

A Different Canada

GUIDING QUESTIONS

Society & Identity

- How did women influence Canadian society in the early 1900s?
- Why were the attitudes of English- and French-speaking Canadians different regarding Britain?
- What attitudes did many Canadians have toward minorities?
- What steps did the government take to control immigration to Canada?
- What challenges did Aboriginal peoples face in the early 1900s?

Economy & Human Geography

- How did technology impact Canada's economy during this period?
- What impact did industrial development have on the natural environment?

Autonomy & World Presence

- What was Canada's relationship to Britain at the turn of the century?



TIMELINE

1896

Wilfrid Laurier becomes prime minister of Canada
Klondike gold rush begins

1899

Canadian volunteers fight in the Boer War in South Africa

1903

Alaska boundary dispute settled between the United States and Canada

1905

Alberta and Saskatchewan become provinces

1906

B.C. First Nations leaders take their land claim to King Edward VII of England

CHAPTER FOCUS QUESTION

What defined Canada in the early 1900s, and what attitudes and expectations did Canadians have for the century ahead?

On a cool October evening in 1904, a tall, dignified man stood in front of a crowd in Toronto's Massey Hall. He was Wilfrid Laurier, Canada's prime minister. Laurier stepped to the podium that night and presented a bold vision of Canada for the new century:

Let me tell you, my fellow countrymen, that the twentieth century shall be the century of Canada and of Canadian development. For the next seventy-five years, may for the next one hundred years, Canada shall be the star towards which all men who love progress and freedom shall come.

—Wilfrid Laurier, Toronto Globe, October 15, 1904

What was Canada like at the beginning of the 20th century when Laurier made his bold prediction? Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec were much smaller than they are today. Newfoundland was still a self-governing colony, and the territory of Nunavut had not yet been created. The census of 1911 reveals that Canada's population was only 7.2 million, less than a quarter of what it was by the end of the century.

People's attitudes about good manners and behaviour in general, the role of women, national identity, minorities, and Aboriginal peoples were also different then. In this regard, Canada fit the claim that “the past is like a foreign country; they do things differently there.” In our study of history, it is important to try to see the world through the eyes of Canadians at that time if we want to understand why they took the actions that they did.



KEY TERMS

prohibition
suffragist
imperialists
nationalists
autonomy
head tax
Indian Act
reserves
residential schools
assimilation



1907
Vancouver
race riot
occurs

1908
*Anne of Green
Gables* is
published

1909
First airplane
flight in
Canada

1911
Laurier era
ends
Robert Borden
elected prime
minister

1912
RMS *Titanic* sinks
off coast of
Newfoundland

1914
Passengers on the
Komagata Maru are refused
landing in Vancouver
First World War begins

Prime Minister
Wilfrid Laurier

- born 1841, Saint-Lin, Canada East (Québec)
- lawyer
- first elected to Commons in 1874
- prime minister 1896–1911; longest unbroken tenure as prime minister; first prime minister of French ancestry

Domestic Record

- helped resolve the Manitoba Schools Question in 1896 by allowing some Catholic and French instruction in public schools
- supported the construction of a second transcontinental railway in 1903
- oversaw Alberta and Saskatchewan joining Confederation in 1905
- created the Royal Canadian Navy with the Naval Service Act in 1910
- opposed conscription during the First World War (1914–1918)

International Record

- participated in colonial conferences of 1897 and 1902, rejecting England's proposals to unify the British Empire
- sent a force of Canadian volunteers to fight in the Boer War (1899–1902)
- fought for Canada's claim during the Alaska boundary dispute, 1903

- How did women influence Canadian society in the early 1900s?

Society and Manners

By the early 20th century, most Canadians lived on farms or in small villages, yet morals and manners of the day were set by a minority of middle- and upper-class Anglophones. These people were greatly influenced by the attitudes of Victorian England. This period—named after Queen Victoria, who was the British monarch from 1837 to 1901—was known for its appearance of moral strictness. Families were expected to attend church regularly; they supported Britain and the monarchy; and they believed in honour, virtue, and duty. It was an age in which right and wrong, good and evil, seemed clear; they were not seen as issues that needed discussion or debate.

There was little tolerance for those who did not obey the law, and the application of the law could be quite harsh. At the time, the death penalty was the sentence for murder. Most convictions, however, were for crimes against people's property. Drunkenness was a close second.

