

IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

Since 1867, an important goal of Canada's federal government was to increase the population in Canada's West. The Canadian government advertised for European immigrants with farming skills, but the number of immigrants to Canada grew slowly. In fact, many people were emigrating from Canada to the United States. While the population of Canada increased by about one million people between the early 1870s and 1891, in those same two decades, two million people left Canada for the United States, preferring to settle there on land offered at preferable terms.

IMMIGRATION UNDER MACDONALD'S GOVERNMENT

Macdonald's National Policy was only moderately successful at attracting immigrants and settling the West. The population in the West rose from 43 000 in 1871 to about 250 000 by 1891.

One group of newcomers to the West came from central Canada. With the passing of the *Dominion Lands Act* in 1872, thousands of people from central Canada were encouraged to settle in the West. Between 1876 and 1881, about 40 000 Ontarians came to Manitoba. During this period, significant numbers of French-speaking immigrants also came to Manitoba from New England and Québec, and later from France, Switzerland, and Belgium.

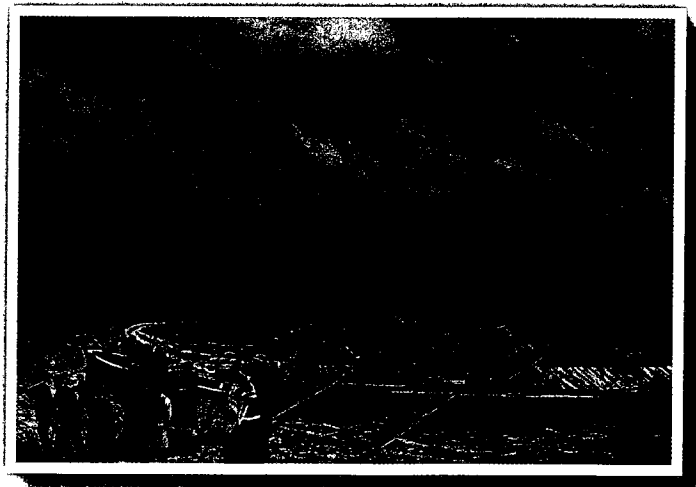
MENNONITE IMMIGRATION

From 1873 to 1884, Manitoba welcomed an influx of German-speaking Mennonites from Russia. One of the cornerstones of the Mennonite faith is pacifism, which is the belief that disputes should be settled peacefully and not with violence. Because of this belief, the Russian Mennonites refused to be conscripted into the army, choosing to leave Russia instead. The Canadian government made a lifetime agreement with the Mennonites that if they would settle and farm in the West, they would be exempt from military service. The government also permitted them to operate their own schools.

ICELANDIC IMMIGRATION

In 1875, 235 Icelanders arrived in Canada and travelled west to Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba. They settled near what is now Gimli ("paradise"), Manitoba. Gimli was within a region called New Iceland. Although New Iceland was under Canadian jurisdiction, the federal government gave permission for this region to have its own council to administer its own constitution and laws. However, in 1881, when Manitoba's boundaries were extended, the region fell under provincial control. By 1900, the population of New Iceland had grown to 2000, and there were 4000 Icelandic immigrants living in Winnipeg.

Figure 8-13 *The Landing at Willow Point*, by Arni Surgudson, 1950. This painting shows a group of Icelandic immigrants arriving in the Gimli area, near Willow Point, in 1875.



VOICES

When I speak of quality I have in mind something that is quite different from what is in the mind of the average writer or speaker upon the question of immigration. I think that a stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children, is good quality . . . I am indifferent as to whether or not he is British-born. It matters not what his nationality is . . .

—Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior between 1896 and 1905

Figure 8-14 Which aspects of this poster may have been misleading to prospective immigrants? Which aspects do you think were a fair presentation?



LAURIER'S VISION OF CANADA (1896-1911)

At the century's end, Canada's opportunity for increased immigration was improved. The economic depression ended. Wheat prices rose, and new technologies, such as steel plows, made crop production more efficient. Much of America's land had been purchased, but much of Canada's good prairie land was still available. To meet Canada's economic goal of moving manufactured goods from East to West and food from West to East, there had to be many more people settled in the West to produce food and to provide a market for products. Wilfrid Laurier became Canada's first French Canadian prime minister in 1896. Like John A. Macdonald, Laurier also had a vision of a united Canada. He believed a common sense of nationhood would inspire Canadians to work together to make the country more prosperous. But, unlike Macdonald, he wanted Canada to forge its identity independently from Britain. As he put it: "Canada first, Canada last, Canada always."

