

THE FINNS



IN CANADA

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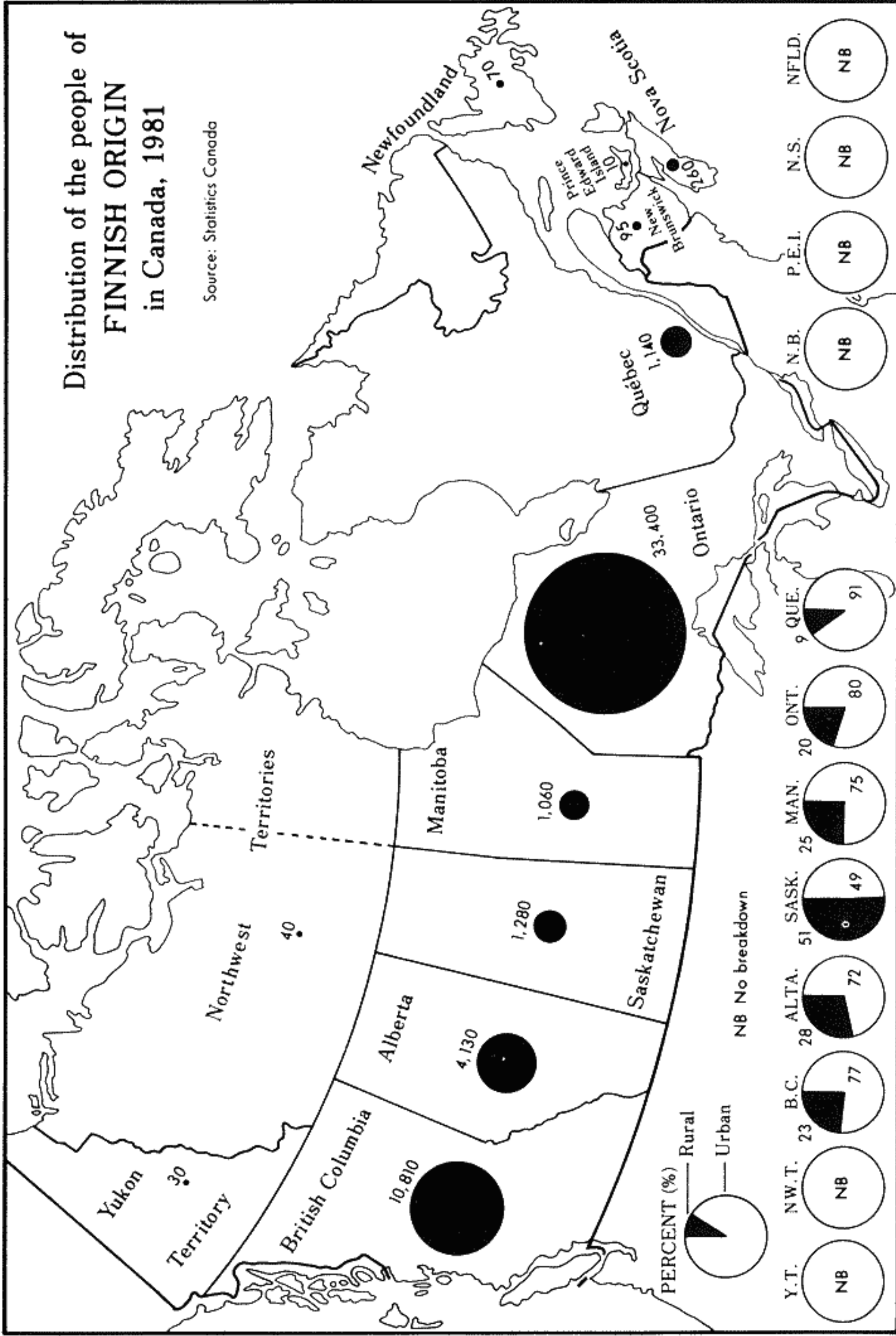
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Distribution of the people of FINNISH ORIGIN in Canada, 1981

Source: Statistics Canada



- Y.T. NB
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THE FINNS IN CANADA

I — The Finnish Background

Finland is, after Iceland, the most northerly country in the world. Its southern point falls well north of Churchill, Manitoba, near the border of the Northwest Territories. Although about one third of Finland's total length lies north of the Arctic Circle, owing to the Gulf Stream which has a tempering effect on the Finnish Climate, much of the country resembles northern Ontario. It is littered with 60,000 lakes; 30,000 islands adorn its coastal areas; thick forests cover over 70 percent of its surface and only about 13 percent of its land is good for agricultural use. Such a country is beautiful to look at, but presents severe challenges to those trying to force a living from the land.

Some ten thousand years ago, following the retreat of the continental ice-sheet, the first scattered settlements began to appear in the area now known as Finland. It is believed that the first inhabitants of this area belonged linguistically and racially to the Finno-Ugrian peoples. The Finns, as we know them today, probably did not migrate to Finland until the beginning of the Christian calendar. In 1155, the Swedish King Erik the Good made his first of a series of crusades to Finland, a country of many different tribes and no strong administrative unity. The Finns were bound together, however, by their distinctive language — Finnish — which bears no resemblance to the neighbouring Slavic or Germanic languages, but is related to Estonian and remotely to Hungarian. They also shared a polytheistic mythology, which emphasized closeness to nature and was transmitted by singing, although, with the aid of the English-born Bishop Henry, Catholicism of the English variety was established in Finland by King Eric. The country became part of the Kingdom of Sweden for nearly six and a half centuries, until 1809 when Finland was ceded to Russia at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Because of the long-term connection with Sweden, Finnish institutions and laws developed to resemble those of Sweden. Finland adopted the Latin alphabet and the language of education and government became Swedish. Finland, like Canada, is officially a bilingual country, although the percentage of the population which speaks Swedish as their mother-tongue has dropped from over 14 percent in 1900 to about 7 percent today. When Lutheranism was adopted in Sweden in the sixteenth century, it also became the official religion in Finland and even today over ninety percent of the Finns who go to worship are members of the State Lutheran Church.

