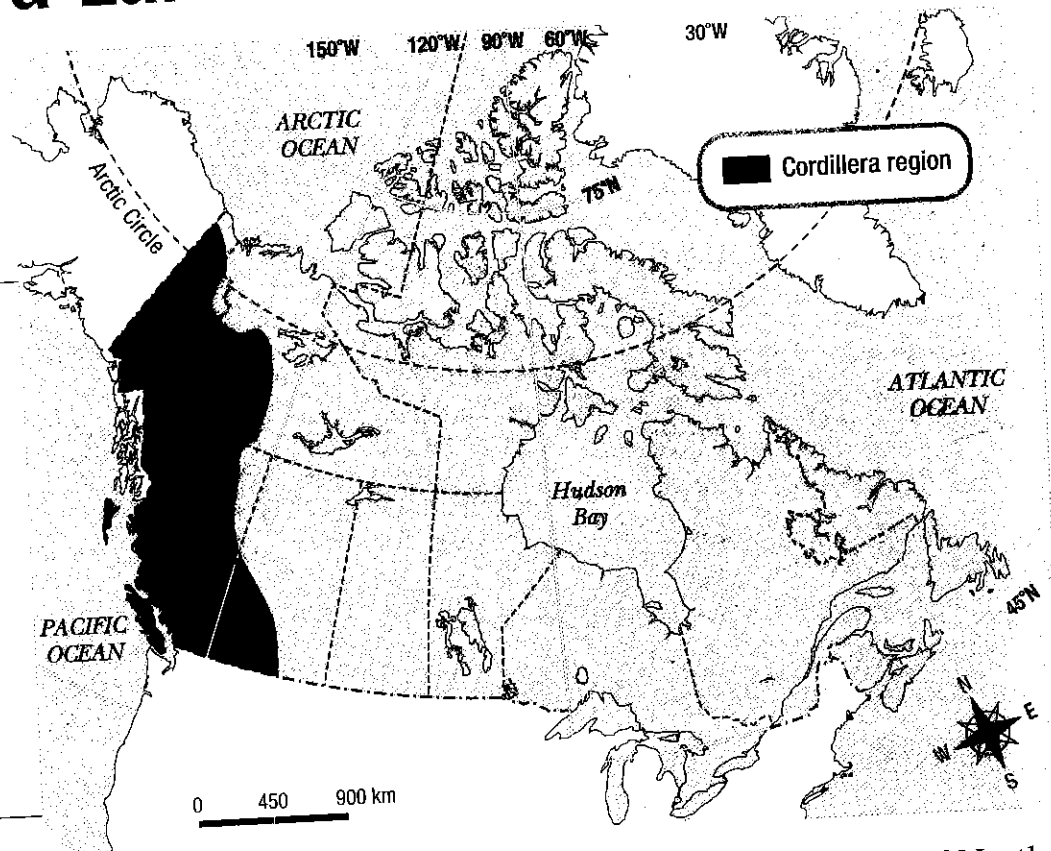


The Cordillera Region— a Land of Mountains

Predict

What is it like to live near or in the mountains?

Between which two lines of longitude is most of the Cordillera region located? What do you know about the importance of the ocean to the Appalachian region? Do you expect the ocean would have similar importance to the Cordillera? Why?



The Cordillera region is located along the western side of North America. "Cordillera" is a Spanish word meaning parallel ridges or mountain ranges.

Unlike the ancient low, rounded mountains of the Appalachian region, geographers describe the tall, jagged Cordilleran mountains as "young." Even though they may be young in geographical age, they are still millions of years old.

For many residents of this region, the majestic beauty of the snow-capped peaks, the smell of seaweed in the ocean, and the fresh scent of pine are what make them feel at home.

Chapter Focus

- How does the land shape life in the Cordillera region?
- How are bodies of water important?
- In what ways does the climate affect quality of life?
- How have natural resources shaped communities?
- What are some views about land use?

How Does the Land Shape Life in the Cordillera Region?

The Cordillera region may be best known for its high, jagged mountains, but it has many different landforms.



Flat lands, like this in Creston Valley, British Columbia, can be found in many parts of the Cordillera. What do you think this flat land might be used for?

Much of the interior of the Cordillera region is made up of large plateaus. These flat lands are far above sea level. The Interior Plateau runs through the southern and northern interior of British Columbia and central Yukon, and is bordered by mountains on either side.

The Okanagan Valley is part of the Interior Plateau. This region is the most heavily populated area in the Cordillera's interior. Many different fruits grow there because of the rich soil and suitable climate. (See the map at the back of this textbook for the location of the Okanagan Valley.)

