IMMIGRATION TO THE PRAIRIES

Canada has received immigrants for most of its history. At the beginning of the 20th century, the country welcomed hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians, Scandinavians, Americans, and Eastern Europeans to help fill up the vast prairie regions with population.

Religious minorities such as Doukhobors, Hutterites, and Mennonites were granted protection from the persecutions encountered in their homelands.

On the prairies, homesteaders lived miles from tiny towns and were isolated from their neighbours. Women worked in the heat and the dust beside their husbands, breaking the earth into chunks of sod, which they stacked up to create their first homes, their "soddies".

EARLY DISCRIMINATION

The profile of the Canadian immigrant in the early 20th century contained a predominantly white face. Non-whites were not actively recruited, and, at times, were blatantly turned away. 15,000 Chinese were brought to Canada in the 1880's to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway, but were denied citizenship.

Watch this Historica Heritage Minute about Chinese immigrant labour on the CP Railway http://www.histori.ca/minutes/minute.do?id=10196
Japanese immigration to British Columbia was deliberately limited by the government. Chinese immigrants faced a head tax of up to $500, and Sikh immigrants were told that they needed to make a “continuous” or direct journey to Canada - something that no shipping company provided.

**WAVES OF IMMIGRATION**

Thousands of free Black people had been among the *18th century* refugees from the American Revolution who settled in Nova Scotia. Prior to the American Civil War, runaway slaves found refuge in Upper Canada [Ontario].

However, during the massive waves of immigration in the *first half of the 20th century*, people of colour were deliberately excluded. So also, for the most part, were Jewish people, including the time period when they were most in need of refuge - as was seen with the S.S. St. Louis.

Passengers aboard the Komagata Maru, Vancouver, BC, 1914. To enter Canada, East Indian immigrants had to make a “continuous voyage” to Canada and to pay a head tax of $200. 376 Sikh immigrants on board the Komagata Maru were barred entry into Canada at Vancouver despite the fact they all had valid British passports. The ship was sent back to India.

(National Archives of Canada c-075259).

Head Tax Certificate showing that Wong Wai, a native of Hong San, arrived in Victoria on May 20, 1913, and paid the head tax of $500. In 1923, the Chinese Immigration Act was passed, also known as the Exclusion Act. For the next 24 years, anyone Chinese was not allowed to come to Canada. It even stopped families in China from coming to live with those family members already in Canada.

(Public Domain image)

Full citizenship was not granted to certain ethnic groups. In British Columbia - where the vast majority of Asian Canadians lived - Chinese and Japanese Canadians were not granted the full right to vote *until 1947 and 1949* respectively. Exclusion from the voting lists was used as a pretext to prevent employment in certain professions such as lawyer, accountant and pharmacist.
Canadian Immigration after 1945

OPEN DOORS

After World War II, Canada started to accept immigrants from a diversity of countries.

Canada led the world in accepting persons displaced from their homes during the horrors of World War II. In a six-year period beginning in 1947, Canada accepted 165,000 refugees. A refugee is a person who has a need to flee his or her home.

In 1956, Canada again set world standards in its generous acceptance of 38,000 refugees from Hungary (after that country suffered from Russian suppression). Many of the refugees were offered free passage to Canada.

Beginning in 1950, Canada also accepted large numbers of British, Italian, German, and Dutch immigrants who were seeking new opportunities.

COLOUR BLIND IMMIGRATION POLICY

In 1962, Progressive Conservative Immigration Minister Ellen Fairclough, Canada's first female Cabinet Minister, eliminated entrance regulations that discriminated on the basis of race and country of origin.

The Honourable Ellen Fairclough, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, gets a kiss from a refugee girl who was allowed into Canada during World Refugee Year, 1959.

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THE POINTS SYSTEM

In the “points system”, potential immigrants received points in categories such as education, employability, and language. Those with a certain number of points gained entry into Canada. The “points system” eliminated racial discrimination in the selection of immigrants.

The new system led to a majority of immigrants arriving from countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America. These newcomers, starting in the 1970's, settled mainly in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

Find more information on the points system used today at https://www.fastcanadaimmigration.com/main/resources-and-forms/point-system/

MULTICULTURALISM IN CANADA

In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to officially adopt multiculturalism.

This policy provided for programs and services to support ethnocultural associations and to help individuals overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society.

Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, take pride in their ancestry, and have a sense of belonging.

Canadian multiculturalism is based in the fact that Canada is a country of immigrants. By the end of the 20th century, Canada had become one of the largest immigrant-receiving countries in the world, admitting thousands of refugees from Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and other places.

In 2005, immigration accounted for more than 50 percent of Canada's population growth, with immigrants coming mainly from Asia and the Middle East. One in six Canadians is a member of a visible minority.