

The Peoples of British North America

READING HINT

Try reading this section out of order. Pick a topic that interests you and read that information first. Then go back and read the rest.

An immigrant is a person who comes to live in a country that is not his or her original home.

Since time immemorial, there has always been diversity among the Aboriginal peoples of North America. After Contact, *immigrants* from other parts of the world added to the mix. In the early 1700s and 1800s, most immigrants were from Europe. But many people of African heritage also came to British North America.

This section describes the main groups of people who were living in BNA by the mid-1800s. You can read about the challenges and opportunities they faced as they created a new society.

The British and Irish

The early 1800s saw a huge population increase in British North America, mostly because of immigration from Great Britain and Ireland. By the mid-1800s, approximately two-thirds of the European population of BNA was of British or Irish heritage. These people had different experiences depending on their background and how long they had been in BNA.

The Elite

In society, an *elite* is a class of people that has more political, economic, and social power than the majority. In most of British North America, the elite was made up of families of British heritage (Scottish or English) who had been in the colonies for several generations.

Many of the British elite in Canada West, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia were the descendants of United Empire Loyalists. The Loyalists were people from the United States who had sided with Great Britain and had come to Canada after the American Revolution. Some of these families had grown wealthy because they were given large areas of land for little or nothing and then sold the land as its value increased. In Newfoundland, the British merchants who controlled the fishing industry also formed an elite.



This illustration from 1869 shows an event in Halifax in honour of Prince Arthur. Which colonists do you think would have been invited to this kind of event?