Regional Perspectives on Canada: a summary
Geography of Canada

• Canada is large and complex, its geography is textured in various ways
Physical Geography

• Physical geography plays an enormous role in setting out some basic constraints and possibilities for human activity.
• The character of the air, land and sea are essential to understanding the country
Physical Geography

- Climate shapes, vegetation, soils and therefore agriculture, forestry
Physical Geography

- Glaciers, rivers, lakes and waterbodies, sources of water, routeways, obstacles, hydro-electric potential
Physical Geography

- Physiography: mountains, plains, obstacles, routeways
Physical Geography

• Minerals
Physical Geography

• Canada’s physical geography inherited from long periods of geological history
  • Faux Amphibolites of Northern Quebec 4.28 Billion years old
  • The oldest known rocks on earth
  • Earth is estimated at 4.5 billion years old
Plate Tectonics

- Continental shelves, mountains from plate-tectonics
Ores

- Non-ferrous ore bodies from ancient astronomical impacts
Hyrdocarbons

- Hydrocarbons from ancient seas and swamps
Shale Gas Basins
Devonian/Mississippian Shale Fairway
Oil & Gas, southern Ontario
Glaciation

• Glaciation stripped the shield of farming soils and created the Great Lakes
• Coated the prairies with soil materials
Human Geography

• Has unfolded over much shorter periods of time than the physical geography
  • Canada in indigenous hands for tens of thousands of years
  • Almost as much human history/pre-history in the Americas as in the old world.
Clovis hunters swept the continent

Earliest undisputed inhabitants of the Americas, the people known as Clovis descended from late Pleistocene hunters who moved south from Canada, probably through an ice-free corridor that had opened by 12,000 years ago. Skilled at taking mammoth, bison, and other Ice Age animals, they used distinctively fluted spearpoints recovered at sites throughout the U.S. Initial digging at the Richey-Roberts Clovis Cache has exposed the largest Clovis points yet found.
Indigenous People

• Indigenous hunter-gatherers living in small groups with seasonal gatherings
  • West-coast salmon allowed some permanent villages, denser populations
• Indigenous farmers in larger semi-permanent villages
  • Hunting, fishing, gathering too
• Mobility was routine to indigenous culture
A Settler Society

• Canada a settler society imposed on indigenous land
• Creates a series of tensions and textures
• A collision with long-term consequences
Indigenous People & Settlers

• Traditions of Partnership
  • Visible in the fur trade era, ideals of the treaties

• Colonialism
  • Settler society occupied indigenous land, resources
  • Indigenous people forced to settle, assimilate

• Reconciliation
  • Perhaps a revival of partnership
Via Rail blockade by First Nations that halted Montreal-Toronto trains ends

Protesters in Marysville, Ont., seek to draw attention to missing and murdered aboriginal women

Scattered Population

- Population is scattered across Canada’s vast territory
  - Cole Harris’s Canadian archipelago of settlement
- Islands of settlement separated by distances
- Indigenous folk forced to settle
  - On scattered reserves, within settler society
Scattered Population

• Importance of routeways and communications to connect the scattered population
  • Part of Indigenous tradition
• A challenge for settler society
  • Railways, roads, rivers and canals
  • Telecommunication, broadcasting
A Settler Society: old and new migrants

• Among the settlers, old and new there are differences and tensions. Established settler groups being challenged by new arrivals etc.,

• Newcomers continue to challenge those already here
  • Outsiders & newcomers provoke change

• Booming cities attract fresh migrants
Most Anglos OK with religious symbols for government workers

40% of francophones say much less needs to be done to accommodate religious minorities
A Settler Society: language

• One of the cultural struggles of settler society: English vs French

• Major tension within Canada since the C18th or before
To Canada

Vers le Canada
Meanwhile, in France:
Language

• Canada beginning to escape from the two-language paradigm
  • English vs French
• Immigrant newcomers, indigenous cultural revival provoke change
  • Immigrant newcomers have already removed Montreal from the English vs French paradigm
Urbanization, peripherality

• Canada has become an urban society.
• Metropolitan Canada now very powerful
• Breeds resentment in non-metropolitan Canada
• Metropolitan Canada dominates politics, culture, the media, the economy
Metropolitan Canada

• Has long dominated Canada’s economy, population
• Metropoli have huge environmental and economic footprints.
• Metropolitan Canada now assuming global importance
  • With property markets to match
Diavik mine NWT
• Western Resentment
• Now resurgent in Alberta
A Settler Society: economy

• Has a history of various often competing forms of economic activity

• The resource economy (mining, agriculture, forestry, fishing, furs, hydro) where metropolitan and foreign capital exploits peripheral regions for the benefit of metropolitan markets

• Manufacturing and service economy, mainly urban
A Settler Society: demographic shifts

• With a constantly changing population
• Changing in structure and distribution
• Population flowing to regions with rapid economic growth
• Transforms culture and politics
  • Alberta gradually becoming multicultural
Internal migration 2001-6
Global Connections

• Important to Canada from pre-history onwards
  • Ancient routeways across the Bering straits, North Atlantic
  • Resource and settlement hinterland for colonizing Europeans
• At the centre of the mid-C20th global economy
• Becoming resource and settlement periphery for Asia
Geography of Canada

• Is shaped by a combination of factors
• Each region has a different texture
• These textures, patterns are not static but keep changing all the time