

# Canada: Our Friendly Neighbor

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## *Living and Learning in this Vast Northern Land*

For those of us living in the United States, we might regard Canada as our friendly neighbor to the north, much like the neighbor who resides on the far side of our backyard fence. We have what you would call a comfortable relationship, chatting from time to time when



we are both out in the yard and possibly even borrowing a cup of sugar when we find ourselves short. Yes, yes, we have a comfortable neighborly relationship... And yet, how well do we know this neighbor across the fence? Truth be told, we probably do not know much about her at all nor have we spent a great deal of time – if any – in each other’s homes.

So let us acquaint ourselves with our neighbor, Canada. You may be surprised by how little you actually do know her.

## **The Location**

By total area, Canada is the second largest nation in the world, and yet by population density, it is one of the least inhabited regions on the globe with only 3.5 inhabitants per square kilometer. Canada is surrounded by the world’s longest coastline and the longest undefended border in history, which it shares with the United States. Canada can also boast that it is home to the most northern settlement on the planet. At just 450 nautical miles from the North Pole, the Canadian Forces Station is located on the northern tip of Ellesmere Island.

## The History

The name *Canada* comes from the Iroquoian word *kanata*, which means “village” or “settlement”. Groups of Inuit and First Peoples have inhabited this land for centuries, even millennia, but the word was apparently used by inhabitants of the present-day Quebec City area in 1535 when directing French explorer Jacques Cartier to one of their villages. The name was subsequently adopted by Europeans as early as 1545 when referring to the entire northeastern region of North America.

Of course, Jacques Cartier was not the first European to explore this great and unknown expanse. More than a millennium ago, the Vikings settled briefly in Newfoundland around 1000AD. Five centuries later in 1497, John Cabot of England explored Canada’s Atlantic coast, and was followed by more explorers, and eventually whalers, from various European countries.

In 1603, French explorer Samuel de Champlain arrived and established the first permanent European settlements at Port Royal and Quebec City, the future capitals of Acadia and New France. The English had established outposts in Newfoundland around 1610 and had begun colonizing the Thirteen Colonies to the south.

Unsurprisingly, a series of inter-colonial wars erupted culminating in the Seven Years War (1763), from which France ceded most of Canada and New France to England.

With Britain at the helm, language and religious rights were restricted for the French Canadians. Just 10 years later, the civil rights

### Samuel de Champlain



to communicate in the French language and practice the Catholic faith were restored under the Quebec Act of 1774.

The next hundred years mark a time of great expansion for the British colonies of Canada (officially split into Upper Canada and Lower Canada at this time). After losing some of their territory south of the Great Lakes to the United States after the American Revolution, Canada began to expand westward and northward. The Oregon boundary dispute was settled in 1846 marking the division between the US and Canada at the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. This resolution paved the way for British settlements to flourish on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia. Soon after, exploratory expeditions to the north followed in order to claim Rupert's Land and the Arctic region for Canada.

By 1867, Canada had become a Confederation with four provinces: Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The Northwest Territories and Manitoba were formed shortly thereafter once Canada assumed control of Rupert's Land to the north. British Columbia and Prince Edward Island joined the



Confederation in 1871 and 1873 respectively. Following the Klondike Gold Rush in 1898, the Canadian government created the Yukon Territory. Around this same time, three transcontinental railways were built in an effort to open up the west and bring settlements to

the prairies. The Mounted Police (or Mounties as they came to be known) were established to control this wild and vast territory and in due time Alberta and Saskatchewan joined as provinces in 1905. Eventually, Newfoundland joined the Confederation in 1949 after World War II. Finally, the newest and largest territory in Canada was established in 1999, when Nunavut was officially separated from

the Northwest Territories to become its own territory. This completes the map of modern day Canada.

Canada is a constitutional monarchy, which means that Elizabeth II, the Queen of England (and also the Queen of Canada) is the head of state. However, the monarch (Queen Elizabeth II) has elected to remain apolitical and mostly ceremonial, deferring all governmental matters to the Cabinet. The Prime Minister, who is usually the leader of the predominate party in the House of Commons, is said to be the most powerful instrument of government, responsible for selecting other leadership heads.