HP On the broadside shown in Figure 8-15, Prime Minister Laurier says that he and his Liberal Party members are "before and above all Canadians." Why might Laurier's vision of Canada have been less centered on Britain than Macdonald's?

In 1896, Laurier appointed Clifford Sifton as minister of the Interior. Sifton was given sweeping control of federal lands in the West, natural resources, and "Indian affairs." Sifton revamped the homesteading system, making it even easier for settlers to acquire free or relatively inexpensive land. He also created a massive advertising campaign highlighting the Canadian prairies as "the Last Best West."

Figure 8-15 A broadside is printed matter on one side of a single sheet of paper. This one was produced and posted in 1898 in Québec.

HON. WILFRID LAURIER.

"I am happy to be able to make the statement that this old French City of Québec, to be able to proclaim that the basis and aim of our ideas and hopes as Liberals are that we are

BEFORE AND ABOVE ALL CANADIANS

Canadians in the fullest acceptance of the term; Canadians at Québec, Canadians at Toronto, and Canadians from the shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the famous mountains whose feet are kissed by the waves of the Pacific. Our great object is the development of the work of Confederation; it is to draw closer, bind and cement together the different elements scattered over the face of the whole of British North America and to weld them into one great nation. This is, as I understand it, the role of the Liberal Party in the Confederation, and as long as I shall have the honor to take a part in the shaping of our destinies this is the ideal towards which it should gravitate."—Hon. Wilfrid Laurier.

SIFTON'S CAMPAIGN

At first, Sifton aimed his advertising campaign at farmers from eastern Canada, the United States, Britain, and northern Europe. He promoted the availability of inexpensive, fertile land in farm journals and newspapers, and he organized lectures in Britain highlighting the benefits of emigrating to Canada. However, after observing that some of the new immigrants struggled to adapt to conditions on the prairies, such as the harsh winters and short growing season, Sifton took his advertising campaign to central and eastern Europe. He was convinced that the farmers of the European grasslands, so similar to Canada's prairies, had the skills, perseverance, and experience to succeed in farming Canada's grasslands.

By 1915, Sifton's advertising blitz had paid off. Between 1891 and 1902, the number of immigrants arriving in Canada was 437 830. Between 1902 and 1914, almost three million immigrants came to Canada. Most were English-speaking; others spoke languages such as Dutch, German, Flemish, or French. Some stayed in urban centres when they arrived, but many a "stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat" headed west on the railroad to farm the prairie lands.

For example, in Ukraine in the early twentieth century, military service was compulsory for young men, taxes were extremely high, and the majority of citizens were living as indentured workers, effectively enslaved to wealthy landowners. Canada's offer of free land gave many Ukrainians an opportunity to free themselves from a lifetime of servitude. Some Ukrainians moved to urban areas and established businesses and services. Most took the offer of homesteads. Some of these farmers, aware of the requirement to live on individual homesteads and not wishing to be isolated from their fellow farmers, came up with a solution. Homesteaders on abutting quarter sections built their homes on adjoining corners, usually along a township line where there was a road, so four homes would be quite close together. In this way, they created close communities. Today these arrangements are called Ukrainian Four-Corner Settlements.

Another significant group of immigrants included Jewish people. Persecution of the Jewish community in eastern Europe, especially in Russia, drove many Jews to seek refuge and religious freedom in Canada. In the 1890s, thousands of Russian Jews settled in cities such as Toronto, Montréal, and Winnipeg. As skilled labourers, they were instrumental in establishing a strong manufacturing industry in Canada.

C&C What changes might the arrival of these immigrants have brought to Canada? In what ways does their arrival show continuity?

Figure 8-16 Major Immigrant Groups to Canada, 1896–1914

Great Britain	1 200 000
United States	1 000 000
Germany, France, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland	800 000
Ukraine	171 000
Poland	116 000

Figure 8-17 Some Black settlers from the United States and Ontario became farmers in the West. For example, John Ware, a former slave in the United States, moved to Alberta in 1882. Eight years later, he started his own ranching operation.

