

# Mr. Dowling's Study Sheet on Canada

1. Canada is the world's second largest nation. Only Russia has more land.
2. Canada is a bilingual nation where both English and French are accepted.
3. The St. Lawrence Seaway flows from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.
4. Native Americans in Canada will soon have a territory of their own. It will be called Nunavut.
5. Native Americans of northern Canada prefer to be known as the Inuit instead of Eskimos.
6. Canada is divided into ten provinces and two territories.
7. Asians have been the fastest growing ethnic group in Canada in recent years.
8. The head of government in Canada is the Prime Minister.
9. The Prime Minister is a member of the House of Commons.
10. The capital city of Canada is Ottawa.
11. Montreal and Toronto are the two largest cities in Canada.
12. The Atlantic Provinces are located along Canada's East Coast.
13. There are four Atlantic Provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. They are the smallest provinces in Canada.
14. Most people in Quebec speak French. Montreal is Quebec's largest city.
15. More than one of three Canadians live in Ontario, Canada's most populated province. Ontario includes Toronto and the capital city of Ottawa.
16. Manitoba is often called the "bread basket" of Canada because a great deal of the nation's wheat is grown there. Manitoba's largest city is Winnipeg.
17. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta comprise the "Prairie Provinces" because most of the land is flat.
18. Alberta is Canada's largest producer of oil and natural gas. Edmonton is Alberta's largest city.
19. Logging and forestry are the major sources of wealth in British Columbia, Canada's westernmost province. Vancouver is the largest city in British Columbia. Victoria is the capital city.
20. Forests cover more than fifty percent of Canada.
21. Most Canadians live within two hundred miles of the United States.
22. Canada signed the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Mexico in 1994.



## Canada's parliamentary system of Government

Canada is a democracy, but their government is slightly different from America's government. Canada has a parliamentary system of government.

Canada's legislative body is called the House of Commons. The Members of the House of Commons select a leader at the beginning of each legislative term. The members usually vote along party lines, and when no party has a majority, two parties agree to vote the same way and form a coalition.

America's legislative body is the congress, but our head of government is President Bill Clinton. Mr. Clinton was elected independently of congress and must work with the congress to make and enforce laws. The president can veto, or forbid congressional laws, but congress can override his veto by a two-thirds vote.

Canada borrowed their system of government from the British. Canada was a part of Great Britain until 1867 and did not sever its ties completely until 1982.

## The First Canadians

We don't know how the first people reached Canada, but archaeologists have made educated guesses based on the clues these first Native Americans left behind. The evidence indicates that human population expanded from Africa and the Middle East, across Asia and into Siberia. People didn't move quickly, they moved slowly over generations in search of new lands.

Siberia and Alaska are no longer connected, but a "land bridge" once existed. This narrow passage of land allowed the human population to move to America.

Most scholars believe the migration into North America began at least 12,000 years ago and some scholars suggest that it could have begun as long as 25,000 years ago. We have evidence of a site in British Columbia that is more than 5,000 years old. By contrast, the civilizations of Greece and Rome are not much more than two thousand years old. The first civilizations we've studied are less than five thousand years old. The first Canadians reached North America in long before the invention of writing. Archaeologists believe that those first Canadians fanned out across North and South America and were the people Christopher Columbus mistakenly called "Indians."



## The arrival of the Europeans

The first Europeans to reach Canada were likely Vikings, but the only evidence left behind are the legends of the Scandinavian people. The legends reveal that Eric the Red left Scandinavia and founded settlements in Greenland and Iceland. His son, Leif Eriksson, explored further west and for a short time founded a settlement in what is now the Maritime Province of Newfoundland about AD1000. Eriksson and the settlers abandoned the settlement after about thirty years, probably because they were unable to co-exist with the native Canadians. Archaeologists have not found any certain evidence of the Vikings in Canada, but some scholars suggest that the stories

about "Vinland", rather than India and China, prompted Columbus to sail west.

Five years after Columbus reached the Caribbean in 1492, another explorer from Genoa, Italy explored Canada. John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto) sailed for England, and like Columbus, did not realize that he had reached America. Cabot believed he had reached northeast Asia. He returned to England and prepared for a second voyage to find Japan, but the second journey ended when one of his ships sank off the coast of Ireland. It is unclear if Cabot ever returned to Canada, but his voyage allowed England to claim Canada as a British colony.