In comparison to other European nations, Finland is sparsely populated. Its present inhabitants, numbering less than five million, are spread over 337,000 sq. km., an area about one-third the size of Ontario. Because of modern technology, improved agricultural methods and the high level of education of the population, Finland's standard of living is among the top ten countries in the world, but this was not the case around the turn of the century. Following the demographic trends of northern Europe, Finland's population had increased rapidly, tripling in the nineteenth century to 2.7 million. At the end of the First World War, the population rose to 3.1 million and it has grown steadily, but at a much slower pace, ever since. At first, the growing population fed themselves by

clearing more land, burning the thick virgin forests and forcing a meagre livelihood out of the new fields, supplementing their diet by abundant game and fish. By 1900, however, even the most marginal lands had been inhabited and the rural population (87.5 percent of the total) had no room for expansion. Overpopulation in the agricultural areas, especially in the more marginal lands in northern Finland, forced the surplus population to migrate from their familiar villages. Initially, they headed to northern Sweden and Norway and then to the urban areas of Finland. Industrialization had come to Finland relatively late in the 1860s and the urban areas, especially the coastal cities which were expanding slowly, could absorb some of the agricultural workers, but not all. Some of the women were able to find work as domestics; others tried their luck in the textile industries. Men searched for wage work in the lumber and sawmill industry, in railroad construction or in the factories. Thus, industrialization created a new group of migrant workers who were particularly vulnerable to periods of economic depression and famine. The bonds that had tied the peasants and agricultural workers together for generations were loosening, and migration which led to emigration became an acceptable and attractive alternative to a life plagued with economic uncertainties.

In addition to the economic problems, the traditionally immobile agrarian society also underwent major political and social changes which encouraged an increasing number of Finns to leave their troubled homeland in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century. The end of the Swedish rule in Finland freed the country from the close political and cultural links and from the use of Finnish men in the numerous wars fought by the expansionist Kingdom of Sweden. As an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia, Finland was allowed self-government with extraordinary freedoms. The country had its own laws, courts and money and the men were not conscripted into the Russian army. The latter part of the nineteenth century was a period of liberalization during which the Finnish language gained in importance, the culture flowered and a sense of national pride and identity was solidified. Perhaps the jubilant mood expressed by turn of the century Finns was best exemplified by the great composer Jean Sibelius in *Finlandia*. Tzar Alexander II was respected by the Finns and to this day his statue stands in the middle of the senate square in front of the University of Helsinki. Disaster struck, however, when Nicholas II became the Tzar of Russia and began to implement restrictive legislation to curb the many special privileges given to Finland. Spurred on by the pan-slavic movement, the weak Tzar focused on Finland. Almost overnight, the loyal Grand Duchy became rebellious. In 1904 the Tzar's hated Governor General, Nikolai Bobrikov, was murdered in the capital city of Helsinki by a young student. Finns resisted the attempts of Russification and refused to be conscripted into the Tzar's army. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1905 and drained the energies of Russia, Finland staged a successful general strike and demanded constitutional reforms. The Tzar relented and in 1906 Finland established one of the most democratic parliaments in the world, giving universal franchise to its adults, including women. In 1907, the population exercised its franchise and the Social Democratic Party emerged victorious, winning 80 of the 200 seats in parliament. But the government did not have the chance to implement its progressive and ambitious reforms. As soon as Russia recovered from the tur-

moil of the Russo-Japanese War, it renewed the Russification policies with increased vigour.

Because of the cultural awakening, the rise of Finnish nationalism, and the increasing strength of socialism, many Finns were encouraged to strive for an independent identity — a nation state of their own. With the outbreak of the Russian revolution and the chaos that ensued, the Finnish parliament seized its opportunity, declaring Finland an independent nation on 6 December 1917. This happy occasion was soon marred by internal strife between the socialist Finns, who favoured close ties with the newly created Soviet Socialist Republic, and the more conservative Finns, some of whom even discussed the establishment of a Finnish monarchy. The two sides reached an impasse and a bitter Civil War was the sad result. It was fought between the Red Guard, mainly made up of the urban workers of the south and the supporters of socialism, with some help from the remnants of the Russian army left in Finland, and the Civil Guard (more commonly called the White Guard), which consisted of the conservative elements of the society and found its greatest strength among the Ostrobothnian farmers. The Civil Guard also received some training and assistance from Germany and, led by Field Marshal Carl G.E. Mannerheim, it emerged victorious. For several months, a systematic persecution, imprisonment and execution of those who had fought in the Red Guard tarnished the newly independent nation and scarred those involved forever. During this brief period of instability, many Finns left the country. Among them was the only recognizable group of political refugees from Finland to Canada, consisting of about 50 Red Guard leaders, including the former socialist prime minister, Oskari Tokoi.

The economic uncertainties, the rural over-population, the unemployment in the cities and the political instabilities were the main causes for mass emigration from Finland. To these can be added many personal reasons: desire for adventure, broken hearts, arguments, family ties. Whatever the reason, the move overseas signalled a dramatic change in the life of an emigrant and ultimately the decision to leave the homeland was a lonely one. For the vast majority of Finns, emigration to Canada was an entirely voluntary act. Finns were seldom forced or even encouraged to leave their own country. In fact, most did so despite the objections of the country's political leaders, negative statements in the press, and the condemnation of the state-church. The young nation did not want to lose its most valuable resource — its people. Nevertheless, before the First World War over 350,000 Finns decided that for them North America held an inescapable attraction. The first wave of Finnish emigrants headed to the United States. They came from the northern provinces and Ostrobothnia and were mainly single men. Canada's share increased from a few individuals in the 1880s and 1890s to 17 percent of the total overseas emigration by the First World War. The later emigrants came largely from Southern Ostrobothnia and increasingly from the urban centers. Restrictive immigration legislation in the United States in the early 1920s channeled the flow of Finnish immigrants in a northerly direction. For the entire decade prior to the depression Canada's share of the overseas emigration averaged about 4,500 Finns a year. In 1930, the depression closed the Canadian gates for intending immigrants and Finns were later barred from entry because of the Second World War. When immigration to Canada resumed in 1947, Canada had changed its attitude to immigration, linking it close-

ly to employment requirements. In the 1950s a new surge of Finnish immigrants arrived in Canada. Many of these were "delayed" immigrants, having had their plans postponed by the depression and the war. Others feared the possibility of a renewed attack on Finland by the Soviet Union. But most still came in search of better economic opportunities in Canada. With the introduction of the point system and the abolition of discrimination in successive changes to Canadian immigration policy in 1962, 1967 and 1977, the number of Finnish immigrants declined dramatically to about 200 a year. Unskilled Finnish workers no longer meet the entrance requirements in Canada and, if they choose to leave Finland, they mainly emigrate to nearby Sweden. Those that do come to Canada are highly skilled and professional, but for them, Finland too offers good opportunities and the prospect of emigration is not as enticing.