Women of the Era

In the early 1900s, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, founded in the 1870s, was still actively campaigning for **prohibition**. These women saw alcohol as the cause of many of society's problems. They also supported women's right to vote. With the vote, women believed they could influence the government to address social problems of the day, such as child labour, pollution, and poverty. Nellie McClung was a well-known **suffragist** who, together with other women, campaigned for women's rights (see Chapter 3).

Since moral codes of behaviour were strict and well-defined, the courtship of young, middle-class ladies was a formal affair under the watchful eyes of their families and community. Once married, women had few rights over property or children, and divorce was rare. Women were not considered persons under the law—unless they committed a crime. Even a woman's salary was legally the property of her husband. Women who worked outside the home, usually before marriage, were employed mainly as servants or factory workers. Some women were teachers and nurses; a few even became doctors.

FIGURE 1-1

Woman's Christian Temperance Union convention in Calgary, 1911

Thinking Critically

What class of women do you think this photograph represents? Why would these women be concerned about society's problems?



Arts and Leisure

As Canada started to become more urbanized, its literature and art became more sentimental, expressing a preference for rural life, simple values, and happy endings. In 1908, Lucy Maud Montgomery published the much-loved novel *Anne of Green Gables*, a rural romance set in Prince Edward Island.

Stephen Leacock gently mocked small-town Ontario life in his humorous *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912). Ernest Thompson Seton wrote moving stories about animals. Pauline Johnson, daughter of a Mohawk chief and his English wife, read poems about her Mohawk heritage to packed halls. Ontario painter Homer Watson gained international recognition with his farm scenes. In Québec, Ozias Leduc painted religious works and landscapes filled with a sense of spirituality. In British Columbia, Emily Carr explored the landscapes and peoples of the West Coast through painting and writing.

For leisure, Canadians enjoyed outdoor activities, such as running, cycling, and rowing. In the summer, trips to the beach were popular despite confining “bathing costumes.” In the winter, tobogganing was a must.

Still a British Nation

At the beginning of the 20th century, some of Britain’s colonies, including Canada, had their own governments but still depended on Britain to resolve disputes with other countries. The British government often made decisions that did not have Canada’s best interests in mind.

The Alaska Boundary Dispute

The dispute was over the exact border of the Alaskan “pan-handle,” a strip of land running down the Pacific Coast between British Columbia and Alaska. Of particular concern was the question of ownership of a fjord called the Lynn Canal. This waterway provided access to the Yukon, where gold had been discovered in 1896. In a speech, Prime Minister Laurier reflected on the relations between Canada and the United States:

I have often regretted... that we are living beside a great neighbour who, I believe I can say without being deemed unfriendly to them, are very grasping in their national actions and who are determined on every occasion to get the best in any agreement....

—Wilfrid Laurier, October 23, 1903

In 1903, the matter was finally settled. The British, weary from fighting the Boer War in South Africa and unwilling to become involved in another international conflict, determined that the Lynn Canal was part of Alaska, not B.C. Many Canadians were angered by this decision, believing Britain had sold out Canada’s interests to keep peace with the U.S.

KEY TERMS

Victorian or pertaining to the reign of Queen Victoria; also someone who shares the values of that period

prohibition the ban of alcohol

suffragist a person who advocates that women should have the right to vote

● What was Canada’s relationship to Britain at the turn of the century?

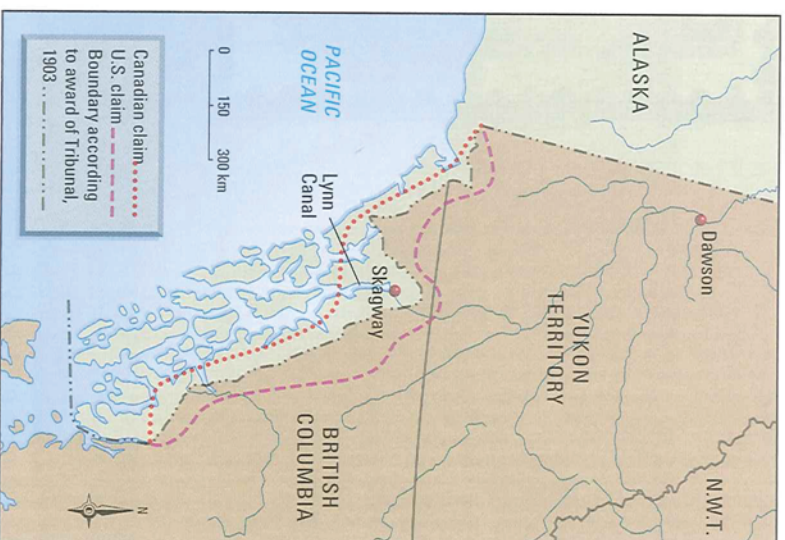


FIGURE 1-2 The Alaska boundary dispute
Using Evidence From the map, explain how the Canadian claim would have allowed easier access to Dawson.