Canada is one of the wealthiest nations in the world and for this reason many people immigrate to Canada every year. Canada closely resembles the United States in its economy, productivity and high standard of



living. Canada is one of the largest agricultural suppliers in the world, growing wheat, canola and other grains throughout the prairies. Canada is a world leader in producing zinc, uranium, gold, nickel, aluminum and lead. It also has the second largest oil reserves behind Saudi Arabia. In fact, timber and oil are Canada's largest and most important industries.



## Homeschooling

Education is a top priority for Canadians. The mandatory school age begins between 5 and 7 and concludes around 16 to 18 years of age, contributing to a 99% adult literacy rate. Canadian provinces and territories are responsible for education and although systems may vary from province to province, all Canadian parents have the right to choose which method of education is best for their children. Homeschooling is legal in every province and territory of Canada.

Homeschooling is growing by leaps and bounds in Canada and has caught nearly everyone by surprise. Figures vary depending upon the study, but the number of homeschoolers nationwide may be as high as 60,000 or 1 percent of Canadian school-aged children.

Why are these families choosing to homeschool?

Both ideological and pedagogical motivations are fueling the home education

movement in Canada. Ideological reasons would include the belief that the school system no longer upholds their religious and moral convictions. The actual subject matter taught in the classroom clashes with the material that these families are trying to teach their children at home. Pedagogical reasons include dissatisfaction with how the school system operates: the size of the classrooms, the methods of teaching, lessons geared to the average, chaos in the schoolyard, etc. Unlike their US counterparts who usually fall strongly into one camp or the other, Canadian homeschooling families often embrace a mixture of ideological and pedagogical reasons for choosing to educate their children at home.



The increase in homeschooling in Canada has some educators worried. Others believe that it is just a passing fad that will soon fade away. And yet, when you hear the comments of parents and homeschooled students in Canada, we realize that this method of education is here to stay... at least for another generation.

*"I believe that the greatest indicator of our success as a home school family is that all of our grown children want to home school their children when the time comes." Cheryl,  
Canadian home educating parent*

*"When I get married and have children of my own, I will definitely home school. As far as I am concerned, that is one of the greatest gifts parents can give their children." Clara,  
former Canadian home educated student*

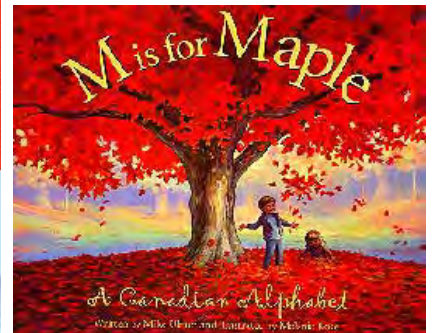
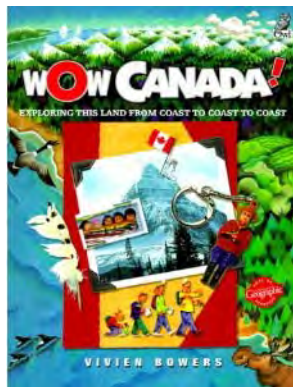
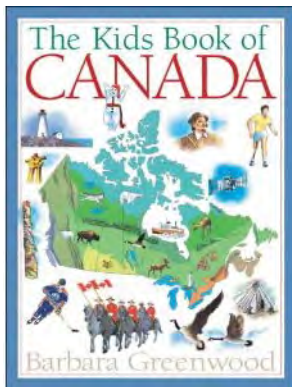
Let us join hands with our Canadian home schooling friends and encourage each other along this road we have chosen. It is by no means the easy or the wide path, eh? It consumes our energy, time and resources, but it is producing fruit: students who are prepared for a life of learning and adventure and willing to pass these skills onto the next generation.