II — The First Settlements 1890-1914

Although isolated individuals from Finland worked on early canal and railroad construction projects in Canada and fished and hunted on its virgin territory, signs of organized community development did not start until about 1890 when Finnish settlements began to grow in British Columbia, the Prairies and Northern Ontario. The Canadian census listed the Finns for the first time in 1901 when it discovered 2,502 persons of Finnish origin in Canada. The next decade witnessed a rapid growth in Finnish immigration and by 1911, 15,497 had settled in Canada. The largest number (56%) lived in Ontario, and most of the others in the Prairies (24%) and British Columbia (18%). The male-female ratio was nearly normal in Toronto (48% female) and Saskatchewan (44% female), but most other Finnish communities were heavily male dominated. Of the total number of Finns in Canada in 1911, only a third were women, and in many frontier towns men outnumbered women by ten to one.

The earliest Finnish immigrants are believed to have come from Alaska which had been governed by Finnish Governors General who encouraged the settlement of Finns in that northern Russian territory. When Alaska was sold to the United States in 1867, some of the approximately 500 Alaskan Finns moved south to British Columbia. Other Finns travelled north from the United States in search of gold or to work on the railroads. Most of them ended up digging for coal in Robert Dunsmuir's mines on Vancouver Island. The work was hazardous and backbreaking, and many miners were attracted to the saloons to seek solace from their misery and loneliness. Women were scarce, but enough of them had moved to Vancouver Island by 1890 to have a tempering influence in the community. In fact, the first formal Finnish organization established in Canada was probably a temperance society in North Wellington in 1890. A few months later a second temperance society was founded; it built several halls, moving from North Wellington to Nanaimo to Ladysmith when new coal mines were opened. In addition to advocating temperance, these organizations promoted united action among Finns in Canada and served as mutual benefit societies, providing insurance and help for the sick and injured and arranging funerals. Social functions — theatrical performances, choirs, brass bands, sports events and dances — fostered community spirit. Libraries, reading rooms and handwritten newspapers were organized and the first Finnish Lutheran Church in Canada was founded in Nanaimo, in 1893.

TABLE I: FINNISH IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

| | Total Finnish* Immigration | % of Total Canadian Immigration |
|-----------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1901-1910 | 12,621 | 0.8 |
| 1911-1920 | 9,651 | 0.6 |
| 1921-1930 | 36,076 | 2.9 |
| 1931-1940 | 758 | 0.5 |
| 1941-1950 | 1,228 | 0.3 |
| 1951-1960 | 16,386 | 1.0 |
| 1961-1970 | 6,146 | 0.4 |
| 1971-1980 | 2,946 | 0.2 |
| Total | 85,812 | 0.9 |

*Arrivals as distinguished from immigrants, since many soon departed for the USA or perhaps returned to Finland.

Figures prior to 1918 are not statistically accurate as many of the Finnish immigrants were classified as either Swedish or Russian.

Figures prior to 1926 do not include immigrants from the United States.

The figures after 1951 refer to Finnish immigrants by country of birth rather than by origin.

TABLE II:
NUMBER AND % OF PEOPLE OF FINNISH ORIGIN IN CANADA
(1901-1981)

| Year | Male | Female | Total | % of Canadian Population |
|------|--------|--------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1901 | - | - | 2,502 | 0.05 |
| 1911 | 10,104 | 5,393 | 15,497 | 0.22 |
| 1921 | 12,033 | 9,461 | 21,494 | 0.24 |
| 1931 | 25,257 | 18,628 | 43,885 | 0.42 |
| 1941 | 22,752 | 18,931 | 41,683 | 0.36 |
| 1951 | 23,038 | 20,707 | 43,745 ¹ | 0.31 |
| 1961 | 30,237 | 29,199 | 59,436 | 0.33 |
| 1971 | 29,360 | 29,855 | 59,215 | 0.27 |
| 1981 | 24,955 | 27,365 | 52,315 ² | 0.22 |

Source: Statistics Canada, Censuses of Canada (1901-1981)

¹Prior to 1951 the figures for the Finnish population included persons of Estonian background.

²The 1981 Census was the first to accept more than one ethnic origin for an individual. This factor thus weakens comparisons with ethnic origins from earlier censuses.

To escape from the dark, damp and dangerous coal mines, a few Finns dreamed of establishing a utopian socialist community in British Columbia. Some miners had been introduced to socialism already in Finland where the workers movement was sweeping the country; others might have learnt about it in the Finn towns of the United States. In 1901, the dream was realized when the provincial government agreed to designate Malcolm Island for this purpose. The philosophy of the community's spiritual leader, Matti Kurikka, was an interesting blend of romantic socialism and theosophy. Kurikka was invited to come to British Columbia by some coal miners who were familiar with his journalistic career. The community was named Sointula (Harmony) and in 1901 Kurikka began to publish the first Canadian-Finnish language newspaper *Aika* (Time). Economic reality and ideological division soon demolished the utopian dreams, but many of the first settlers remained on the island where the thriving fishing community of Sointula still exists. Although British Columbia offered other employment alternatives in the logging industry and salmon fishery and a few Finns homesteaded at Salmon Arm, Solsqua and White Lake and a few others congregated near the cities of New Westminster and Vancouver, most of the 2,858 Finns found in the province by the census of 1911 were in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith area still working in the coal mines.

