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O Canada

BY LISA RAMBERT

This article highlights Canada's uniqueness and, in particular, compares and contrasts different aspects of Canada and the United States. According to Rambert, "to know us is to love us!"

Despite its size, riches, and beauty, Canada remains somewhat unknown by people around the world. Alternately, Canada often is defined in counterpoint to the United States, as in "Canadians and Americans are pretty much alike."

Ask anyone what first comes to mind when they think of Canada and there is a popular set of answers: trees, maple syrup, moose, and the like. While these things are indeed part of our cultural and physical landscape, Canada is so much more than the sum of its stereotypes. Could it be that its famously polite and understated people simply are uninterested in shouting its own praises from the mountain top? Or is it that Canada is too vast and varied for simple descriptions?

It is particularly fitting that Canada be featured in *MOBILITY*. In many ways, Canada is the model of a mobile population.



Canada has the highest per capita immigration rate in the world. It relies on immigration for its sustained economic growth. With the United States, Canada enjoys the single most important trading relationship in the world. And, its border with the United States is the longest unprotected land border in the world. These facts are strong evidence of everything that Canada is doing well when it comes to mobility issues. However, they also are the reasons why Canada must strive for excellence in all policy matters affecting workforce mobility. There is simply too much at stake not to.

Much of what sets Canada apart from other nations is a factor of its physical territory. First, there is its sheer size. Canada is the second-largest country in the world, out-ranked only by Russia. It enjoys the longest land border in the world with its American cousin to the south and it also shares a border with Alaska in the northwest. It stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic, hence the saying “from sea to sea to sea” when talking about Canada’s borders. Canada also has the longest coastline in the world: 243,000 kilometers (151,000 miles).

With so much land, it is not surprising that Canada enjoys one of the lowest population densities in the world. Its 31 million people are spread out at the rate of 3.5 inhabitants per square kilometer; however, as most of the population is located within 150 kilometers of the American border, much of Canada’s land mass is uninhabited.

Canada relies on immigration to grow its population. The most populous part of the country is situated amid a stretch that runs from Quebec City, in the province of

Quebec, to Windsor in southern Ontario (the golden horseshoe of Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal), the British Columbia Lower Mainland (including Vancouver), and the Calgary-Edmonton corridor in Alberta.

Not only is Canada huge, with plenty of room for everyone, it also is immensely rich in natural resources. Northern Canada, called the Canadian Shield, is a wild and beautiful place. It is a rocky area with stunningly beautiful landscapes punctuated with pristine lakes and rivers. Its remoteness, however, does not diminish its strategic value to Canada and, indeed, to the world, as this area contains more lakes than any other country in the world. Further, Canada contains 20 percent of the world’s fresh water supply. The strategic value of this asset cannot be understated. The management and protection of Canada’s fresh water supply is a top foreign policy priority. Canada also is the world’s largest producer of zinc and uranium and a world leader in many other natural resources such as gold, nickel, aluminum, and lead. In fact, many northern towns exist because of a nearby mine or source of timber.

Regionalism

This rich and varied physical landscape helps define strong regional identities. Canada’s regions (west, prairie, central, maritime, and the north) define its industries, local population growth, and cultural identities. Beware the newcomer who dons a tie at the Calgary stampede or shows up at a swanky Montreal bistro in cowboy boots!

Western Canadian culture is marked by the rugged beauty of the

mountains, the dominance of the oil industry, and an affinity for outdoor activities. Once a year, Calgary welcomes cowboys from around the world, most notably from Texas and Montana. The boom of the oil and gas industry in recent years has seen Western Canada's economic growth outpace the rest of the country. In British Columbia and Alberta, at the height of the boom, the demand for labor and skilled workers was so acute that employers often were unable to fill jobs.

