

The First Nations

People have lived in North America for at least 12,000 years. At times in the past, the levels of the oceans were as much as 300 feet lower than they are today. Then the narrow water passage between Asia and North America—the Bering Strait—became dry land. Small bands of people crossed this land bridge into North America and settled throughout North America and South America.

The Canadians of the **First Nations** are descendants of those first settlers from Asia. In the Arctic north, Inuit and other native people make up more than half the population. Large numbers of First Nations people, including Cree, Micmac, Abenaki, and Ojibwa, live in southern Canada near the United States border.

European Immigrants

The first major wave of European settlement began in the 1600s. Both Britain and France established colonies in what is now Canada. These two countries had a long history of conflict, and they continued their rivalry on the North American continent. Between 1754 and 1763, they fought the French and Indian War for control of North America.

Background
The name **Canada** comes from Kanata, a First Nations Huron-Iroquois word that means "village."



Totem Poles—Carving History The Haida people in Canada's Queen Charlotte Islands and the Kwakiutl in central British Columbia have been skilled totem carvers for centuries. Early craftspeople believed that red cedar was a gift from the Great Spirit. They used simple tools to carve beautiful, detailed totem poles from these trees.

Totem poles, such as these in Stanley Park, Vancouver, display brightly painted animal figures, or totems. These include eagles, whales, grizzly bears, wolves, ravens, frogs, and halibut. Totems are symbols that tell stories, celebrate important events, and preserve the history of native clans. Totem poles have also been used as grave markers and monuments.

THINKING CRITICALLY



1. Making Inferences

What do the totem poles tell you about the First Nations people's relationship with nature?

2. Drawing Conclusions

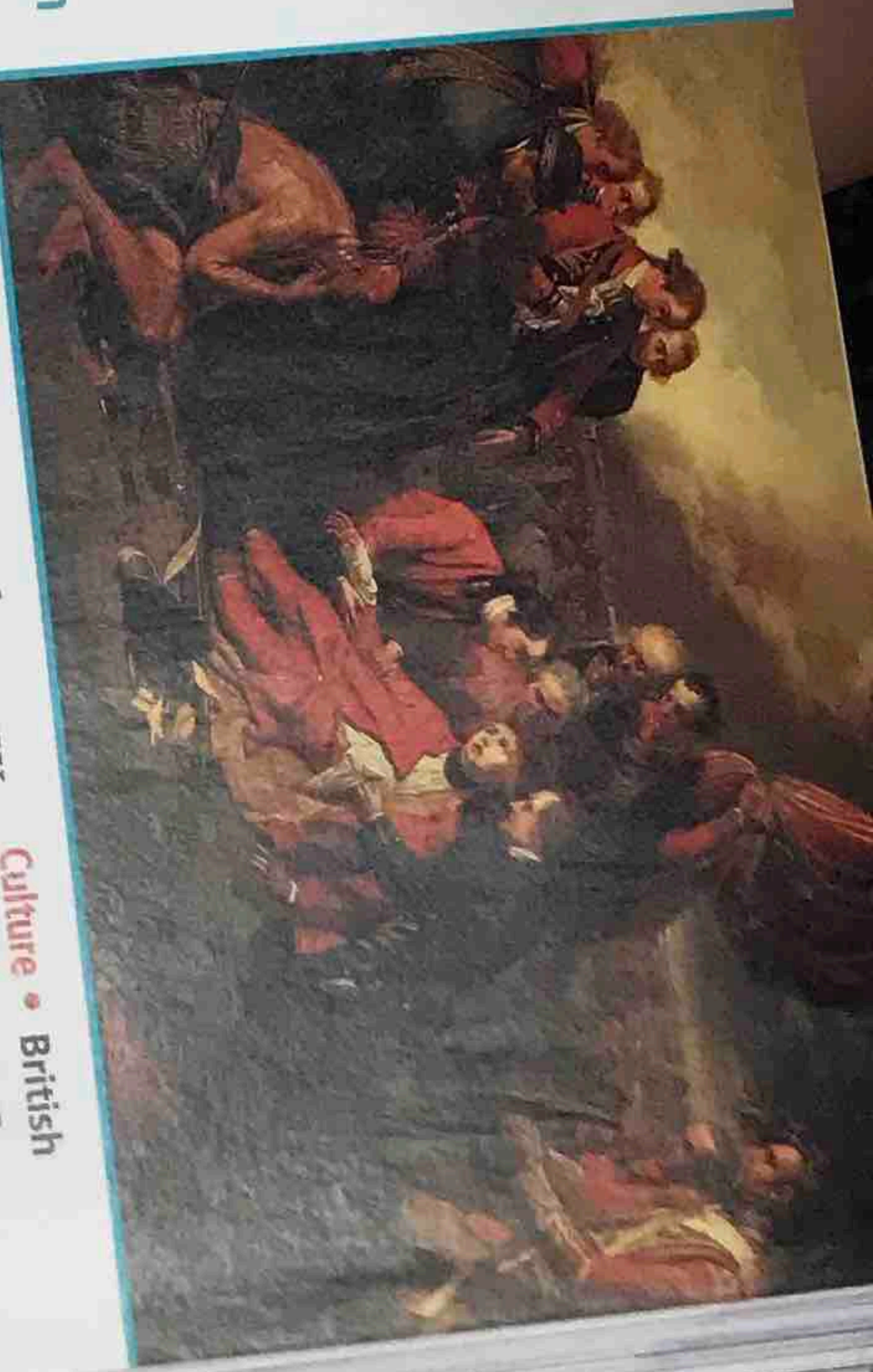
What roles do totem poles play in native culture?



For more on totem poles, go to



France lost the war and surrendered most of its Canadian territory to Great Britain. However, many French settlers remained, and disputes continued between them and the fast-growing population of British settlers.



Culture • British General James Wolfe's troops defeated the French and captured Quebec in 1759 during the French and Indian War. Benjamin West's painting *The Death of General Wolfe* shows Wolfe's death at the end of the battle. ▲

Canada and the United Kingdom
In 1791, the British government established itself in two areas in Canada. Upper Canada, now Ontario, had mostly British settlers. Lower Canada, now Quebec, remained largely French. Although hostilities continued between the two populations, in 1867 they were united as the Dominion of Canada, along with Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Canada became a self-governing nation, although the British monarch remained its head of state.

In 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company sold land to Canada that later became the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. In 1871, British Columbia joined the Dominion, and Canada now reached to the Pacific Ocean. In 1931, with the enactment of the Statute of Westminster, Canada gained equal status with the United Kingdom and joined the Commonwealth of Nations. In 1982, the last legal connection between Canada and the British Parliament ended, although Canada remains a member of the Commonwealth.

Later Immigrants Most of Canada's early immigrants were English, Scottish, Irish, and French. After World War I, other Europeans arrived from countries such as Italy, Poland, and Ukraine. Most Italian immigrants settled in Toronto and Montreal. Most Ukrainians moved to the prairies of central Canada. After World War II, Germans and Dutch entered the country, settling primarily in Ontario and British Columbia. In the 1960s, new immigration laws allowed people to migrate from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

Canadian Citizens and Citizenship

As Canadian citizens, those of English or French descent have retained their separate languages and identities. Other groups have also kept the traditions of their homelands after settling in Canada. To support these citizen groups, Canada has adopted an official policy of **multiculturalism**—an acceptance of many cultures instead of just one.

Reading Social Studies

A. Drawing Inferences How might Canada's policy of multiculturalism lead to increased immigration?