Officially the colonization department of Canada was not looking for coal miners, loggers or salmon fishermen, but for farmers and agricultural workers in order to hasten the settlement of the sparsely populated prairies. The oldest, and only really successful Finnish prairie farming community was New Finland, Saskatchewan, which relied heavily on Finnish farmers who came from the United States during the late 1880s. Many had some resources on arrival and a few had already experienced the arid prairie conditions, but most were from the copper country of Michigan, escaping the shrill sound of the mine whistle and the dangerous work. By the 1890s immigrants found their way to New Finland directly from Finland. In 1893 the settlement established the New Finland Lutheran Church as the center of the community, and three years later built a library and the New Finland School. Today, New Finland is a prosperous farming community in the southeastern corner of the province, inhabited by the descendants of the first pioneers.

Around the turn of the century, after the British and the United States markets had been thoroughly bombarded with advertisements of Canadian opportunities, the colonization department and the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company turned their people-hungry gaze to Europe. The Finns caught their imagination. Here were people acceptable to the most stringent nativists; they were protestants, fair-haired, literate, and best of all, they were used to clearing and cultivating northern lands. Thousands of Finnish language folders and maps were distributed in the emigration area of Ostrobothnia on the west coast of Finland, despite the objections of Finnish political and religious leaders. In 1899, the Canadian Government sponsored five Finnish delegates to come and choose the most suitable land for Finnish block settlement in Canada. New Finland was used as the show piece to convince the delegation of the good opportunities Canada offered to hard-working settlers. In the end, the delegation chose the Red Deer district of Alberta and optimistically agreed to deliver 4,000 settlers annually. Unfortunately, the Finnish immigrants did not turn out to be as eager

prairie settlers as the Canadian government and the Finnish delegation had imagined. Ultimately the Red Deer district of Alberta attracted only a few hundred Finns who lived near Sylvan Lake. Other prairie communities struggled in Lucky Lake, Dinsmore and Rock Point, Saskatchewan, but these were severely affected by droughts. Most of the Finnish pioneers who did decide to take homesteads on the Prairies depended on alternative sources of income. The location of their farms was often determined by their proximity to mining, lumbering or construction work. Many of the Alberta Finns, who lived along the bituminous coal range of the Eastern Rockies in the towns of Blairemore, Coleman, Bellevue and Canmore, never owned a homestead; others could travel seasonally to their farms. In Manitoba the Finns settled in Lac du Bonnet-Elma region east of Winnipeg and in the area of Rorketon-Meadow Portage. By 1911, the Finnish population in Alberta was 1,588, in Saskatchewan 1,008, and in Manitoba 1,080.

The largest block of Finnish immigrants was attracted to Ontario, especially to its northern parts, where wage work was available. In 1911, 8,619 Finns resided in Ontario, 32 percent of whom were women. While Canada needed agricultural settlers, its mines, lumber camps and railroads depended on cheap immigrant labour, and the government was willing to allow and even encourage the importation of migrant workers. Once in Canada, the majority of Finnish immigrants became wage workers instead of farmers. They were concentrated in the unskilled and semi-skilled jobs in northern Ontario mines and lumbercamps. Finns preferred to live in the rural areas within commuting distance of their work. This pattern is clearly evident around Sudbury where the Finns kept small farms in the Beaver Lake, Waters Township, Long Lake, and Wanup areas. Further north, near Timmins, South Porcupine and Cochrane, many Finns took homesteads where they built a log cabin and a sauna and harvested the remaining trees to sell in the town. They supplemented their income from mining or lumbering by fishing, hunting and trapping, but left the land largely uncultivated, calling themselves "stump-farmers". Women and children contributed in maintaining subsistence farms by raising chickens and some livestock which produced food and extra income. Some Finns did manage to own larger commercial farms, taking advantage of lucrative markets in the cities. Dairy farms were most popular, but many also raised pigs and chickens. These farms could also be found around Sudbury and near Thunder Bay.

As elsewhere in Canada, the immigrants to northern Ontario quickly established temperance societies, congregations, and socialist halls. The first Finnish temperance society in Ontario appears to have been formed in Sault Ste. Marie in 1893 and a Lutheran congregation was established there in 1905. The small mining community of Copper Cliff could boast of its own temperance society in 1894 and it had a congregation by 1897. In 1903 the community organized a youth club and constructed a large building to facilitate its many activities. In 1911 half of the Ontario Finns lived in the Thunder Bay and Rainy River Districts, an area which continues to hold the largest Finnish-Canadian community. Although the first Finns were recorded in Thunder Bay in the 1870s, a congregation was not established until 1896 and a temperance society until 1901. By 1903, the community had a socialist organization and a community center. By 1910 the first building was already too small and the socialist Finns banded

together to build the "Big Finn Hall", a multistorey structure complete with a fine stage, library, bookstore, co-operative restaurant and a publishing company, which can still be found on Bay Street in the heart of the Finnish community of Thunder Bay. In 1907, the socialist Finns established a weekly newspaper called *Työkansa* (Working People) which was published in Thunder Bay until 1914, when it collapsed due to financial difficulties. When the First World War broke out, small, often unknown frontier centers, such as Timmins, South Porcupine, Cobalt, Kirkland Lake and Parry Sound, were already familiar destinations for Finnish immigrants; all had rooming houses, saunas, saloons and bootleggers, and most had established organizations, the most popular of which were the socialist clubs.

The only large urban area that attracted a sizable Finnish community during this first phase of Finnish settlement was Toronto, which was the home for about a thousand Finns by the First World War. The first Finn to arrive in Toronto in 1887 was a tailor called James Lindala who, in 1907, ran for the position of Mayor as a socialist candidate. Many artisans, especially tailors, followed Lindala to Toronto where their skills were in demand. In 1913, 40 percent of the Finnish males were tailors and fully 80 percent skilled workers. Two thirds of the women who worked outside of their home were maids. In 1902, the Finnish Society of Toronto was founded on the principle of free thought, but by 1905 the organization was clearly socialist, reflecting the political thinking of the artisans. That year, the organization decided to investigate the possibility of joining *en masse* the Socialist Party of Canada which they did in 1906. In 1911 the talented leaders and organizers of the Finnish community of Toronto established a country-wide network joining together the many isolated Finnish left wing organizations under the name of the Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada (FSOC), after 1923 simply called the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC). By the end of its founding year 22 locals had joined the FSOC from British Columbia, the Prairies and Ontario and at its height, during the early 1930s, the FOC had about 100 locals. Most owned their halls and some built sports facilities and summer camps. At first, the left-wing Finns affiliated with the Socialist Party of Canada, but they were ousted from the SPC in 1910 for their "revisionist" views. They then supported the newly organized Social Democratic Party of Canada (SDPC) until 1918, when the Canadian government declared the foreign language groups of the SDPC illegal in the midst of the "red scare".