There are several small plains in this region. Among the most important of these are the coastal plains, which lie between the mountains and the ocean in the lower mainland. This area is known for farming and is also one of the most populated areas in Canada.



Canada's highest mountain is Mount Logan in southwestern Yukon. At 5959 metres, it is still growing about 2 centimetres a year. Use the map at the back of this textbook to locate Mount Logan.



Much of the Cordillera region has few or no communities in it. However, the coastal plains in the southwestern part of this region is one of the most densely populated areas in Canada. Based on this photo, what do you think attracts so many people to settle there?

CONNECT

If you were to draw or make something that described your connection to the land where you live, what would it be?

"The Spirit of Haida Gwaii: The Jade Canoe" by Haida Artist Bill Reid, 1993. The Second and Final Bronzecasting. In the Collection of the Vancouver International Airport Authority. Photo by Bill McLennan.

Expressing Connections to the Land

People often express their connection to the land through art. Paintings, drawings, and other forms of art are used to tell stories about where and how they live. Look at the images below. What have the two artists on this page shared about their connection to the land?



Artist Bill Reid was one of Canada's best-known artists. He was of European and Haida (hi-dah) ancestry. Although he passed away in 1998, he and his works are still celebrated. He used wood and bronze to carve sculptures. Travellers at Vancouver International Airport can view one of his most famous works "The Spirit of Haida Gwaii." It features animals—the grizzly bear, raven, eagle, frog, and wolf. It also has figures from Haida myths—the Bear Mother and Dogfish Woman. Together, the animals and figures symbolize all living beings in nature. These beings are not always united, but their lives depend on each other, so they have to work together. How do you think this sculpture represents Bill Reid's relationship with nature?

Pause

1. How are the landforms of the Cordillera region different from or similar to those in your region?
2. The Nuu-chah-nulth (new-cha-nulth) are a First Nation people on Vancouver Island. They have a saying "hishuk ish tsawak" (his-shuk ish tsawak). It means that "everything is one and all is interconnected." How might this apply to Bill Reid's "The Spirit of Haida Gwaii"?

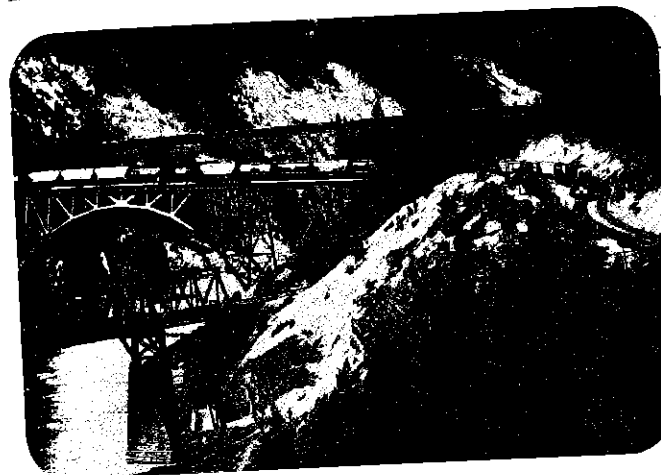


This painting is by Ted Harrison. He is a popular Yukon artist whose paintings show his love of the land and the people of his province. From this painting, what do you think are some of the features of Yukon's geography to which Harrison relates?

Illustration from "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," written by Helen Nolan and illustrated by Tracy Walker, is used with permission from Kids Can Press Ltd., Toronto. Illustration © 1988 Ted Harrison.

Challenges Posed By a Mountain Landform

The rugged landscape of the Cordillera region poses challenges not present in other regions of Canada. Building transportation routes through the high, steep mountains was one of the biggest challenges. Tunnels had to be blasted through the rock with dynamite and high trestle bridges had to be built across the deep, narrow valleys.



A train passes over a trestle bridge to cross the Fraser River Canyon. Imagine what it would have been like to build roads there without today's technology. What challenges would have faced the people who built these roads and railways?



Many communities in this region can only be reached by water or air even today. The residents of Bella Coola were told that it would be impossible to build a road to their community because of the rugged land. In 1951, community members decided to just go ahead and build their own road. It was completed two years later. Referred to as "the Hill" or "the Freedom Road," this road stretches 43 kilometres and rises 1600 metres to the plateau above.

Avalanches are another challenge of living in the Cordillera region. Avalanches are a threat to communities and travellers. The mountains in this region are so steep that these giant masses of snow can come crashing down mountain slopes, destroying everything in their path.



