

Booklet for New Canadians

British Columbia

Early History

It is not certain how B.C.'s first people came to be here. Until recently, it was believed that they came from Asia sometime after the first Ice Age.

Eventually they made up about 30 different groups, the largest of which are the Coast Salish, Nootka, Kwakiutl, Bella Coola, Tsimshian and Haida.

In the late 1700s, a few European fur traders began to arrive by ship, first from Spain then from Britain. James Cook visited the coast in 1778, George Vancouver charted the coastline from 1792–1794, and Alexander Mackenzie reached the coast over land in 1793. During the early 1800s, Simon Fraser and David Thompson explored the Fraser and the Columbia Rivers.

Fur-trading posts turned into permanent settlements in the early 1800s, as more Europeans moved into the area. The Fraser River gold rush and the Cariboo gold rush (1858-1862) brought in many more non-natives, including Chinese immigrants from San Francisco.

British Columbia joined Confederation in 1871. The province, however, only became accessible to the rest of the country in 1886, upon the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). During the building of the railway, the CPR, unable to supply enough white workers, brought in 6,500 Chinese workers to complete the difficult and dangerous work.

During the 1880s and early 1900s, many people came to B.C. from Europe and other parts of North America. In spite of racial discrimination, Chinese, Japanese, and Sikhs also came to B.C. during this time. By the early 1900s, the immigrant population had surpassed the native population and British Columbia was well on its way to becoming the multicultural province it is today.



Population

The population of B.C. is 4,435,344 (estimate) (Statistics Canada, 2009 statcan.gc.ca).

*British Columbia's motto,
Splendor Sine Occasu means Splendour without Diminishment.*

Provincial Government

There are currently 85 elected representatives in the provincial legislature.

(Go to www.leg.bc.ca, then click on Members, then MLA Finder.)

The legislature meets in Victoria, the capital city of B.C., where the Parliament buildings are located.



Geography

British Columbia, Canada's third largest province, is approximately 1,200 kilometers (750 miles) from north to south and an average of 640 kilometers (400 miles) from east to west.

The Pacific Ocean forms the western boundary, and parallel ranges of mountains and valleys cover most of the province. Mount Robson, at 3,954 meters (12,972 feet) in the Rocky Mountain Range, and Mount Waddington, at 4,016 meters (13,175 feet) in the Coast Range, are the highest peaks.

B.C.'s major rivers include the Fraser, Columbia, Okanagan, Peace, Stikine, and Skeena. The Fraser River crosses the Lower Mainland.

Industries

B.C.'s most important industry is manufacturing, which involves processing agricultural products and natural resources.

B.C.'s major natural resources are forest products, fish, minerals, coal, natural gas and water.

The service sector (finance, real estate, health, retail, tourism, etc.) is becoming increasingly significant to the prosperity of the province.

The Dogwood is B.C.'s provincial flower.

Jade is our provincial gemstone.

B.C.'s provincial tree is the Western Red Cedar.

The provincial bird is the Stellar's Jay.

Coquitlam

(from kwayhquitlum—the Salish word meaning 'small red salmon')

History

Coquitlam was incorporated in 1891, and officially became a city on December 1, 1992.

The settling of the area began around Millside or Fraser Mills as it was also called. Much of its original growth was due to the lumber industry. In 1909 the Fraser Saw Mills Company brought in experienced sawmill workers from Québec. They called the area in which they settled Maillardville, after Father Edmond Maillard, their first priest.

Today, less than 2% of Coquitlam's population is native French-speaking (Statistics Canada, 2006: Community Profiles)

Coquitlam's future is linked more to the growth of the Lower Mainland area than it is to its own industrial base.

Population

The population of Coquitlam is 121,452 (estimate)
(BC STATS, 2008: www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca).

City Government

Coquitlam is administered by a mayor and eight councillors.

Copies of the minutes and the agendas of all meetings are available for consultation at both branches of the Coquitlam Public Library.

Coquitlam City Hall

Address:

3000 Guildford Way
Coquitlam, BC V3B 7N2

Web Site: www.coquitlam.ca

Phone:

604-927-3000 (City Hall)

604-927-3001 (Mayor)



*Coquitlam's motto, Animus Fluminum Vires Populi, means
The Spirit of the Rivers is the Strength of the People.*

Useful Internet Sites

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

www.cic.gc.ca

British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services: find *The British Columbia Newcomers' Guide* under Quick Links on the right-hand side of the screen.

www.welcomebc.ca

Elections Canada: Information about the Federal political parties and elections.

www.elections.ca

Government of British Columbia

www.gov.bc.ca

Small Business Information

www.smallbusinessbc.ca

S.U.C.C.E.S.S.: Immigrant services including counselling, settlement and family services.

www.successbc.ca

Political Leaders and Representatives

Please go to the Information Desk at either branch of the Coquitlam Public Library for a copy of the most current list of political leaders and representatives.

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