After the war, the FSOC flirted briefly with the One Big Union and then gave its support to the Workers Party of Canada, later called the Communist Party of Canada. At this point, some left-wing Finns chose to support the Industrial Workers of the World, instead of the CP affiliated FOC. The IWW found its main strength among Finns in the Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay regions. Evidently, as was the case with the British Columbia coal miners who had dreamed of a utopian socialist community, many Finnish immigrants upheld socialist beliefs in Canada. Some had acquired them already in Finland, but many others joined the socialists in North America. The strong socialist press, coupled with many capable leaders and orators, "converted" immigrants to socialism in Canada. Furthermore, the insecure, dangerous and often seasonal working conditions and the lower class position relegated to the immigrants in

Canada, encouraged many of them to believe that through unified class action, immigrants could gain a better life. Of all those Finns who had formally joined some Finnish organization in Canada by the First World War, approximately three quarters had chosen the FSOC. This does not necessarily give an accurate picture of the ideological commitment, since "hall socialism" — participation only in the dances and social activities — could also bolster the membership numbers. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that many Finnish men and women remained or became socialists in Canada.

III — From Optimism (1920-1930) To Gloom (1931-1947)

Finnish immigration to Canada reached its pre-war peak in 1913 when 3,508 Finns chose Canada as their North American destination. During the war years this influx of people was reduced to a trickle, but as soon as the seas were safe for passenger ships, Finns began to arrive at Canadian ports in larger numbers than ever before. This was mainly due to the restrictive legislation in the United States, but also the many established Finnish communities in Canada were a drawing force for newly arriving immigrants. Over 37,000 Finns came to Canada between 1920 and 1930 and the Finnish population doubled from 21,494 in 1921 to 43,885 in 1931. Clearly not all Finns who came to Canada stayed. An indeterminate number went to the United States and an estimated 20 to 30 percent returned to Finland. The majority, perhaps 75 percent, of the returnees were men who left to meet their family obligations or who had failed to fulfil their economic expectations in Canada. Some lucky ones also returned with fistfuls of dollars and continued to perpetuate the dream of Canada as the land of opportunity. As many of the villages in Ostrobothnia had lost their young men to emigration, women began to arrive in larger numbers and because they made more permanent settlers, the previously uneven sex ratio quickly balanced out. By 1931, 44 percent of Finns in Canada were women. Finns in Canada continued to gravitate to Ontario; 62 percent were living there in 1931 and 16 percent in British Columbia, but the Prairie share dropped to 15 percent. Because of large hydro projects in Quebec and the availability of domestic work for single women in Montreal, 7 percent of the Finns were attracted to Quebec.

This second phase of Finnish immigration was characterized by the arrival of three distinct ideological approaches to community life. Among the first arrivals, those who came immediately after the Finnish Civil War, were many Reds extremely bitter with their treatment in Finland. Among them were some of the country's most capable left-wing leaders. The small, but significant, group of Red Guard leaders brought to Canada by Lieutenant Wetton from Murmansk, Russia, included the socialist Prime Minister, Oskari Tokoi, who had sought refuge in northern Russia and Hannes Sula, a linguist, journalist and an athletic champion who influenced the socialist press. Tokoi stayed in Canada for less than two years after which he edited the Finnish social democratic newspaper *Raivaaja* (Pioneer) in the United States for 35 years. This group of about 50 men were initially confined to a lumber camp in New Liskeard, Ontario, but after a year were allowed to disperse to the Finnish communities, where they had a significant impact in the left-wing organizations. They provided capable leaders and helped to revitalize the press. *Vapaus* (Freedom) began publication in Sudbury in 1917 and, for a few years during the later 1920s appeared as a daily

socialist paper with 4,000 to 5,000 subscribers. Socialist women eagerly ordered *Toveritar* (Woman Comrade) from the United States. In fact, when this paper was banned from Canada in 1930 because of its Communist line, its Canadian subscribers numbered over 3,000. In 1936, the Vapaus Publishing Company started a weekly magazine *Liekki* (Flame), designed partly to fill the void created by the loss of *Toveritar* and partly to allow a literary forum for the Finns. In 1974 *Vapaus* and *Liekki* joined together to form *Viikkosanomat* (Weekly News).

The 1920s and 1930s were the most active and productive decades for left-wing Finns, many of whom threw their energies into labour activities. They led and organized strikes, collected funds, sent petitions and marched in protest. Perhaps the Finns' most significant contribution to the Canadian labour movement was the organization of the northern Ontario bush workers into the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada. The first of the major strikes in the Ontario lumber industry occurred in September 1926 when bushmen in the Thunder Bay area called a general walk-out, demanding higher pay and better camp conditions. For the next decade, there was at least one large strike involving several hundred Ontario lumber workers nearly every year. In the 1926 strike the workers won significant improvements in pay and conditions, and the Lumber Workers Industrial Union of Canada, under left-wing leadership, emerged as the major union in the Ontario woods. The influence of Finns in this union was so strong that its minute books for the first decade were written in Finnish and the first two national secretaries of the union were Finns. Many Finns were also active in organizing the west coast fishermen as well as participating in attempts to organize the hard-rock miners of northern Ontario.