Today, avalanche-control workers try to reduce the danger of avalanches. When the snow has built up on the slopes, avalanche-control workers close the roads to traffic. Then they fire a cannon at the slopes. The explosion causes the snow to slide down. These avalanche workers are near Lake Louise, Alberta.

Pause

1. The people of Bella Coola are very proud of "the Hill." Why do you think that is so? How do you think building this road might have given the people a sense of community?
2. How do the challenges of building roads and structures in the Cordillera region compare to those in the Canadian Shield region?

How Are Bodies of Water Important?

Bodies of water play an important role in this region's history and ways of life.

SKILLS at Work

As we read, make notes to show how people use bodies of water.



Pacific Ocean

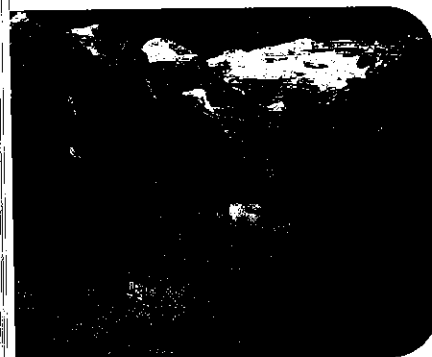
For thousands of years, the Pacific Ocean has provided many people with food and a means to travel. Today, the ocean provides jobs in the region's thriving fishing and tourism industries. The ocean is a transportation route to places around the world. Vancouver has become an important Canadian port, with ships from around the world docking there.



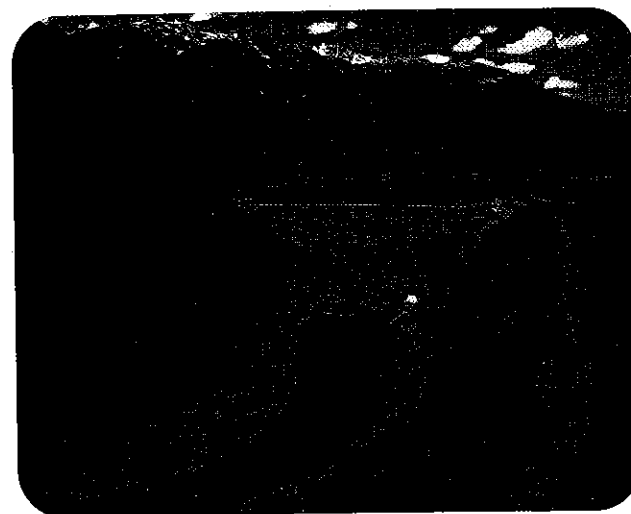
The Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands travelled the waters using canoes that they carved from western red cedars. Although these canoes are no longer used as a regular means of transportation, they are still an important part of today's Haida traditions. Haida canoe makers carve beautiful canoes. Every canoe is unique with its own design, and each is given a name by the carver. This photograph shows students on a field trip learning about Haida culture.

Lakes and Rivers

The lakes of the region draw tourists from all over the world because of their beauty. Some of the rivers are fast-flowing. They are used to produce electricity in the same way that hydroelectricity is produced in the Shield region.



The mountain lakes, such as Lake Louise in Alberta, are famous for their turquoise colour.



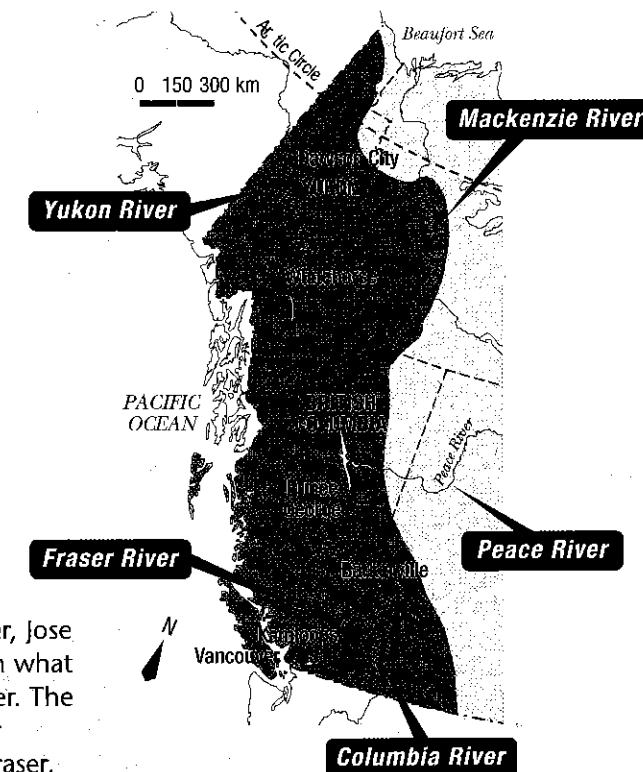
The Columbia River produces more hydroelectric power than any other river in North America. Canada's highest hydroelectric dam, the Mica Dam, is on this river.