The prairies are made up of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. With its millions and millions of acres of farmland, this area is the breadbasket of not only Canada but much of the world, as well. Canada is one of the world's most important suppliers of agricultural products, with the Canadian prairies one of the most important suppliers of wheat, canola, and other grains. The people who live here share values finely honed by the demands of agriculture and, although farmers are growing fewer in number, there still are many families in Saskatchewan and Manitoba who have been tending the land for generations. Central Canada is made up of Ontario and Quebec. These provinces traditionally have been the economic engine of Canada, though the recent energy boom has seen Western Canada lay claim to that distinction. Toronto is the largest city in Canada, with a population in excess of five million. It is the center of Canada's financial, service, automotive, and manufacturing industries. Toronto's population is multicultural and highly skilled. Moreover, Ottawa, the capital of Canada, also is situated in Ontario, making this province a hub of political as well as economic activity. In addition to its

business scene, Toronto has a thriving entertainment industry. In fact, the entertainment industry infrastructure here is so good that many American films are shot on its streets with Toronto passing for Chicago, New York, and any number of other American cities. Toronto's International Film Festival is an important event that is now a must for filmmakers around the world.

Quebec is a province set apart from the others by its French language and culture. In reality, however, many of its inhabitants speak English, especially in the city of Montreal. It, too, is a multicultural city that enjoys a more European culture and lifestyle than any other city in North America. *The New York Times* has called it "Paris without the jet lag" and its cultural and gastronomic scene is highlighted repeatedly by the most influential travel writers. Some of the more notable cultural exports from Quebec include Celine Dion and Cirque du Soleil. In addition to its vibrant cultural and creative scene, Quebec also is Canada's hub for the pharmaceutical, aerospace, engineering, and video game industries. Quebec's European flavor and excellent business and investment opportunities make this location a particularly attractive one for corporate transfers.

Last, but definitely not least, we arrive at the eastern-most tip of Canada; the Maritime provinces. This region is made up of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia. Just as the economies of the prairie provinces were defined by those regions' agricultural riches, the Maritimes depend on fisheries. This industry was devastated by the collapse of the cod population in the

Atlantic. But recent years have seen a slow return to healthier levels.

Atlantic Canada also can rely on its vast offshore deposits of natural gas to maintain economic prosperity. In fact, Canada is a net exporter of energy. Strongly influenced by its Irish and Scottish heritage (and Acadian in New Brunswick, which is related to French Louisiana) the people of the Maritimes are known for their warmth and hospitality.

Canadian Culture and People

Although regional identities are strong across Canada, there still exist some overarching national values that Canadians hold dear. And, while venturing into the minefield of cultural generalizations always is risky business, some basic traits are worth noting. For example, while American political philosophy draws heavily on an unwavering belief in the individual, Canada's approach to governance tends to be more community-oriented. The current health care debate is a perfect example of this difference. Universal health care has been a fact of life in Canada for approximately 40 years while our American cousins still are grappling with all its implications and ramifications.

Ours is a society marked less by the peaks and valleys of prosperity and poverty found in the United States. In Canada, economic freedom is ranked lower than in the United States, but higher than most European nations, as indexed by the Heritage Foundation. Hence, Canada's economic culture can be seen as a middle ground between that of the United States and Europe. In addition, Canadians as a group tend to be more reserved and prudent than Americans. The Canadian banking

Canada Culture Tips

- Canadians pride themselves on the link between their cultural heterogeneity and their strength as a peaceful nation.
- Historically, Canadian immigration policy has been very welcoming in its philosophy, celebrating diversity and offering opportunities to anyone. This has created a cultural mosaic where individuals are encouraged to retain their cultural identities through traditions, languages, and customs.
- English and French are the country's two official languages. Both languages appear on maps, tourist brochures, and product labels, so it is important to have business materials in both French and English.
- There are several distinct varieties of French, collectively known as Canadian French, spoken in Canada, and it is not the same as the French spoken in France. Canadian French speakers tend to communicate more indirectly and nonverbally than native English speakers.
- Because Canada is a country of immigrants from all around the world, Canadians exhibit a multiplicity of communication styles. Even within ethnic groups there is variation. For example, a fourth-generation Chinese-Canadian working in Toronto would communicate far more directly than an ethnic Chinese who lives in a Chinese enclave in Vancouver.
- Although Canadians generally are individualistic and make decisions based on their own needs rather than those of the group, they place great emphasis on the individual's responsibility to the community and to achieving a good quality of life.
- Most Canadians see time as something that can be controlled, although they are not obsessive about letting the clock rule their lives.
- For the most part, Canadians strive to be on time for social engagements, so deviations are more a matter of personal preference than culture. Punctuality is expected in business.
- Canadians are egalitarian businesspeople, so it is safest to treat everyone with equal respect and deference. In Quebec, there is a bit more regard for titles and hierarchy. Canadians generally are reserved and somewhat formal in their behavior, especially in Quebec.
- As an egalitarian culture, Canadians tend to express their opinions freely. In general, information flows in all directions and managers often seek the advice of technical experts. Managers tend to see themselves as facilitators whose job is to assist their subordinates to produce their best work, rather than vice versa.