Coupled with the increased political activity was a boom in cultural and social events. Many small communities would perform a new three or four act play every second week. Weekly dances, frequent sports competitions, reading circles, excursions and music evenings drew hundreds of participants keen to spend their free time with fellow countrymen. Co-operative ventures, such as dairies, grocery stores, boarding houses and restaurants, seemed one way to fight the capitalist system, and gained in popularity. These were also supported by non-Finns who were thus introduced to the co-operative movement. Generally, the 1920s were hopeful years for the left-wing Finns, many of whom optimistically believed in the imminent arrival of a more equitable system through revolution or parliamentary reform.

These hopes were dashed with the arrival of the Depression. The forest workers were among the first to be thrown off their jobs. Because the majority of Finns were comparatively recent arrivals, they had not yet been able to establish themselves financially. In fact, many were single men, who were unable to turn to their families for support. For the next decade many of them criss-crossed the country on freight trains in the vain search for work. Some became resigned to begging or living in "jungle gangs" — in groups of men who begged and stole their food and put it in a common pot. Many others, who had enough money, or who could borrow the money, returned to Finland. At least 2,000 Finnish-Canadians abandoned their attempts to change the Canadian system and moved to the Soviet-Karelia, hoping to build a new socialist community there. Most of these were members and supporters of the Finnish Organization

of Canada which never fully recovered from the loss of membership and leadership caused by this exodus. The "Karelia-fever" spread to most Finnish communities and often those who departed went in groups of thirty to fifty, taking along wives, children and their belongings. Because of the Depression the Canadian government closed the "gates" for new immigrants in 1930 and, therefore, there were no new arrivals to replace the many Finns who left Canada. Not only was immigration stopped, but the unemployed immigrants who threatened to become financial burdens to the government were frequently deported. This practice was an economical and convenient solution to get rid of "vagrants", especially if they were also suspected of radicalism. About one hundred Finns faced this fate annually during the depression. Not surprisingly, during the 1930s the Finnish population declined and in 1941 only 41,683 Finns resided in Canada. Ontario was still the main recipient of Finns, having increased its share to 64 percent. The percentage of Finns in the other provinces remained basically the same, except for Quebec, where the large construction projects that had attracted so many Finnish men were now over.

Women were the sustaining force in the Finnish communities throughout the depression. Because of their good reputation as domestic servants, they were able to find work, establish soup kitchens and distribute clothing as well as pay the running costs of halls and congregations. This was not done without personal sacrifices. In order to keep their jobs as live-in-maids, women had to stay single and certainly could not have children. Delayed marriages and births were the price the community paid for women's pay cheques.

The most visible and organizationally active Finns during the 1920s and 1930s were the socialists, but they were not the only Finns in Canada. The second ideologically committed group of Finns — the nationalist conservatives — gained in strength during the late 1920s. After the Civil War, Finland was ruled by the former "whites" who were intolerant of any left-wing movement. They harassed the social democrats and declared the Communist Party of Finland illegal in 1923. In 1932, Finland was in great danger of becoming a fascist state, but the attempted coup of Mäntsälä by the radical right-wing "Lapuans" failed. Except for those "reds" who had left Finland during or immediately after the Civil War, most new arrivals from Finland were now politically conservative or at least non-committed. Those who had participated in the Red Guard were no longer able to obtain the necessary police clearance for an exit visa, as they were officially classified as "traitors". When the conservative Finns arrived to Canada, they were appalled by the apparent radicalism of the Finnish communities. They found that many employers suspected all Finns of radicalism and were reluctant to hire them. The members of the Finnish Organization of Canada were equally suspicious of the new arrivals, refusing to allow any conservatives to take part in their social activities and attempting to harass them away from the lumber camps and mines. To counteract the red image of the Finns, to avoid further harrassment, and to improve employment opportunities, many conservative Finns fought back. They formed a number of right-wing organizations during the late 1920s and in 1931, these joined together under the name of Loyal Finns in Canada. Since 1915, *Canadian Uutiset* (Canada's News), a weekly newspaper published in Thunder Bay, had been the only organ for those Finns who did not support the left-wing. The extreme conservatives, however, felt that this paper was not conservative enough nor did it attack the communists

with the desired vigour. As a result, they set up yet another newspaper, *Isänmaan Äöni* (The Voice of the Fatherland) in the late 1930s, but only a few issues were ever published. In 1936, the organization had about 18 locals across Canada and about 500 members, half of whom were in Montreal.

Despite the smallness of the membership, the Loyal Finns did have a significant impact in the communities because they were supported by the Finnish consuls and the Lutheran ministers in Canada. Together with the Lutheran Church, with which they co-operated closely, the organization offered an alternative form of activism to the Finns in Canada. Revitalized by the arrival of many religious Finns in the 1920s, the few scattered Finnish Lutheran congregations reorganized and joined the United Lutheran Church in America, reaping some financial and organizational benefits. Prior to this, many congregations had acted independently or belonged to the Suomi-Synod, an organization of Finnish Lutherans in North America. By 1933, there were twelve Finnish Lutheran churches and 29 preaching stations across Canada. In addition, Finns had formed Presbyterian, United Church of Canada and Pentecostal congregations to look after their spiritual needs, and provide assistance to needy immigrants. The most significant example of the latter was the Finnish Immigrant Home in Montreal, which provided temporary shelter, attempted to find employment and served as a post office for over 5,000 Finns between 1928 and 1932, when it collapsed due to financial difficulties. Despite their profound ideological differences, both the Finnish Organization of Canada and the Loyal Finns in Canada helped the immigrants to improve their social and economic life.

The third element in the Finnish communities is more elusive and, hence, more difficult to describe. It is obvious that many Finns never formally joined any organization. The most optimistic estimates of membership strength in Finnish organizations and congregations would still leave at least 50 percent of the adult population without formal links. This does not mean that they did not occasionally participate, read a Finnish newspaper, or get involved in local matters, but generally they preferred to stay non-committed. Many Finns worked in isolated farms, finding it inconvenient to travel to far away halls or churches; others were fed up with the political bickering of their countrymen. Socially, however, the majority of Finns kept close ties, over 90 percent of Finnish immigrant men marrying Finnish women. In 1931, the more tolerant wing of the Finnish Organization of Canada split away from the organization, at first lending its support to the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, but quickly moving to the political center. This group started another newspaper, the *Vapaa Sana* (Free Word), which was at first published in Sudbury, but within a few years it moved to Toronto where it is still serving the "politically non-aligned" Finns. It is today the largest Finnish language newspaper in North America, attesting to the strength of the non-committed Finns.