Ann Voskamp, author of *A Child's Geography* ([www.achildsgeography.com](http://www.achildsgeography.com)) writes, *"We find Canada to be a notably homeschool-friendly country, supportive of our parental right to educate our children. Parent-educators experience real freedoms, an atmosphere for which we are grateful and offer our thanks to American homeschooling pioneers from whom, in large measure, we have inherited this environment. The parent-educator community in Canada is thriving and growing, undergirded by a network of dynamic and informed homeschool suppliers. Our children happily speak of and anticipate stoking this vibrant community further when they take the torch and light the next generation of flickering flames."*

## Unit Study

Now that you have read the chapter, it's time to dive in for some hands-on learning to cement your student's growing knowledge of this second largest country of the world.

- 1. READING SELECTIONS** - Let's start with some extra reading. Listed below are some great books about Canada, or set in the North American country of Canada, that will provide many hours of enjoyable reading. The links below will take you to Amazon.com for more information, but you may be able to find these at your local library. Read for pleasure alone, or have your kids write a book report on one of these selections.



- [Kids Book of Canada, The](#) by Barbara Greenwood
- [Wow Canada!](#) By Vivien Bowers
- [Crazy About Canada!](#) By Vivien Bowers
- [M Is For Maple](#) by Michael Ulmer

The last book listed above - **M is for Maple** - is for younger readers. There is a companion book to it entitled **Loonies and Toonies - A Canadian Number Book**. The other three books listed above are targeted for kids between 3rd and 6th grade. For some grown-up reading, you might try

**Canadian History for Dummies.** We Americans really do know very little about the history of our northern neighbor!

2. **HISTORY & TIMELINES** - Learn more about Canada by compiling historical facts and events from its often over-looked history and adding them to your timeline. If you do not have a timeline already in the works, you can construct one by following these directions - [How to Make a Timeline Easily](#). Here is a wonderful resource for timeline entries about Canada - [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country\\_profiles/1203358.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1203358.stm). Here is another one, a little bit more simplified for kids - <http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/rw.htm>.
  
3. **MAPWORK** - A unit study would not be complete without taking a good look at the lay of the land. Pages 93 and 94 include both a labeled and unlabeled map of Canada. Have your younger students mark some of the major cities, the neighboring countries, and the surrounding oceans, at the least. For older students, have them use your teacher's map and fill in the rest.
  
4. **RECIPES** - This is my favorite part - the food from the land! I have always assumed that Canadian cuisine is very similar to American food. However, I came across a website that delves a little bit into the history of Canadian cuisine and how it has developed through the years. You may find this fascinating as well: <http://www.foodreference.com/html/artcanadianfoods.html>  
Here's another website that defines some Canadian specialties while giving geographical reference when necessary:  
[http://www.hillmanwonders.com/cuisines/canadian\\_cuisine.htm](http://www.hillmanwonders.com/cuisines/canadian_cuisine.htm)  
Now for some recipes. Here are a few favorite dishes. One is a family favorite of ours as well – the Quebec Pork Pie. Enjoy!



## Sauteed Fiddleheads

- 1 bunch fiddleheads
- 1 Tablespoon butter
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil



1. Trim the fiddleheads so that the stem end is about 2 inches long. Rub the dry brown flakes off the fiddleheads, and rinse well.
2. Fill a saucepan with cool water and plunge the fiddleheads into the water to rinse off any grit.
3. Remove the fiddleheads from the pan, change the water, and repeat the soaking. Rinse the fiddleheads under running water to remove any remaining grit.
4. Rinse and dry the saucepan. Measure oil and butter into it and heat until the butter is melted.
5. Add the fiddleheads and sauté, stirring with a wooden spoon, for about 5 minutes. Fiddleheads will be bright green and crispy.

Serves 8 to 10.

## Sweet Corn Pancakes

6 eggs, separated (Note: to separate eggs, crack the egg and allow just the white to fall into a bowl, holding the yolk in one of the shell halves. Transfer the yolk back and forth between the two shell halves, being careful not to break it, until all the white has dripped into the bowl. Put the yolk into a separate bowl.)