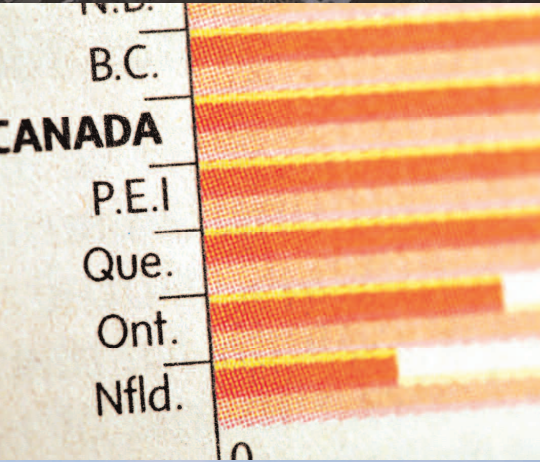
Source: RW³ CultureWizard's™ Country Profiles

system remains robust and escaped the worst of the financial crisis in part because of its more conservative banking culture.

Canada's culture is rooted in its bicultural English and French heritage. Canadians pride themselves on their multicultural population and view it as an essential part of their identity. In fact, an interesting point is that while Americans speak of their population of different cultures as a melting pot where all come together as Americans, Canadians view their own multicultural population as one where each cultural group retains their identities, all the while standing side-by-side with other groups that together form a Canadian cultural mosaic.

And a rich mosaic it is. Canada boasts 43 different ethnic groups. Based on the 2006 population census, the breakdown largely is as follows: the largest ethnic group is English (21 percent), followed by French (15.8 percent), Scottish (15.2 percent), Irish (13.9 percent), German (10.2 percent), Italian (5 percent), Chinese (3.9 percent), Ukrainian (3.6 percent), and First Nations (3.5 percent). Approximately one-third of respondents identified their ethnicity as "Canadian." Canada's aboriginal population is growing almost twice as fast as the Canadian average, as 3.8 percent of Canada's population claimed aboriginal identity in 2006. Also, 16.2 percent of the population belongs to non-aboriginal visible minorities. The largest visible minority groups in Canada are South Asian (4 percent), Chinese (3.9 percent), and Black (2.5 percent).

At 3.8 percent of the current population, Canada's aboriginal community is small; however, its importance cannot be understated. Canada, or "*Kanata*," is Iroquois for settlement. There are distinctive aboriginal cultures originating from all regions of Canada. Aboriginal people today are active in many different occupations and may live fully "North-Americanized lifestyles" while others maintain their traditions on reserve lands granted them by the government. Despite challenging political relations at times between some aboriginal leaders and the Canadian government, they remain a seminal and cherished part of Canada's cultural heritage and identity. National Aboriginal Day is a day of recognition of the cultures and contributions of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada. Today, most of the 30 different languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of North America, are spoken in Canada. In fact, two of Canada's territories give official status to native languages.



Canada's System of Government

Canada and the United States are both democracies and both are federal states. And that is about the end of any similarity between the two.

Canada is an officially bilingual (English and French) country by the express design of our Fathers of Confederation in 1867. The United States is a republic whereas Canada is a constitutional monarchy. Our head of state is the Queen of England and we share her with Australia, New Zealand, and many other nations such as the Bahamas, Papua New Guinea, and Tuvalu. In Canada, the Queen is represented by the Governor General, a Canadian citizen appointed by the Queen of England on the advice of the Prime Minister. But the significance of this difference is about much more than our figurehead, however, because Canadians are governed by a parliamentary cabinet, while Americans have a presidential-congress. While the difference may appear formal only, its practical effects are profound.

The presidential-congress is based on a separation of powers. The American president cannot be a member of either house of congress. Neither can any of the members of his or her cabinet. Neither the president nor any member of the cabinet can appear in congress to introduce a bill or defend it, answer questions, or rebut attacks on policies. No member of either house can be president or a member of the cabinet. The practical effect of this is that the president may propose a specific program of legislation but either house can add to or modify it and the president only can lobby from the sidelines. Also, no matter the successes or failures of the American president, he or she is elected for a fixed-term of four years

(unless he or she is impeached or resigns), and has a two-term limit.