IV — World War II and Post War Immigration

Suddenly, in 1939, the negative press, which the Finns had been receiving in Canada because of their left-wing radicalism, came to an abrupt end. After Russia attacked Finland, the sympathies of the Canadian people were immediately with the Finns whose struggles in the chilling winter of 1939-1940

against the Russian giant were reported at length in the Canadian press. After the temporary peace treaty of 1940, which left Finland truncated, a grand scheme was launched to bring Finns from areas captured by the Russians. Premier Hepburn of Ontario offered to settle 100,000 displaced Finns in the Northern Ontario clay belt, but the Finnish government declined the offer. The peace in Finland was short-lived and by 1941 Finland was again fighting Russia. In the meantime, Russia had become Canada's ally and the Finns were now enemies. The nationals of Finland became inadmissible to Canada, until 1947. As enemy aliens the Finns in Canada did not suffer as severely as the Japanese or the Germans; only a few of them were ever detained, although most had to register with the police and be finger-printed.

The war years helped to dissipate many of the divisions in the Finnish-Canadian communities. Finland-Aid organizations sent thousands of parcels containing clothing and food overseas. Everyone was affected by the news blackouts and censorship of mail, and the waiting for information from friends and relatives in Finland was agonizing. Immediately after the war, the Canada-Finland Aid Society Fund was established to send medicine and food to Finland. All Finnish organizations, regardless of their ideological views, participated in this effort. With the help of the Canadian public, thousands of dollars were also sent to Finland via the Red Cross.

When the doors to Canada were reopened for the Finns in 1947, a seventeen year backlog of prospective immigrants were waiting to leave. Many were also discouraged by the war, fearing a renewed attack by Russia. Some of the displaced Karelians, who had been resettled all over Finland, made one more move, this time as far away from Russia as possible. Between 1948 and 1960 17,384 Finns came to Canada. During the 1960s, as the Finnish economy improved, unemployment declined, the standard of living rose and political stability created a feeling of security, fewer Finns were inclined to leave their home for far away Canada. New patterns of emigration emerged, as Finns began to move to nearby Sweden which was experiencing an unprecedented economic boom. Since the introduction of the point system and the tightening of immigration quotas in 1962, 1967 and 1977 the number of Finnish immigrants arriving to Canada has declined to about 200 a year. In 1981, 64 percent of the 52,515 Finns in Canada lived in Ontario and 21 percent in British Columbia. In Ontario, the Finns are still largely settled in and around the resource towns of the north with the largest concentration in the Thunder Bay area. The cities of Toronto and Vancouver have, however, increased their share significantly. Before the depression, skilled workers made up only 3 percent of reported occupations of Finns arriving in Canada, while in 1952 they comprised the largest segment at 41 percent of the total. During the same period the number of female domestics declined from 39 percent to a mere 6 percent. In 1978, a year after the latest immigration act was passed, 74 percent of Finns fell into the highly skilled and professional categories.

The post war immigrants added new strength and vitality to the Finnish-Canadian communities. While these communities are still plagued with persistent political divisions, united efforts have become more common. Old age homes are now built to provide comfort to the early settlers: Vancouver, Sault Ste. Marie and Sudbury already have one and plans are ready for the Toronto

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE OF FINNISH ORIGIN IN CANADA

| | | Total No. (and %) | | | | | |
|------|------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--|
| | Atlantic* Provinces | Quebec | Ontario | Prairies | British Columbia | Northern Territories | |
| 1901 | 8 (.3) | 115 (4.6) | 1,225 (49) | 312 (12.5) | 780 (31.2) | 62 (2.8) | |
| 1911 | 67 (.4) | 216 (1.4) | 8,619 (55.6) | 3,676 (23.7) | 2,858 (18.4) | 61 (0.4) | |
| 1921 | 81 (.4) | 76 (.4) | 12,835 (59.7) | 5,369 (25) | 3,112 (14.5) | 21 (0.1) | |
| 1931 | 235 (.5) | 2,973 (6.8) | 27,137 (61.8) | 6,644 (15.1) | 6,858 (15.6) | 38 (0.1) | |
| 1941 | 206 (.5) | 2,043 (4.9) | 26,827 (64.4) | 6,200 (14.9) | 6,332 (15.2) | 75 (0.2) | |
| 1951 | 346 (.8) | 1,600 (3.7) | 29,327 (67) | 5,584 (12.8) | 6,790 (15.5) | 98 (0.2) | |
| 1961 | 471 (.8) | 2,277 (3.8) | 39,906 (67.1) | 6,623 (11.1) | 10,037 (16.9) | 122 (0.2) | |
| 1971 | 425 (.7) | 1,865 (3.1) | 38,515 (65) | 6,765 (11.4) | 11,510 (19.4) | 130 (0.2) | |
| 1981 | 435 (.8) | 1,140 (2.2) | 33,400 (64) | 6,470 (12.4) | 10,810 (20.7) | 70 (0.1) | |

*Newfoundland statistics are not included until 1951

home. While community halls are still important centers for social activity, much of the entertainment is now directly imported from Finland. Visiting choirs, speakers, sports teams as well as student exchanges and direct flights, have narrowed the cultural gap between the Finnish communities in Canada and Finland. Instead of English classes, the communities now try to teach Finnish to the quickly assimilating second and third generation. In Thunder Bay, courses in Finnish are offered in the high schools and at Lakehead University. Service organizations such as the Finnish Lions and Lioness clubs help the needy and friendship organizations such as the Canadian Friends of Finland promote cooperation and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Increasingly, annual cultural festivals have participants from all parts of the Finnish community. Because of the decline in Finnish immigration, Finns have realized that only in unity will they have sufficient strength to make their concerns heard in multicultural Canada.