In the past, the rivers were highways for both the First Nations peoples and early Europeans of this region.

First Nations Names of Some Rivers in the Cordillera Region

First Nation Name	Meaning	First Nation	European Name
Deh Cho	big river	Sahtu Dene	Mackenzie
Nagwichoonjik	a water flows through a big country	Gwich'in (gwich-inn)	
Unchaga (un-ja-ja)	large river	Dunne-za (de-nay-za)	Peace
Mi*qaqas *akinmituk (mitts-aka-kas a-kin-mee-took)	chickadee river	Ktunaxa (tun-ah-hah)	Columbia
Lheidli (slay-ed-lee)	where two rivers meet	Dakelh (ka-kelh)	Fraser
Fâtâtqwa7 (shat-qwa)	community areas and the water that flows by	Stl'atl'imc (stat-liem)	
Yukon (This river has retained its original name.)	great river	Gwich'in	Yukon

In the late 1890s, thousands of gold seekers travelled the Yukon River to settlements, such as Whitehorse and Dawson City, during the Klondike Gold Rush.



In 1791, a Spanish explorer, Jose Maria Narvaez, came upon what we now call the Fraser River. The river was later named after another explorer, Simon Fraser, who came to the area in 1808. Years later, in 1858, gold seekers travelled up the Fraser River in search of gold.

In 1807, explorer David Thompson came upon the Columbia River. He explored all of this river's systems and mapped the area for the North West Company.

In 1789, Alexander Mackenzie travelled north down the Mackenzie River to the Arctic coast. His travels led to rich new sources of furs for a fur trading company, the North West Company.

In 1793, Mackenzie navigated the Peace River. In 1861, gold was found along this river. As a result, the Cariboo Wagon Road was built, which opened up the interior of British Columbia. Communities, such as Barkerville, were settled along the Cariboo Wagon Road and the Peace River.

In What Ways Does the Climate Affect Quality of Life?

SKILLS at Work

What type of climate does the Cordillera region have? How do you think this climate affects people's lives? Look at the photographs on this page for some ways that it affects lives.



Every year, thousands of visitors go to the mountains of Alberta and British Columbia. This snowboarder is enjoying the slopes of Haihte Range, Vancouver Island.



Tourists and residents visit the many lakes in this region during the hot, dry summers. This photograph was taken at a beach in Lake Skaha, Penticton, British Columbia.

The climate along the coast of the Cordillera region is moderate. The winds coming off the Pacific Ocean result in milder temperatures because they are warmer than land in winter and cooler than land in summer. Also, the mountains help keep out the cold Arctic air from the north and east. Many people from across Canada and other parts of the world move to the coast of British Columbia because of its mild climate.

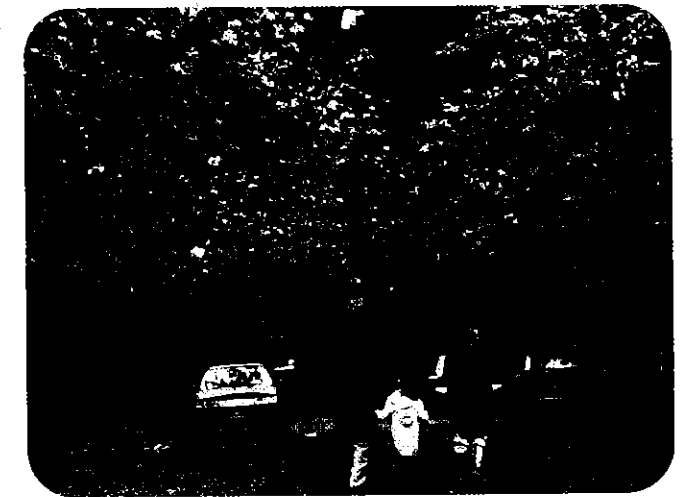
Farther inland in British Columbia, summers are warm and dry with some very hot days. Winters can be cold because Arctic air can blow into the region. The valleys and eastern slopes of the mountains are the driest areas. In the northern parts of the region, including Yukon and the Northwest Territories, winters are long and cold, and summers are short and cool.

