

This pattern varied from region to region. People of French origin were the majority in Canada East. In Canada West and the Maritimes, people of British origin were predominant. In the Prairies, First Nations people and the Métis were the largest groups. There were also some British and French fur traders living there. In British Columbia, the largest groups were people of British and American origin who had been attracted by a series of **gold rushes**.



Miners wait their turn to register their claims to gold-mining sites. Think of three questions you would like to ask the men in this photo.

The Great Migration

One factor that contributed to the population diversity was a mass migration of people from Europe in the 1830s and 1840s. Poverty and food shortages drove thousands of people to **emigrate**, many coming to what is now Canada. This increased the ethnic diversity of British North America. People from the Netherlands and Germany settled here. Others came here from Ireland because of the Great Irish Famine, when disease destroyed the country's main crop, potatoes. Many of the Irish who came were Roman Catholic and were hostile to Britain, but conditions in their homeland were so poor they needed to move in order to survive. You will read more about the Irish immigrants in Chapter 2.

WORDS MATTER

gold rush a mass movement to an area where gold has been discovered

emigrate leave one's country to settle elsewhere

Environmental Milestones

Diversifying Crops

In the early 1840s, potatoes were the staple food in Ireland. A strain of potato known as the "lumper" was the most popular because it gave a high yield. In 1845, a fungus infected the lumper potato. For three years in a row, the potato crop failed. In the resulting famine, thousands of Irish people starved. Others emigrated to North America. It was an environmental disaster that might have been avoided by growing a wider variety of crops.