Canada's parliamentary-cabinet government is completely different. It is based on a concentration of powers. The prime minister and every other minister must be a member of one house or the other. Every government bill is introduced by a minister and ministers are regularly in Parliament debating, defending, and answering questions on government policies and actions. As such, so long as the prime minister can maintain a majority in the House of Commons, he or she will be able to pass every bill he or she introduces. And, if not, then an election may be triggered and a new prime minister and a new House of Commons can get back to business. Of course, there remain other differences, such as the types of federalism both systems embody but it is clear that, despite these differences, both nations have constructed successful systems of government.

Canada's Economy

Canada is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. It is a member of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the G8. As of February 2009, Canada's national unemployment rate was an enviable 7.77 percent. We all have witnessed spectacular reversals of fortune on an international level during the recent financial crisis. Canada has emerged at the head of the pack, though, and is poised to lead all other nations in its economic recovery and growth in 2010. Of course, it had a solid economic foundation on which to build. In 2008, Canada had the lowest level of government debt in the G8. And the OECD predicts that Canada will continue to be in great fiscal health



as its debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to decline to 19 percent in 2009. This is less than half the expected average of other G8 nations.

During the past 50 years, Canada has transformed from an agricultural-based economy to an industrial economy dominated by manufacturing, mining, and the service industry in which 75 percent of Canadians are employed. Canada's economy stands out among those of other developed nations for the prominence of its oil and logging industries. Canada has avoided the usual pitfalls of a natural resource-based economy. On the contrary, its wealth of natural resources leaves it poised to experience another era of economic growth and prosperity as the world grapples with issues related to the environment.

United States and Canadian Trade

As one of our former beloved Prime Ministers, Pierre Trudeau, once said about the Canada-U.S. relationship in a 1969 speech, "living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt."

The United States and Canada enjoy an economic partnership unique in the world. The two nations share the world's largest and most comprehensive trading relationship, which supports millions of jobs in each country. In 2007, total

trade between the two countries exceeded \$560 billion. To make it all a bit more tangible, consider the following: the two-way trade that crosses the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit, MI, and Windsor, Ontario, equals all U.S. exports to Japan; Canada is the number one export market for 36 of the 50 U.S. states, and is ranked in the top three for another 10 states; Canada is a larger market for U.S. goods than all 27 countries of the European Community combined, whose population happens to be more than 15 times that of Canada; Canada is the single largest foreign supplier of energy to the United States—providing 17 percent of U.S. oil imports and 18 percent of U.S. natural gas demand; Canada is a major supplier of electricity (mostly clean and renewable hydroelectric power) to New England, New York, the Upper Midwest, the Pacific Northwest, and California; and Canadian uranium helps fuel U.S. nuclear power plants.

Canada and the United States also enjoy one of the world's largest investment relationships. The United States is Canada's largest foreign investor. In 2007, U.S. foreign direct investment in Canada totaled \$289 billion, or about 59 percent of total foreign direct investment in Canada. Most of this money flowed to Canada's mining and smelting industries, petroleum, chemicals, the manufacture of

machinery and transportation equipment, and finance.

Mobility

It is clear that the mobility of its people abroad and the organized integration of foreign workers in Canada is a key factor of its continued prosperity. As noted by the Honorable Preston Manning at the annual conference of the Canadian Employee Relocation Council in 2007, Canada was built by immigrants and migrant workers and it will be the skilled and knowledge workers that will ensure Canada's prosperity in the future. This is a pressing issue that governments at all levels are grappling to deal with. Canada's aging population means that without an increase in immigration, Canada will not be able to maintain the workforce it needs as early as 2011.

Canada is very much open for business and has much to offer any person or company. Its unparalleled cocktail of enticements and resources make it the ideal place to invest in and do business with. The staggering volume of trade between Canada and the United States indicates that many already are wise to the riches to be made in Canada. For those who have yet to launch ventures on our shores, all I can say is: what are you waiting for? ■

Lisa Rambert is director of business development for ARIANNE Relocation, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. She can be reached at +1 514 482 2200 ext. 226 or e-mail lisa@ariannerelocation.com.