- ¼ cup half-and-half
- 1 Tablespoon sour cream
- 1/3 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ cup corn (may be fresh or frozen corn kernels)
- Vegetable oil to oil the pan



1. Beat the egg whites until they hold soft peaks when the beaters are lifted up.
2. In another bowl, combine the egg yolks, half-and-half, and sour cream.
3. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the egg yolk mixture. Add the beaten egg whites, using a gentle stirring motion to combine them with the yolk mixture.
4. Add the corn, and stir gently. Pour a small amount of oil into a non-stick pan and heat it over medium heat. Drop batter, about 1 Tablespoonsful at a time, into the pan for each pancake and cook until golden brown on each side.

Serves 4 to 6.

## Canadian Bacon with Maple Glaze

- ½ cup cider vinegar
- ¾ cups maple syrup
- 1 Tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 pound (approximately) Canadian bacon

1. Preheat oven to 300°F (150°C).
2. Combine vinegar, maple syrup, and brown sugar in a bowl. Set aside.
3. Slice Canadian bacon about ½-inch thick. Arrange the slices in a casserole or baking dish, and spoon the syrup mixture over the slices.
4. Bake for 30 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature. (To serve as a snack, cut slices into bite-sized pieces and serve with toothpicks.)

Serves 6 for lunch or dinner

## Quebec Pork Pie (Tourtiere)

This is a family favorite!!

Pastry for 2-crust pie

1lb ground pork

1/2lb lean ground beef

3 Tablespoon chopped onion

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

1 cup water

1/8 teaspoon cloves

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1 1/2 cups mashed potatoes (2 large potatoes)



1. Combine pork, beef, onion, salt, pepper and water.
2. Cook slowly for 45 minutes.
3. Add cloves and cinnamon and cook 15 minutes longer.
4. Add potatoes to meat mixture while still hot. Let cool thoroughly, or about 1 hour, so flavors will blend.
5. Turn mixture into pastry-lined 9" pie pan. Top with crust, cut vents and flute edges.
6. Bake in hot oven (400°F) for 45 minutes.
7. You can freeze this pie before baking, or freeze just the filling to use later.

Serves 6 for lunch or dinner

## Nanaimo Bars

Nanaimo Bars have three layers.

### Ingredients for bottom layer

1/2 cup butter

1/4 cup sugar

1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa

1 egg

1 teaspoon vanilla

2 cups crushed graham crackers (packaged graham cracker crumbs may be used)

1 cup shredded coconut

1/2 cup chopped walnuts

### Ingredients for middle layer

1/4 cup butter

2 cups confectioners' sugar

2 Tablespoons vanilla custard powder (available in Canada, but not in the United States; instant vanilla pudding powder may be substituted)

3 Tablespoons milk

### Ingredients for top layer

4 ounces semi-sweet chocolate

1 Tablespoon butter

1. Make bottom layer: Grease a 9-inch square cake pan.
2. Combine 1/2 cup butter, sugar, cocoa, egg, and vanilla in a heavy sauce pan. Heat over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens.
3. Add graham crackers crumbs, coconut, and chopped walnuts, stirring to combine. Press the mixture in the greased pan.
4. Make middle layer: Beat together 1/4 cup butter, confectioners' sugar, vanilla custard or pudding powder, and milk, until the mixture is creamy.
5. Spread over graham cracker base in cake pan. Refrigerate bars until firm, at least 1 hour.
6. Make topping: Melt semi-sweet chocolate and 1 Tablespoon butter. Drizzle over chilled bars. Return to refrigerator to chill until firm (at least 1 hour).
7. Cut into squares and serve.

Serves 16.

**5. CRAFTS -** Here is a website with some fun projects that you can do with your children. <http://www.dltk-kids.com/canada/crafts.html>

**And remember to have fun!**



# Around the World CANADA