- Why were the attitudes of English- and French-speaking Canadians different regarding Britain?

KEY TERMS

imperialists people who support imperialism, the policy of one nation acquiring, controlling, or dominating another

Canadiens French descendants of the original settlers of New France

nationalists people who have a strong attachment to their culture or nation

autonomy the power to govern oneself and make one's own decisions

homesteaders newcomers who claimed and settled land

ethnocentric the belief that one's own culture is superior, and that other cultures should be judged by its values

head tax the fee that Chinese immigrants were required to pay after 1885 in order to enter Canada

French-Canadian Nationalists

While unhappy with Britain's decision regarding the Alaska boundary, most English-speaking Canadians were proud to be British subjects, and they shared Britain's dreams of expanding the British Empire. These **imperialists** had eagerly supported Britain in the Boer War in 1899.

French-speaking Canadians, however, did not share this enthusiasm for the British Empire. They were the descendants of people who had settled New France more than 200 years earlier, and they saw themselves as **Canadiens** rather than British subjects. French Canadians tended to be **nationalists**, believing that Canada should have **autonomy** and be totally independent from Britain. For example, nationalist leader Henri Bourassa resigned from Laurier's Cabinet when Laurier agreed to send volunteers to fight with the British in South Africa during the Boer War. Bourassa's stand against Canada's involvement in Britain's wars became an even bigger issue during the First World War.

Language rights was another issue that divided French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. After a bitter dispute, French Canadians first lost the right to French-language instruction in Catholic schools in Manitoba, then in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Henri Bourassa voiced the concerns of many French Canadians when he suggested that Canadians might not have any reason to stay in Canada if their rights as a minority were not protected, as the people of Québec had believed they would be at the time of Confederation.

FIGURE 1–3 This postage stamp shows the extent of the British Empire in 1898.

Using Evidence The British Empire was the biggest of the European empires that controlled much of the land and people of the world. What does the expression “the sun never sets on the British Empire” mean?



PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. **Perspectives** Imagine you could go back to the Canada of 1914. What attitudes would you find most difficult to deal with? Why? What specific social values do you hold that would conflict with those commonly held in 1914?
2. Describe the situation of women in Canada in the years before the First World War.
3. Explain why some Canadians did not share enthusiasm for Canada's ties to Britain. Do you think their objections were justified? Explain.

Canada's Changing Population

After becoming prime minister in 1896, Laurier realized that for Canada to prosper, it needed more people, especially in the West. His government launched an advertising campaign to attract immigrants to Canada. It circulated posters in the United States and northern and eastern Europe promoting the Prairies as the “Last Best West” to distinguish it from the American West, where land was becoming limited and more expensive. These efforts resulted in a significant increase in immigration.

Entry into Canada was easy if you were reasonably healthy and had funds to establish yourself. The federal government offered immigrants willing to farm the Prairies 65 hectares of land for only \$10. These **homesteaders**, as they were called, had three years to build a house and begin cultivating the land. The loneliness and harsh conditions of life on the Prairies prompted some to move to urban centres.

Not Everyone Is Welcomed

Some Canadians did not welcome changes to Canada's ethnic composition. Many French-speaking Canadians were concerned that the new immigrants would outnumber the Francophone population. Most Canadians were **ethnocentric**, believing their own race or group was superior, and therefore they disliked “outsiders.” As a result, many newcomers to Canada experienced discrimination.

Eastern Europeans, particularly the Ukrainians and Polish people who settled the Prairies, were targets of ethnic prejudice. Their language and customs were unfamiliar to Canadians, who often ridiculed these people.

Many Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian immigrants settled in British Columbia. They, too, suffered from discrimination and racism. R.B. Bennett, a future prime minister, reflected popular prejudice when he declared in 1907, “British Columbia must remain a white man's country.” As long as Asian immigrants did work that other Canadians considered too unpleasant—such as hauling coal, packing fish, and washing dishes—their cheap labour was generally accepted. But when Canadian workers began to fear that Asian immigrants would compete against them for other jobs, they joined in denouncing them.