The climate in the Cordillera region offers opportunities that are not available in other parts of Canada. Fruits grown here, such as plums and grapes, will not grow in most other places in Canada. In places such as Vancouver Island, it is often possible in winter to golf and ski on the same day.

This man is picking cherries in an orchard in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia. The Okanagan Valley has a long growing season. It is famous for its orchards, which grow a variety of fruit, such as juicy peaches, apples, pears, and plums. Sometimes the summers are so dry there that farmers have to irrigate their fields.

The southwest coast of the Cordillera region receives a large amount of precipitation, mainly in the winter. Most of this is rain. It does not snow in this area very often. When it does, the snow melts quickly. So, rather than snow boots, many people wear duck boots. In winter, most people usually carry an umbrella or wear a rain coat whenever they go out.

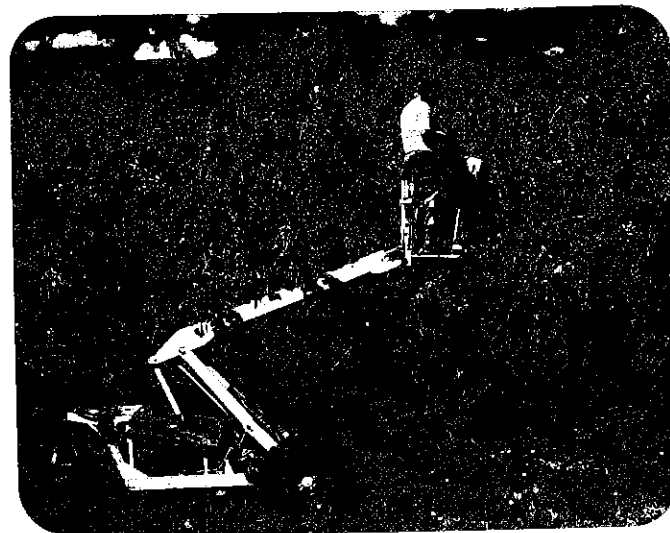
Snowstorms in the southwest coast are rare. Sometimes when an unexpected storm hits, communities come to a standstill because there are not enough snowplows to clear the roads. Some residents do not even own snow shovels.



A family enjoys a walk in the rain in Vancouver. How does this compare to your family walks where you live?

CONNECT

How do you take advantage of the seasons where you live? How do the seasons affect what activities you do?



People and Places

Farming: A New Industry in Yukon?

Farming is difficult in the northern areas of the Cordillera. Most food for people and farm animals, or **livestock**, has to be shipped in from other parts of Canada. Fresh fruits and vegetables are rare. The main challenge for farmers is the short growing season. Another challenge is that the soil is not very fertile—there are few nutrients in the soil to help plants grow.

While nothing can be done to lengthen the growing season, the government of Yukon is trying to find ways to make the soil conditions better. Tony Hill works with the Yukon government as an agrologist, a scientist who studies agriculture. He says, "We should not be able to grow grains here, but we can." At the Takhini Forestry Farm, just outside Whitehorse, agrologists have been running tests by using a technique called green manuring. For four years, soil is enriched by plowing clover and oats into the ground. As these plants rot in the soil, they create nutrients. In other words, they fertilize the soil. This method of fertilizing is far cheaper than shipping fertilizers from southern Canada.

Hill and others hope that one day crops, such as berries, vegetables, barley, and wheat, will become profitable in Yukon and other areas in the north.

Adapted from "A Yukon Breadbasket?" *Your Yukon*, Column 237, Environment Canada: Pacific and Yukon Region web site.

Pause

1. How does the climate in the southwest coast of the Cordillera region compare with that of the interior and the northern parts of the region?
2. Why do you think the Yukon government would be interested in growing new types of crops? If this could be done, how do you think it would affect people's lives in the northern part of the Cordillera region?

How Have Natural Resources Shaped Communities?

The Cordillera region has an abundance of natural resources. It is famous for its fishing and coastal forests. The mountains contain minerals, and the southern interior has rich soils and flat land. This region's natural beauty has also given it a thriving tourism industry.

An Ocean of Opportunities

Resources of the ocean have always been important to the people of this region. Coastal First Nations peoples, including the Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw (kwak-wak-ya-wak), fished and hunted whales and seals. Eulachon (yu-le-con) is also an important fish. The oil taken from this fish is nutritious and is eaten alone or as a sauce. It is also used to preserve foods, such as fruit. Eulachon oil was an important trade item and is still produced and sold today.

