

## 1.1: Immigration: government policy, who they were, why they came, where they settled, their experiences

### Introduction

- At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the world population was approximately **1.4 billion**.
- The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw explosions in population, social advances, economic advances, and technological advances.
- In 1900, Canada was 33 years old.
- **Sir Wilfred Laurier** is the new Prime Minister, elected in 1896.
- He was the **1<sup>st</sup> French Prime Minister of Canada**.
- His term in office is known as the “*GOLDEN ERA*” of Canada.

*“As the nineteenth century belonged to the United States, so the twentieth century will belong to Canada!”*

**- Laurier, 1904**

- Sir Wilfred Laurier was very optimistic about the future.

### **Why? In 1900, Canada ...**

- was gaining territory to the west of the continent
- had better relations with the USA (until Alaska)
- was the most important British colony
- had growing cities and industries

### **But the lives of most Canadians was not perfect ...**

- life on the Prairies (AB, SK, MAN) was harsh
- in the cities, the working class lived in slums
- working conditions were horrible and unregulated
- the American threat (Alaska)
- racism towards Aboriginals
- conflicts between the English and French Canadians

### **Canada: Land of Opportunity**

- Between 1901 and 1914, the population of Canada jumped from 5.4 to 8 million.
- Most of this was due to **IMMIGRATION**.
- This immigration changed the ethnic composition of the country.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most immigrants came from Britain or the United States.
- Between 1896 and 1914, 3 million immigrants arrived, and over half were neither British nor American.

- In Canada, the federal government came up with a policy on immigration and could thus choose who could enter the country.
- In 1896, Laurier chose **CLIFFORD SIFTON** as Minister of the Interior.
- His job was to attract immigrants to Canada, and to get them to settle in the West.
- He declared the **Homestead Acts**.
  
- Sifton adopted an “*open door policy*” on immigration.
- He looked for settlers who would be accustomed to the harsh conditions to be expected on the Prairies.
- Thus he looked for immigrants from North, Central, and Eastern Europe
  
- Ads were placed in all ‘desirable’ countries.
- Sifton offered each family **0.65 km<sup>2</sup>** of free land and a promise that immigrants could purchase more land for little money.
  
- Sifton had success ...
- Almost one million immigrant families came to the Prairies before 1914!
- But! ... This had a huge impact on the Aboriginal population already living there.



## **THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES**

- All immigrants in the Prairies had arrived on land that had been occupied for thousands of years by Aboriginals.
- They were chased out of areas where Europeans settled and had to retreat to the Northern forested areas of Canada.
- As a result, in 1876 and 1895, the federal government declared the **Indian Acts**.

## **The Indian Acts ...**

- Were meant to integrate the Aboriginals into Canadian society
- Gave the government complete control over interactions between Aboriginals and ‘Whites’
- Created a system of **Reserves** (Crown land) where the Aboriginals were forced to live.