The French reached and began to colonize Canada in 1605. The French had a better relationship with the native population because they were most interested in fur trading. The natives often helped the French to hunt and trap in exchange for knives, guns and worst of all, alcohol.

The British were also active in colonizing the New World and after a series of wars, forced the French out of Canada by 1760. At the time, most the population of Canada was almost entirely French. The English mollified the French Canadians by recognizing both cultures. The arrival of English speaking settlers

from the American colonies swelled the population of Canada but also created ethnic tensions that continue to exist today.

The British solved the cultural problems by dividing Canada into two parts. Lower Canada, now called Quebec, retained French customs while Upper Canada, known today as Ontario, followed English customs. As Canada expanded east into the fishing villages of the Atlantic Provinces and west to the Prairie Provinces, the English languages and culture dominated. Today most of Canada speaks English, but 80% of the people of Quebec speak French.

## Quebec

The people of Quebec are very protective of their French culture and language and work hard to protect it. Some Quebecois want to secede from, or

leave the Dominion of Canada to form a separate nation.

Quebec has strict language laws that are enforced by "language police." Laws dictate that all road signs in Quebec must be written in French, despite the fact that most Quebecois speak English and that English is the dominant language of the rest of Canada.

Commercial signs must also be in French. If a second language is used, the non-French lettering must be less than half the size of the French writing. The proponents of the law feel that the use of other languages on signs would "marginalize" the French language in Quebec. Further, they argue the law guarantees that immigrants will recognize the predominantly French character of the province. Finally, those in favor of the law believe that it will preserve French as Quebec's official language.

Critics of the law say there is no evidence that the French language and culture has been "marginalized" by other cultures. Further, they argue that the law is a slight to immigrants.

The language laws were enacted to protect the minority status of French Quebecois in the face of the dominant English speaking culture of Canada, but that argument has recently been used against the French Quebecois. Montreal has welcomed Chinese immigrants for more than a century. These immigrants live close together in "Chinatown," where they continue to speak and write in their native language. Quebec's language police forced Chinese businesses to replace their signs in 1997. The Chinese merchants of Chinatown requested the same status in Quebec that Quebec has asked Canada to give them. One merchant argued. "What is Chinatown without Chinese writing?"

Some Quebecois want Quebec to leave Canada to form their own nation and secede from Canada. The Parti Québécois is a political party that supports Quebec nationalism. They won 71 of 110 seats in a legislative election in 1976, but four years later when a solid majority of Quebecois voted against secession the Liberal Party was back in power.

Opponents of secession argue that there would be many negative implications of secession. They argue

that a country that has existed as one of the oldest democracies in the world would not be able to easily break apart. Even the Parti Québécois acknowledges that the standard of living in Quebec would fall as they developed a new national government.

Additionally, Quebec's relationship with the other provinces would change if they left the Dominion. Quebec trades more with Ontario than with all of the United States. Quebec would be seen as a neighbor rather than part of the family. Most Canadians feel that Quebec will remain unhappy as a province in Canada, but will not secede from the Dominion.

## The Atlantic Provinces

Four small provinces of Eastern Canada are known collectively as the Atlantic Provinces. Lumbering, mining, and fishing dominate the economy. When Italian John Cabot first explored the region, he found fish so abundant that they slowed his ship. Today over fishing and the exploitation of the natural resources of the region have left it the poorest part of Canada.

The four Atlantic Provinces are Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Prince Edward Island (or PEI) is the smallest and least populated province, but it is where Canadian leaders first met in 1864 to form the dominion. Newfoundland is Canada's easternmost province. It includes Newfoundland Island and the territory of Labrador. New Brunswick retains a strong French culture and heritage, but unlike Quebec, has no secessionist movement. Scottish people founded the province of Nova Scotia over two centuries ago. It's name means "New Scotland."

What would happen to the Atlantic Provinces, should Quebec secede from Canada, is unclear at this time. Each of the provinces has a French minority, but they are unlikely to want to join Quebec. Their great distance from the capital and population centers is already a problem. It would be made worse if they were cut off by another nation. The Atlantic Provinces are much smaller and poorer than Quebec, so they would not likely form an independent nation. Another option, to join the United States would likely have to be considered by both the provinces and the United States.