The federal government tried to limit immigration from Asia in 1885 by introducing the Chinese Immigration Act. Under this Act, every Chinese immigrant to Canada had to pay a **head tax** of \$50 upon arrival. In 1907, an angry mob of 9000 people smashed windows and destroyed signs on stores owned by Chinese and Japanese immigrants in Vancouver. This race riot resulted in severe restrictions on Japanese immigration. A year later, there was a virtual ban on East Indian immigration.

- What attitudes did many Canadians have toward minorities?
- What steps did the government take to control immigration to Canada?

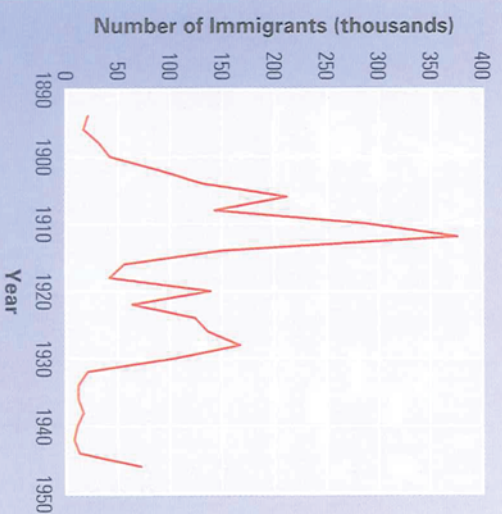


FIGURE 1-4 Immigrants to Canada, 1894–1946



FIGURE 1-5 Today many Canadian communities are multicultural, as shown on this street in Vancouver. **Thinking Critically** How does Canada benefit from its ethnic diversity? In what ways is the immigrant experience different today?

Is today's government responsible for injustices of the past?

In the early 1980s, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau refused to apologize for past injustices committed by Canadian governments. He claimed that we cannot rewrite history; we can only try to be just in our time. Those calling for apologies say it is not about rewriting history. They feel acknowledging that the government and its institutions took wrong turns in the past shows that we are on the right road today.

Since 1988, federal and provincial governments have recognized and tried to compensate for past wrongs by issuing official apologies. In 1988, the Conservative government apologized to Japanese Canadians for their internment during the Second World War (see Chapter 5) and again in 1990 to Italian Canadians for similar reasons. Perhaps the most significant event to date has been Prime Minister Stephen Harper's 2008 formal apology to Canada's Aboriginal peoples, acknowledging that "...the treatment of children in Indian residential schools is a sad chapter in our history" (see Chapter 8). Supporters of this approach hope that such apologies offer closure to a hurtful past. Opponents say that no matter how sincere an apology, it cannot undo what has been done.

The following Canadian immigration case studies examine two apologies and corresponding responses.

The Chinese

As you read earlier, the federal government tried to discourage Chinese people from coming to Canada by imposing a head tax in 1885. The tax was increased from \$50 to \$100 in 1900, and to \$500 in 1903. On July 1, 1923, the federal government introduced the Chinese Exclusion Act—an Act that tried to halt Chinese immigration altogether. Chinese Canadians refer to this day as Humiliation Day. The Act was in place for more than 20 years; it was repealed in 1947.

In 1984, the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) began a campaign for an apology from the federal government. They also asked for a repayment of \$23 million, the amount collected from 81 000 Chinese immigrants who were forced to pay the tax.

In 1993, the Canadian government rejected the redress claim stating that it was more important to erase inequality in the future than to compensate people for past mistakes. Dr. Alan Li, the then-president of the CCNC, disagreed. He stated:

Returning the money is only basic justice. It is a strong statement of principle that a government cannot, and should not, and must not, benefit from racism.

—Alan Li, Speech, 1994

FIGURE 1-6 Immigration certificate for Lee Don, 1918

Gathering Information How old was Lee Don when he was admitted to Canada? How much was the head tax he had to pay? Where do you think he might have obtained the money to pay the tax?



In 1995, the CCNC approached the United Nations Human Rights Commission to ask for their help with this issue. In 2006, the Canadian government agreed to address the claim and offered a parliamentary apology for the head tax and exclusion of Chinese immigrants from 1923 to 1947. The federal government promised financial redress of \$20 000 to each of the surviving head tax payers or their spouses.