V — A Comparative Perspective

Although the Finns have never comprised more than half of one percent of the Canadian population, they increased their visibility in this country by settling in clusters, concentrating in a few occupations and actively participating in Canadian politics. Unlike most other immigrants, the Finns were able to tolerate the rugged frontier conditions and pragmatically chose them, even when the Canadian government was strongly encouraging prairie settlement. Throughout the century of Finnish settlement in Canada, British Columbia and Northern Ontario have received the lion's share. In 1929, when 57 percent of all immigrants to Canada were heading to the Prairies, only four percent of the Finns declared it as their destination. While the cold climate and often unfriendly terrain were not a deterrent to the northern Finns, they did react strongly against poor and often unjust working conditions. Finns were set apart from their fellow immigrants because they organized a numerically strong and visible movement for radical change in Canada.

Chain migration was not as important for the Finnish immigrants as it was for many Southern and Eastern Europeans. Most Finns immigrated individually rather than as members of a large family or community. Information linkage and prepaid tickets were important in directing new arrivals to previously established communities, but they were not as strong as family ties. Finnish women often came alone, looking for domestic work in Canada rather than following family obligations. While the Finnish communities continued to be male dominated until the Second World War, the sex ratio was not as intolerable as it was in the case of the Chinese or Greeks. By the depression, well over 40 percent of the Finns living in Canada were women and the Finns had begun to establish a normal social and family life.

The major stumbling block to the first generation's easy accommodation was the Finnish language which bore no resemblance to English. Unlike other people from the Nordic countries, the Finns were among the slowest European immigrants to learn to speak English. Because the Finns were almost universally literate and eager to read, the language handicap made the Finnish language press vital as an information source. The problem was not, however, carried to the second generation who benefitted from their parents' insistence on building

schools and libraries even in the remotest of lumber camps or rural towns. Educationally and occupationally the second generation Finns have fared well.

Today the Finnish population in Canada is largely an indistinguishable part of the society. True, many of them will glue a blue and white Finnish flag on their bumper as a distinguishing mark, rush every weekend to their cottage in the woods or by the lake, relax in the sauna, and demonstrate their legendary "sisu" (tenacity) by jumping for a refreshing dip in an ice hole. During a mid-summer festival, they can be found in their colourful national costumes, singing around a bonfire, and in the bitter winter they can still enjoy a 30 kilometer cross-country ski hike. Yet educationally, occupationally and residentially they are no different from average Canadians. Most are satisfied and well adjusted in Canada, and if homesickness becomes overwhelming, a cheap charter flight is usually an adequate cure. While the first generation Finns will continue to hold a special place in their hearts for Finland, they are also the first to come to the defence of Canada. Recently the editor of the newest Finnish Canadian magazine, *Kanadan Suomalainen* (Finnish-Canadian) stated after the Olympics: "It is wonderful for the Finnish-Canadians to have two such good countries to cheer for!"

Suggestions For Further Reading

A handy short overview of the history of Finland is Matti Klinge's *A Brief History of Finland* (Finland, 1983). A more comprehensive account is Eino Jutikkala and Kauko Pirinen, *A History of Finland* (rev. ed., New York, 1974). For information on Finnish emigration in general one can turn to Reino Kero, *Migration from Finland to North America in the Years between the United States Civil War and the First World War* (Finland, Migration Institute, 1974) and for return migration to Keijo Virtanen, *Settlement and Return: Finnish Emigrants (1860-1930) in the International Overseas Return Migration Movement* (Finland, Migration Institute, 1979).

The most comprehensive collection of scholarly articles on Finns in Canada is Michael G. Karni ed., *Finnish Diaspora I* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1981). The MHSO has also devoted Vol. 3 No. 2 (1983) of its bulletin *Polyphony* to "Finns in Ontario", with 13 articles edited by Varpu Lindstrom-Best. In addition, many other issues of *Polyphony* have articles dealing with Finns, such as Peter V. Krats, "Suomalaiset Nikkelialueella: Finns in the Sudbury Area, 1883-1939", Vol. 5, No. 1 (1983). The same society has also published in its Occasional Paper Series Varpu Lindstrom-Best's *The Finnish Immigrant Community of Toronto, 1887-1913* (Toronto, 1979).

Finnish-Canadian radicalism has been explored in several studies. Edward W. Laine, "Finnish-Canadian Radicalism and Canadian Politics: The First Forty Years, 1900-1940" and Varpu Lindstrom-Best, "The Socialist Party of Canada and the Finnish Connection, 1905-1911" are published in Jorgen Dahlie and Tissa Fernando, eds., *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada* (Toronto, 1981). On the same theme is Satu Repo's excellent article, "Rosvall and Voutilainen: Two Union Men Who Never Died", *Labour/Le Travailleur*, 8/9 (1981/1982) and Allen Seager's "Migration and Proletarianization: Aspects of the Finnish Immigrant Experience in Western Canadian Coal Mining, 1880-1940" in *Siirtolaisuus/Migration*, No. 2 (1983). A fascinating utopian socialist community in British Columbia has been extensively examined by J. Donald Wilson in "Matti Kurikka: Finnish-Canadian Intellectual", *BC Studies*, No. 20 (Winter 1973-1974) and "A Synoptic View of *Aika*, Canada's First Finnish Language Newspaper", *Amphora*, No. 29 (March 1980). Wilson has also edited "The Finnish Experience", *Lakehead University Review* (Spring 1976), an issue entirely devoted to the Finns in the Thunder Bay region.

Oiva W. Saarinen has published a useful geographical study on "Finns in Northeastern Ontario with Special Reference to the Sudbury Area", *Laurentian University Review*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1982) and Mark Rasmussen on "Finnish Settlement in Rural Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada" in *Siirtolaisuus/Migration*, No. 4 (1982). The first published dissertation on a Finnish-Canadian topic is Arja Pilli's *The Finnish Language Press in Canada, 1901-1939* (Finland: Migration Institute, 1982). An interesting anthropological study is Charles M. Sutyla's *The Finnish Sauna in Manitoba* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1977). In addition, there are two high quality local studies: Nancy Mattson Schelstraete, ed., *Life in the New Finland Woods* (Rocanville, Saskatchewan, 1982) and *A Chronicle of Finnish Settlement in Rural Thunder Bay* (Thunder Bay, 1976).



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