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms mentions "God" but no specific beliefs are specified, and support for religious pluralism is an important part of Canada's political culture. However, most people report they are Christians.

72% of the Canadian population list Roman Catholicism or Protestantism as their religion. The Roman Catholic Church in Canada is by far the country's largest single denomination. Those who listed no religion account for 16% of total respondents. In British Columbia, however, 35% of respondents reported no religion - more than any single denomination and more than all Protestants combined.