Voices

Mabel Sport, a Nuu-chah-nulth Elder who lives in Nanaimo, British Columbia, describes how her grandmother taught her to use resources from the land and sea:

The things we did with our grandmother were berry pick, collect driftwood, and gather medicines. The kinds of food that we ate were all different kinds of fish from the ocean and at that time salmon would be up to a hundred pounds. We also ate clams and different shell fish, roots, berries, as well as stalks from different kinds of bushes. The teaching I want to share is, the importance of getting back to eating our natural foods from the land and the sea.

Excerpt from the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council web site.

Today, the Cordillera region's fishing industry earns about half a billion dollars each year, making it the largest fishery in Canada. Salmon is one of its most important fish. The fisheries in this region have a reputation as being one of the best managed in the world.



Pause

1. The coastal peoples traded eulachon oil with people who lived away from the coast. What other types of items do you think the coastal peoples might have traded?
2. In which other region is fishing an important industry? What kinds of concerns and ways of life do you think that coastal communities in these two regions might share?

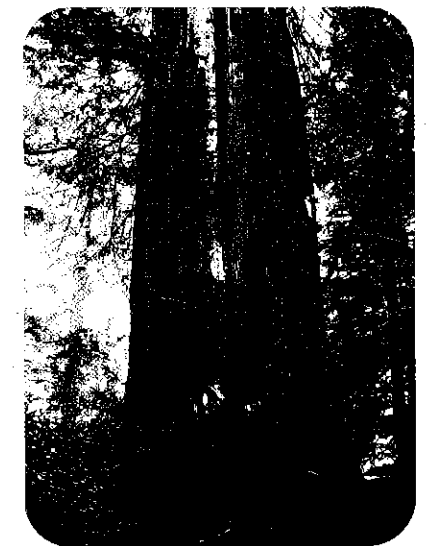
Lush Forests

There are more than 60 million hectares of forests in the Cordillera region that have trees suitable for forestry. Different types of trees grow throughout the region. The forests in the northern interior, southern interior, and coastal areas all have different types of trees. The region may be best known for its coastal rainforests. Rainforest trees, such as western hemlock, western red cedar, and Douglas fir, grow to be hundreds of years old. Some are over 60 metres high.

Logging in these old forests is a topic of great debate. Many people believe that these trees should not be cut down, while others believe they are an important resource that creates jobs. The forestry industry is carefully managed to try and balance both of these views. However, there are still disagreements about how much cutting should be allowed and how it should be done.

Kids Speak

“My people, the Haida, and the Nuu-chah-nulth believe that the cedar is sacred. Before taking anything from the tree, we would say a prayer of thanks to it. We would then carefully strip bark and planks from the tree without killing it. The wood is used to build many everyday items, such as boxes and containers. Haida and Nuu-chah-nulth women are world famous for their woven products. Traditionally, thin strips of cedar bark were even used to weave hats and clothes that kept out the rain.”



A giant western red cedar in the Cordillera region's rainforest dwarfs a person standing next to it.



Jason

Queen Charlotte Islands,
British Columbia

Logging has had a long history in this region. Many communities began because of logging. This is a logging camp near Chemainus, on Vancouver Island, in 1890. What challenges might the loggers have faced without modern machinery?

Forestry Communities

Today, forestry is the largest industry in British Columbia. There are many pulp and paper mills, sawmills, and other businesses that process lumber. More than 150 communities in the Cordillera region depend on forestry-related businesses. Some communities, such as Kamloops and Prince George, are quite large, both having more than 75 000 residents. Others, such as Tahsis on Vancouver Island, have less than a thousand people. However, all of them look for ways to attract businesses in other industries. Why do you think it is important to have other industries besides forestry?

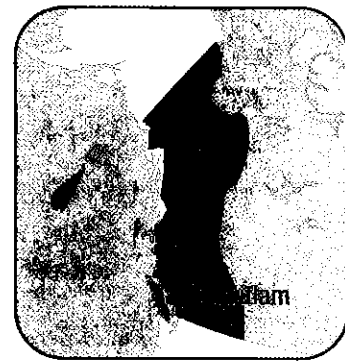
People and Places

Maillardville

Maillardville is the oldest neighbourhood in Coquitlam, British Columbia. It began in 1909 when the owners of a local lumber mill advertised in Québec for experienced lumber workers. One hundred and ten **Canadiens** came to the community, with more arriving the next year. This was the beginning of a vibrant Francophone community. Today, there are about 5000 Francophones in Coquitlam. About 13 per cent of the city's residents speak French as their first language.

