



# 1

## Regions of Canada

### Learning Objectives

- To define geography and regional geography
- To outline and justify a rationale for dividing Canada into six regions
- To outline the geography of political power
- To introduce the concept “sense of place”
- To introduce the four “faultlines” that characterize Canadian society
- To outline the theoretical framework, i.e., the core/periphery model, within which the regions are to be studied

## Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to the study of Canada’s regional geography. The main aspects of this chapter include:

1. Discussion of what regional geographers study, what constitutes a region, and what defines Canada’s geographic regions.
2. Explanation of the four faultlines or weaknesses that exist within the fabric of Canadian society. These faultlines reappear throughout the book.
3. Introduction to conceptual framework around which the book is structured: the core/periphery model, and the Canadian version of the core/periphery model.

This introductory chapter is particularly important for students in survey courses who have little or no background in geography.

### Regional Geography

At the root of **regional geography** is the need to break large areas of the earth’s surface into smaller units, or **regions**, that make sense both to geographers and to the people who live in the areas being studied. Bone’s rationale for taking a regional approach includes the convenience of working with smaller areas, and the regions around which Bone has chosen to structure this book reflect the diversity of Canada’s physical and human geographies.

### Canada’s Geographic Regions

Each of Canada’s six regions is defined by territorial, provincial, and/or international boundaries. Ontario, Québec, and British Columbia each constitute a region while Atlantic Canada, Western Canada, and the Territorial North are comprised of more than one province or territory. Bone justifies this regional scheme by reasoning that it is readily understood, it reflects the political landscape of Canada, it facilitates the use of statistical data, it fits with perceptions of the country, and it is based on the country’s physical geography.

## Geography of Political Power

Population increase across Canada has not been distributed evenly and this fact leads to different levels of political power in each region. Ontario and Québec's percentage of Canada's population has declined while the western half of the country has increased. Such changes challenge the political balance of power.

## Sense of Place

Sense of place is discussed as a deep emotional attachment, on the part of residents, to region. This attachment may be based in the features of the natural environment or in the collective experiences of the residents or both. It can lead to a strong sense of regional pride and perhaps self-interest.

## Faultlines within Canada

Tensions, or **faultlines**, exist within the fabric of Canadian society and carry the potential, to a lesser or greater extent, to divide Canada. According to Bone, four faultlines are of particular relevance: centralist and decentralist views of Canada; English-speaking and French-speaking Canada; Indigenous minority and non-Indigenous majority; and old and new Canadians. Divisive as these faultlines have threatened to be, Canada has survived. This has been achieved largely through compromise.

## The Core/Periphery Theory

The **core/periphery model** is introduced to help us understand the regional economic relationship within Canada. The model serves as a broad interpretation of the spatial nature of Canada's economy, while the emergence of the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" (Chapter 5), marked by the increased use of robotics and green energy, indicates Canada's place in the future global economy. The model does not address social problems although to some degree, this issue is dealt with by the four faultlines. Also, the model does not address the dynamic nature of Canada's regions and the nature of the four types of economic regions in this theory makes the application to Canada challenging.

## Challenge Questions

1. From a geographer's perspective, in what ways is Canada "a country of regions"?
2. How well does Friedmann's version of the core/periphery model correspond to Canada's six regions as defined by Bone?
3. Is the term "region," as it is used in this text, static or dynamic? Explain your answer.
4. Is the regional balance of power in Canada changing and, if so, how and why?
5. What is "sense of place" and how is it relevant to Canada's faultlines?
6. Would you consider any of the four faultlines dormant in Canada at this time?
7. Can you envisage another faultline? What would it be?
8. What are the limitations of the core/periphery model in its application to the spatial nature of Canada's economy and the dynamic nature of Canada's regions?

## Key Terms

**Core/periphery model** A theoretical concept based on the dual spatial structure of the capitalist world and the mutually beneficial relationship between its two parts, which are known as the core and the periphery. While both parts are dependent on each other, the core (industrial heartland) dominates the economic relationship with its periphery (resource hinterland) and thereby benefits the most from this relationship. The core/periphery model can be applied at several geographical levels, including international, national, and regional. (pp. 6, 16)

**Core** An abstract area or real place where economic power, population, and wealth are concentrated; sometimes described as an industrial core, heartland, or metropolitan centre. (p. 6)

**Faultlines** A term that describes the application of a geological phenomenon to the economic, social, and political cracks that divide regions and people. (pp. 7, 9)

**Globalization** An economic, political, and/or social process that leads to a single world market and has wide-ranging impacts on environment, cultures, political systems, and economic development. (p. 8)

**Hinterland** A geographic area based on resource development that supplies the heartland with many of its primary products; also known as the periphery. (p. 6)

**Indigenous ancestry** According to Statistics Canada, those who report an Aboriginal identity as well as those who report being Aboriginal to the ethnic origin question, which focuses on the ethnic or cultural origins of a person's ancestors. (p. 13)

**Indigenous identity** According to Statistics Canada, those persons identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, that is, North American Indian, Métis, or Inuit, and/or those who report being a treaty Indian or a registered Indian, as defined by the Indian Act, and/or those who report they are members of an Indian band or First Nation. (p. 13)

**Indigenous peoples** All Canadians whose ancestors lived in Canada before the arrival of Europeans; includes status and non-status Indians, Métis, and Inuit. (p. 7)

**James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA)** A treaty agreement between the Québec provincial government and the James Bay Cree and the northern Inuit of Québec that offered cash compensation and a portion of their traditional lands. The 1971 announcement of the James Bay Project triggered a series of events that quickly led to a negotiated settlement and, in 1975, an agreement between the Cree and Inuit of northern Québec. In the original treaty, Aboriginal title was surrendered by the Inuit and Cree of northern Québec to the federal and Québec governments. In the modern treaty, Aboriginal title was surrendered by the Inuit and Cree of northern Québec to the federal and Québec governments in exchange for specific rights, including self-government and benefits (cash and financial support for the hunting economy). (p. 15)

**Nation** A territory that is politically independent; a group of people with similar cultural characteristics and a shared historical experience that makes them self-consciously aware of their uniqueness as a group. (p. 9)

**Oil prices** Either of two pricing systems for oil in North America. Tidewater cities use the Brent crude oil price while inland cities use the West Texas Intermediate (WTI) price. (p. 9)

**Periphery** The weakly developed area surrounding an industrial core, also known as a hinterland. (p. 16)

**Placelessness** The opposite of “sense of place”; sameness, uniformity, lack of distinguishing features of landscape. (p. 8)

**Region** An area of the earth’s surface defined by its distinctive human or natural characteristics. Boundaries between regions are often transition zones where the main characteristics of one region merge into those of a neighbouring region. Geographers use the concept of regions to study parts of the world. (p. 4)

**Regional consciousness** Identification with a place or region, including the strong feeling of belonging to that space and the willingness to advocate for regional interests. (p. 4)

**Regional geography** The study of the geography of regions and the interplay between physical and human geography, which results in an understanding of human society, its physical geographical underpinnings, and a sense of place. (p. 4)

**Regional identity** A person’s association with a region or place; his or her sense of belonging to that place. (p. 4)

**Regionalism** The division of countries or areas of the earth into different natural/political/cultural parts. (p. 18)

**Sense of place** The special and often intense feelings that people have for the region in which they live. These feelings are derived from a variety of experiences; some are due to natural factors such as climate, while others are due to cultural factors such as language. Whatever its origin, a sense of place is a powerful psychological bond between people and their region. (p. 4)

**Shariah law** Islamic religious law based on the Koran. (p. 16)