

The late 19th century also saw the beginning of large-scale immigration from central and eastern Europe. Schools were seen as an important way to make the children of these new immigrants into "good Canadians" by teaching them English and citizenship. Especially in Ontario and western Canada, schools were seen as important for teaching students a sense of Canadian nationalism.



This was also the period when native people were placed on reservations and native children were forced to attend school. These residential schools were intended to destroy native culture and to assimilate native children into white society.

These moves to use the schools to Canadianize children led to bitter political struggles over questions of language, religion, and control. The basic question was: whose version of Canada was to be taught to children? The most serious crisis was the Manitoba Schools Question, which began in 1890. The Manitoba government cut off tax support for French, Roman Catholic schools, even though these had been guaranteed by law. The result was a long and bitter political and legal crisis, involving the federal government, other provinces, and the churches. Similar crises took place in Nova Scotia and Ontario. To this day, one of the most persistent issues in Canadian education is that of minority rights.

Notes:

nationalism: a strong belief in loyalty to one's country and pride in the identity of a nation.

This period of history is often called a time of "nation-building," and is identified by a strong desire to develop a Canadian identity as a country while still keeping ties to Britain. How do you think this would influence what was taught in the schools, and what the educational system saw as the "ideal Canadian citizen?"

Source: The *Canadian Encyclopedia*, "Education, History of":

<<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/>>

Reprinted with permission of The Historica Foundation of Canada. All rights reserved.