The residents of Maillardville are proud of their heritage and identity. Many streets in Maillardville are named after the first Francophones who settled there, and the street signs are in French and English. Also, the city's flag and the emblem use the fleur-de-lys (fluhr-de-lee) to honour the pioneers, who came from Québec.

Fleur-de-lys is French for "flower of the lily," or iris flower. This flower has been a symbol of France's royal family. It appears on Québec's flag. (An image of the flag appears on page 273.)



CONNECT

How does your community celebrate its history? After whom are some of the streets or buildings in your community named? Why do you think we name streets and buildings after people from our history?



People of Maillardville celebrated their community's 90th birthday in 1999.

Riches from Rock

The history of many communities in this mountainous region is closely tied to mining and minerals.

In the mid- and late-1800s, gold was discovered in the region. The gold was close to the surface or in the creek beds. People rushed into the region hoping to find riches. Some did find wealth, but most did not.

With each gold rush, existing towns grew, while new towns were settled. Barkerville, British Columbia, and Dawson City, Yukon, were two towns that were created. Barkerville boomed during the gold rush of 1862, while Dawson City grew and prospered in the late 1890s. This photograph is of Barkerville, which became a ghost town after the gold rush, but is now a popular tourist attraction. Some gold mining is still done around Dawson City, but tourism is now its main industry.



People and Places

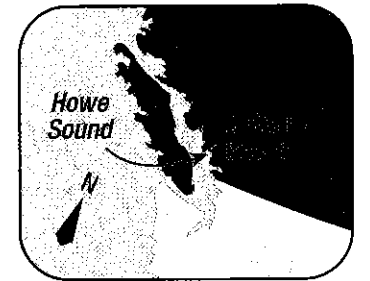
The Britannia Mining Town

In 1888, Dr. A.A. Forbes went hunting on Britannia Mountain near Howe Sound. He expected to find a deer. Instead, he found much more. When he shot a buck, its kicking hooves uncovered rock containing copper underneath the moss. It took time before a company began to mine the site. The company made its first shipment of copper from the Britannia mine in 1904. A community started with the mine.

The surroundings created challenges and tragedy. The community was very isolated, or far away from other communities, and travel in and out of the mining camps was difficult. However, this isolation meant that the community members formed a much closer bond with one another.

In 1915, there were heavy snowfalls in the area. An avalanche caused by the snowfalls destroyed the mining town, killing 60 people. A new town was built in a safer spot, but in 1921, 37 people were killed by a flood. Soon after, the community built another town, Britannia Beach, which still exists today.

The mine continued operating, but the markets finally closed it down in 1974 when the price of copper fell. The community was never large, but more than 60 000 people of diverse backgrounds worked and lived there over the years.



This is Britannia Beach in its early years. Despite its isolation, the community thrived. It had parties, sporting events, stage plays, and other events year round.



This miner is at a lead-zinc mine in Faro, Yukon. This mine has been closed. What do you think happened to the people who worked at the mine?

Mining Today

Mining is an important industry in British Columbia. This rocky region is rich in mineral resources. The rivers also provide access to hydroelectric power. With good transportation systems and modern ports, minerals can be shipped from this region around the world.

The most important minerals mined here are gold, copper, silver, lead, and zinc. These minerals can be found in many parts of this region, from the Okanagan area in the southern interior to the northern area around Kitimat and Telegraph Creek. There is also some coal mining, but it is not as important to this region as it once was.

Mining was also an important industry in Yukon at one time. However, today most mines have closed except for many small gold operations. These operations employ several hundred people.

The story below is a fictional account that tells about a miner who has just learned that the mine where he has worked for many years is closing. How has this closure affected his way of life and his identity?

Reflections

A Miner's Story

We got the news this morning. The mine is shutting down. The company will pay each of us several months of wages, but that will be it.

We had seen it coming for months. Prices of minerals around the world had fallen. The owners were cutting back on costs, saying that we all need to tighten our belts. With lower prices, they cannot make money, they said. Then there were the picketers outside the mine, protesting that mining was bad for the environment. Easy for those people to picket and tell us what to do. We need to make a living, just like everybody else.

Now that my worst fears have come true, what am I going to tell my family? You think you're prepared, but it's still very difficult. What am I going to do? Twenty years I've been working here. Whenever people asked, "Sam Berec, what do you do?" I'd say, "I'm a miner." That was how I saw myself—a miner. I can't imagine not being one. Where would I begin to look for another job? Would I need to move my family?

