

Chapter 2

History

It is 50 years since the *Canada Year Book* included a chapter on Canadian history and it seemed appropriate to inaugurate the new format with a review of the historical background to the events recorded elsewhere in the book.

The first part of the chapter describes the present knowledge of Canada's earliest inhabitants. The second covers the early explorations which opened up the country to European colonization. The third section sketches the political and economic evolution and the fourth part discusses the events of this century.

2.1 Canada before Cartier

The following outline of Canada's prehistory updates an article on Canadian archaeology that appeared in the *1968 Canada Year Book*. Since archaeology is a cumulative discipline such periodic revisions are necessary. Future research will undoubtedly modify many aspects of the present outline but the very fact that a revision is needed reflects the increasing pace and quality of archaeological research in Canada. For a history of this archaeological research the reader is referred to the original article.

2.1.1 Prehistory of eastern Canada

Eastern Canada, consisting of Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces south of the treeline, can be roughly divided into two major archaeological areas – Northern and Southern. Physiographically, the Northern Area coincides with the Canadian Shield and the predominantly coniferous forests that cover northern Ontario, most of Quebec, and Newfoundland. The Southern Area incorporates southern Ontario, the Eastern Townships, the upper St. Lawrence Valley of Quebec, and the Maritime Provinces, an area of predominantly hardwood forests.

There is clear evidence that the faunal and floral resources of the Southern Area were able to support a far greater prehistoric population than the less kindly endowed Northern Area. The richer archaeology of the south, however, has been complicated by the development of local cultural groups which interacted with each other and with outside areas in a highly complex fashion. Conversely, the Northern Area is characterized by a high degree of cultural similarity which allows certain general interpretations to be drawn from relatively limited archaeological data. In both areas, the maritime-adapted cultures differed significantly from contemporaneous interior cultures. Indeed, along the southern and eastern coastal regions of the Northern Area, Indian and Eskimo cultures replaced one another on more than one occasion as major climatic changes favoured the maritime-adaptive patterns of one group over the other.

The earliest evidence of man in eastern Canada dates between 10,000 and 11,000 years ago. During this period, small bands of hunters roamed the Southern Area near the edge of the glacier which covered the north. These people, referred to as the Clovis culture, were part of an extensive but thinly distributed population which entered the New World from Asia and rapidly occupied most of North America.

In western North America, the Clovis culture became differentiated into a number of regional complexes, collectively termed Plano. The Plano people, like their Clovis ancestors, were big-game hunters. Eastward penetration by Plano peoples seems limited to the Southern Area of Ontario and the southern fringe of the Northern Area of the same province which was still partially covered by glacial ice and associated glacial lakes 8,000 to 9,000 years ago. Although the data are very incomplete, it appears that the earlier Clovis population in the east evolved into various regional complexes called Archaic. Early representatives of the Archaic cultures, therefore, already occupied most of eastern Canada before the eastward movement of the Plano people began. Indeed, a number of sites have produced associated early Archaic and Plano artifacts indicating that the two populations were, on occasion, in direct contact with one another.

Through a process of gradual change, the Archaic population of the Southern Area became more diversified with numerous local varieties of culture developing in a number of different directions. There is evidence that by 3500 B.C., polished stone tools such as adzes and