For over six decades, these malicious measures, aimed solely at the Chinese were implemented with deliberation by the Canadian state. This was a grave injustice, and one we are morally obligated to acknowledge.

—Prime Minister Stephen Harper, June 22, 2006

For Sid Chow Tan, national chairperson of the CCNC and president of the Head Tax Families Society of Canada, the apologies must not distract us from present-day problems. He stated:

The historical injustices of the Chinese Head Tax are being replicated today through Canada's exploitative guest-worker programs and restrictive immigration policies. The descendants of these policies will be demanding apologies in future decades. We should deal with this present reality and not just dwell on the past, especially if a history that we are supposed to have learnt from is repeating itself.

—Sid Chow Tan

The Komagata Maru

In 1908, the federal government passed the Continuous Passage Act, a law requiring all immigrants to come to Canada by a non-stop route. This effectively made immigration from countries such as India impossible, since there were not any steamship companies that offered direct routes to Canada. This law was challenged in 1914, when the passengers on the *Komagata Maru*, a steamer chartered to carry Sikh immigrants from Hong Kong to Vancouver, were refused entry to Canada.

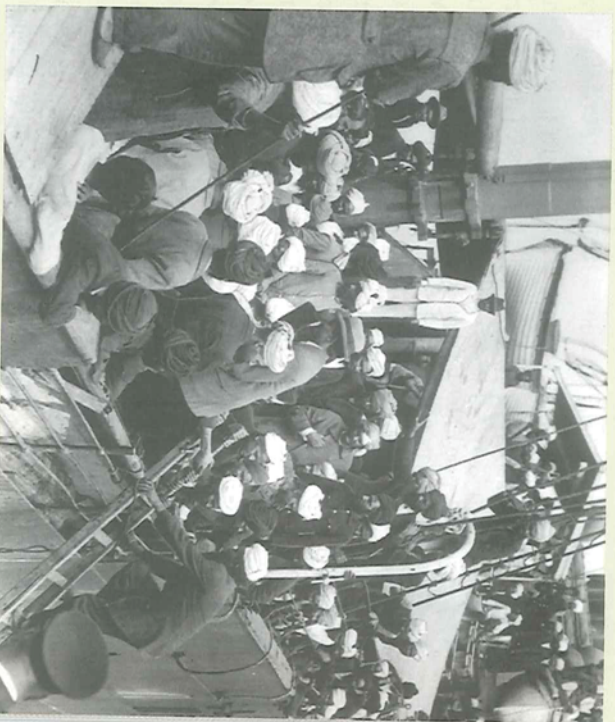


FIGURE 1-7 The *Komagata Maru* was docked for two months in Vancouver while the Canadian government decided the fate of its 340 passengers.

In May 2008, the British Columbia legislature extended an apology for the *Komagata Maru* incident. A few months later, at a Sikh festival in B.C., Prime Minister Harper also offered an apology for the incident. Sikh organizations have rejected the prime minister's apology, comparing it to the formal apology to Chinese Canadians in 2006. The Sikh community requested a formal apology in the House of Commons, which would grant this issue the respect and dignity they feel it deserves. The Conservative government has since said there will be no further apology.

Analyzing the Issue

1. Compare the responses of Prime Minister Trudeau to those of Prime Minister Harper. What might explain the differences in their opinions?
2. Official apologies for past wrongs have accelerated since 1988. Why do you think that has happened? Would you support treating all claims for redress for past wrongs equally? Why or why not?
3. Organize a debate on the topic: Should we try to right the wrongs of past generations?

- What challenges did Aboriginal peoples face in the early 1900s?

KEY TERMS

Indian Act an Act created to regulate the lives of the First Nations of Canada

reserves land set aside by the government for the use of First Nations

residential schools government-authorized schools, run by the churches, in which Aboriginal children lived apart from their families and were educated in Canadian culture

assimilation adoption of the customs and language of another cultural group so that the original culture disappears

Cultural Extinction?

As thousands of immigrants settled into the western provinces, Aboriginal peoples found themselves more and more displaced. Their lives were regulated by the **Indian Act** passed in 1876. By the 1880s, most Aboriginal peoples of the Prairies were living on **reserves**. The main purpose of reserves was to free up land for settlers and immigrants from Europe, and to avoid the violent clashes that had taken place between Aboriginal peoples and settlers in the United States.