Pause

1. Compare the story of Sam Berec to the situation of the fishers in the Appalachian region. How does losing a job affect communities, ways of life, and identities?

Activities and Natural Beauty Bring Visitors

The Cordillera region's landscape and natural resources have given this region a successful tourism industry. What places do you think people would most want to explore in this region? Why do you think people would come to this region?

CONNECT
What attracts tourists to your region?



Sameera
Kamloops,
British Columbia

Tourism is important to Vancouver. When I visited there with my mom and dad, we walked around and looked at some of the sights. These are a few of the postcards I collected.



People in Vancouver are lucky. In the winter they can choose whether they want to walk down by the beach or go skiing in the mountains.



One of Vancouver's most popular places is Stanley Park. The park contains about 35 kilometres of trails. We hiked along trails that weave among towering Douglas fir, hemlock, and cedar.

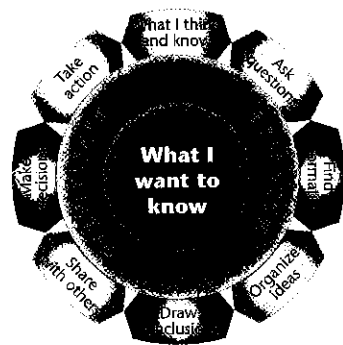


The Lion's Gate Bridge was built across the entrance to the Vancouver Harbour. This harbour is deep enough to hold some of the world's largest ships! My parents said the view of the harbour was "incredible."

What Are Some Views about Land Use?

In the Cordillera region, cities are growing quickly and taking over farmlands. Many people are worried about what this could do to the environment. However, it is often difficult to decide how land should be used. People need places to live and communities need businesses and services.

Inquire



Should Cities Continue to Expand?

This is what some people are saying about this issue.

“More and more people are coming to live in Vancouver and they need places to live. We have to build homes for them.”

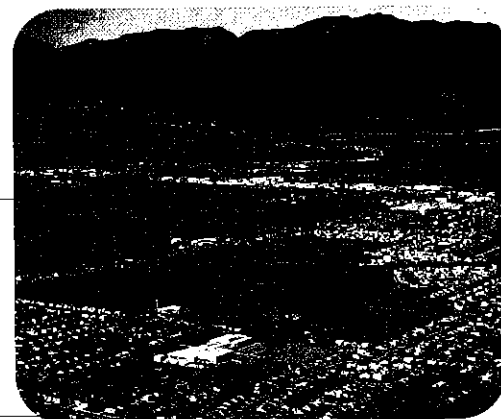
“My husband and I just moved our family to Vancouver. We bought a house in a new neighbourhood that has recently been built. I’m hoping a school will be constructed nearby soon.”

“Important and valuable natural resources are being destroyed as cities such as Vancouver grow. It is important to protect the natural areas that are still left in our city.”

“I bought a piece of farmland just outside Vancouver and built a mattress factory. There was no land available within the city. My factory employs more than 200 people and provides a product that people need.”

“The quality of life we have in rural communities is important to me and my family. As urban areas grow onto agricultural land, they take away land that is used to produce food.”

As people move into this region, more and more land is needed to build homes. This photograph shows an area in the lower Fraser Valley in southwestern British Columbia.



← Looking Back

The Cordillera region is famous for its mountains. What are some challenges of living in a mountainous region? How have people adapted to living in this region? Why do people from across Canada and all over the world come to live in and visit this region?

On your own, with a partner, or in a small group:

- Review the Predict question at the start of this chapter: *What is it like to live near or in the mountains?* What predictions did you make? What new things did you learn that you could add to your predictions?
- Choose one of the following to represent your understanding of life near or in the mountains:
 - * Create a photo essay.
 - * Write an article for your school newspaper.
 - * Design an advertisement for people who may be thinking about moving to this region.

Consider your purpose and audience. What would you tell about ways or quality of life? Choose a focus.

Building the Travel Canada Tour



It is time to gather new ideas for the *Travel Canada* tour. What would you include from this chapter on the Cordillera region? Take another look at all the photographs in this chapter. What tourism activities do you see? What do you think a tourist to this region would find most interesting or would want to see? Is there a particular community that you think tourists will be most interested in visiting? Why? Make notes of your ideas and save them for the *Travel Canada* tour.

→ Looking Forward

Next, we will learn about the Arctic region of Canada, travelling from the region where some parts have the warmest climate in Canada to the region with the coldest climate. What might that be like? How different would these two regions be from each other?