On the reserves, Aboriginal people were encouraged to take up farming instead of traditional hunting. But their attempts to adapt to farming were hindered by several factors: the soil on the reserves was often unsuitable for crops. They traded their land for equipment and livestock, but were given hand tools and animals ill-suited for plowing. Even when Aboriginal farmers managed to harvest crops, efforts to sell them were often hindered by government agents who would deny them the passes they needed to leave the reserve and market their crops. As a result, many Aboriginal people experienced hunger.

Loss of land was not the only problem Aboriginal peoples faced. The Canadian government established **residential schools** in an attempt to force Aboriginal children to set aside their identity and traditions and become part of the dominant culture. Children were taken from their communities by Indian agents, police, or priests and sent to schools hundreds of kilometres away. The overcrowded dormitories, unsanitary conditions, and lack of medical care caused tuberculosis and other diseases to spread quickly. Many students were physically and sexually abused. They were punished for speaking their language, forbidden to practise their culture, and denied contact with their families.

Residential schools, reserves, and enforced farming were all part of the federal government's policy of **assimilation**, which was intended to make Aboriginal peoples abandon their traditions and adopt a European way of life. This policy had been in place since 1871, and by the early 1900s the populations of Aboriginal peoples were declining. By 1913, an article in *Maclean's* magazine claimed that “the white man of Canada... is slowly, steadily and surely absorbing his red brother.” Aboriginal peoples did not agree. Their struggle to establish land claims and reclaim their culture was just beginning.



FIGURE 1-8 An Aboriginal man plowing land on a reserve
Thinking Critically Aboriginal peoples traditionally survived by hunting, trapping, and fishing. How would farming change their traditional lifestyle?

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Despite their poor treatment in Canada, immigrants kept coming. Explain the factors that attracted immigrants to Canada.
2. Why were many English- and French-Canadian people upset by the changes to Canada's ethnic composition?
3. Describe the steps taken in British Columbia to restrict Asian immigration.
4. Describe the policies of the federal government that were designed to assimilate Canada's Aboriginal peoples.

WEB LINK ● The last residential school closed in 1996. Find out more about Canada's residential schools on the Pearson Web site.

Millions of immigrants came to Canada in the 20th century. They were lured by the promise of freedom, land, and a better quality of life. As new people came to Canada, the original inhabitants of the country were forced off their land. First Nations peoples in British Columbia reacted by asserting their rights to Aboriginal land and self-government. Squamish Chief Joe Capilano, a respected and talented speaker, played a major role in championing this cause.

On August 14, 1906, delegates led by Chief Capilano met with King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace. They brought with them a petition expressing their dissatisfaction with the Canadian government and their claim to land. Although they could not present the petition directly to the king because of protocol, they discussed these issues with him during the audience.

The delegates were enthusiastically received when they returned to Canada. Chief Capilano toured



FIGURE 1-9 Chief Joe Capilano

Thinking Critically Why might this photograph have been taken? Do you think this image shows the “real” Joe Capilano? Why or why not?

B.C., speaking to First Nations peoples throughout the province. He told his audiences that the king supported them in their dispute with the Canadian government. The effectiveness of his speeches was clear in *The Victoria Daily Colonist* headline on May 8, 1907. It claimed, “Cowichan Indians in Restless Mood: Alleged That Tribal Discontent Is Aroused Through Oratory of Joe Capilano.”

But Canadian authorities disputed the royal promise of King Edward because there was no written record supporting the chief’s claim. This highlighted one of the key differences between European and Aboriginal cultures: Europeans relied on written records while Aboriginals trusted verbal promises.

The more active Capilano became in the cause, the more the Canadian government threatened him with prosecution and labelled him a troublemaker.

Until his death in 1910, Capilano continued his struggle for Aboriginal rights. It was not until the latter half of the 20th century that the Supreme Court of Canada began to recognize Aboriginal rights.

1. Describe what the delegates might have hoped to achieve in going directly to King Edward VII.
2. **Patterns and Change** List the differences between the activism of First Nations in the early 20th century and that of First Nations today. How would you relate the early struggles to those of today?
3. During his journey to speak with the king, Chief Capilano wore a blanket crafted to give spiritual protection. In 2009, the Squamish Nation celebrated the historic return of the blanket to Salish traditional territory at the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre. Where should an important artifact like Capilano’s blanket be kept?

What If...

Imagine that the king had convinced the Canadian government to acknowledge the grievances presented in the petition. How might this have changed the attitude of Canadians and the government toward Canada’s Aboriginal peoples?