TEACHERS, TEXTS AND EARLY CANADIAN ENGLISH 1791-1841

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1. Introduction

Complaints about the negative influence of American teachers and texts were very common in Upper Canada. This 1838 editorial from the Toronto *Patriot and Farmer's Monitor* is a particularly strident example:

> No one acquainted with human nature, and with the influence which the instructor exercises over the mind of the pupil, can deny the position that, if an American educates a child, the child will grow up with a strong American bias, an American that is filthy in his habits, an American that is with a nasal twang in his pronunciation, an American that is a free thinker, or fanatic, in religion and an American that is an inveterate hater of the British government in his political opinions. (Love 1984: 170)

Similar concerns had been expressed decades earlier in an 1815 article in the Kingston *Gazette,* which worried that American textbooks

> . . . teach us to hate the government that we ought and are bound to support; to revile the country we are bound to love and respect; and to think that there is nothing great or good, generous or brave, anywhere to be found but in the United States. (Wilson 1978: 26)

Such anti-American sentiments were voiced in the early 1800's (Wilson 1978) and continued into the 1830's and 1840's. The concerns were moral, political and linguistic. In 1817 Rev. Alexander Macdonell claimed that

> . . . boarding schools for young ladies in both the Canadas are kept principally by American women, and every book of instruction put into the hands of their pupils by these school mistresses are of American manufacture, artfully tinctured with the principles of that Government and constitution. ... In some districts teachers objected that the whole atmosphere was American, that even the children's voices were affected. (de T. Glazebrook 1968: 88)

In 1836, Dr. Thomas Rolph made the following complaints:

> It is really melancholy to traverse the Province and go into many of the common Schools; you will find a herd of children instructed by some anti-British adventurer, instilling into the young and tender mind sentiments hostile to the parent state; false accounts of the late war in which Great Britain was engaged; . . . historical reading books describing the American population as the most free and enlightened under heaven; insisting on the superiority of their laws and institutions to those of all the world . . . and American spelling Books, Dictionaries and Grammars, teaching them an anti-British dialect and idiom although living in a Province and being subjects of the British Crown. (Parvin 1965: 13, Chambers 1993: 13)

A late nineteenth century evaluation of the effects of American teachers and texts can be found in William Canniff's writings:

> Some of the first school teachers were from the old country, and some from the American States. The latter would naturally desire to have used American school books, and, as they were the most conveniently procured, they were introduced, and continued to be in use for many years. At least, by some schools, Dr. Noah Webster's spelling book was among the first to be used; and the writer commenced his rudimentary education in that book. It followed, from the presence of American teachers and school books, that peculiarities of American spelling and pronunciation were taught to the children of Canada. (1872: 333-334)

J. K. Chambers, citing Canniff, argues that the American dialect of Loyalist settlers was reinforced by American teachers and texts. He claims that

> . . . the first schoolteachers in inland Canada were Loyalists or their descendants, and they used the pedagogical tools they were familiar with. Noah Webster's spelling book, for instance, was almost universally used in Ontario schools. (1998: 263)

This paper attempts to evaluate the extent of the influence of American spelling books and American teachers on early Canadian English. The paper is in three main parts. The first sets out the historical context, outlining the settlement history and the development of schooling in Upper Canada. The second describes the use of Webster's spelling books in Upper Canada schools and compares the spellings of fifteen words in the different spellers used. The third section evaluates the influence of American teachers with respect to their numbers and amount of student contact.

I will argue that, despite the constant complaints of contemporaries over the years 1791-1841, the presence of American teachers and texts in Upper Canada played a minor role in the development of early Canadian English.

2. Historical Context

2.1. Settlement history

Loyalists formed the founding population of Upper Canada, settling along the north shore of Lake Ontario after the American Revolution. By 1812 the population of Upper Canada was about 80,000 (Cowan 1968) of which one-fifth was British and four-fifths American (Orkin 1970). Many scholars claim that Canadian English has its roots in the American speech of these early settlers (Avis 1954, Bloomfield 1948, Chambers 1993).

After the war of 1812 there was much concern about the American presence in Upper Canada. In 1815, Drummond described Upper Canada as "a Country already too much inhabited by Aliens from the United States" (Craig 1963: 47). For over a decade controversy raged as to the status of American born 'aliens' until

a bill in 1927 provided for the naturalization of those who had resided in Upper Canada for seven years and had taken an oath of allegiance (Craig 1963: 122).

After 1812, official policy discouraged American immigration and encouraged settlers from Britain. Cowan (1968) estimates that almost one million British emigrants landed in British North American ports between 1815 and 1855; her data indicates that at least 2/3 of these emigrants headed to Upper Canada. By 1867, the proportion of the population in Upper Canada with British heritage had risen to 50% (Orkin 1970). Despite the British influx, it has been argued (Chambers 1993) that while the British dialect of the new immigrants carried prestige, the American patterns of speech remained dominant in Upper Canada,

2.2. Development of Schools

In evaluating the influence of texts and teachers on English in Upper Canada it is important to establish how much exposure children had to these influences. One must consider what proportion of the population attended school, for how many months each year and for how many years.

As Upper Canada grew, the availability and nature of schooling changed as well. The following description of schooling in the early 1800's is given by Henry Rutlan:

> At 7 years of age I was one of those who patronized Mrs. Cranahan, who opened a Sylvan Seminary for the young idea, from thence I went to Jonathan Clark's and then tried Thomas Morden, lastly William Faulkner . . .
> You may suppose, that these gradations to Parnassus, was carried into effect because a large amount of knowledge could be obtained. Not so, for Dilworth's Spelling Book, and the New Testament, were the only two Books, possessed by these academiecians.
> About 5 miles distant, was another teacher, whose name I do not recollect. After his days work was over in the woods, but principally in the Winter, he was ready to receive his pupils. This Evening School was for the express purpose of those in search of knowledge. My two elder Brothers availed themselves of this opportunity, and always went on snow shoes . . . There the same process was gone thro' - Dilworth's Spelling Book, and the New Testament.
> Those primeval days, I remember with great pleasure.
> At 14, my education was finished, this was in 1806. (Fink 1971: 66)

Rutlan lists four schools that he himself attended in seven years; his older brothers attended an evening school. The frequent changes in schools and attendance at evening schools for older children who worked, were typical of the time.

Before 1800 there were few schools in Upper Canada. The first English school opened in Kingston in 1785. In 1807 the District Public (Grammar) Schools Act provided that one grammar school be established in each of the eight districts of Upper Canada and a yearly salary provided for a teacher in each school. The Common School Act of 1816 provided a grant towards the teacher's salary

where there were at least twenty students. In 1827 there were 364 common schools with 9800 students; by 1839, about double that number.

Contradictory comments can be found about the availability of schooling in Upper Canada. In 1829 Lord Durham claimed that "even in the most thickly peopled districts there are but few schools, and those of a very inferior character; while the more remote settlements are almost entirely without any" (Gidney 1975: 4). On the other hand, a visiting Englishman, John Howison, observed in 1821 that "schools, at which the essential branches are taught, exist in the most secluded parts of the Province" (Gidney 1975: 4).

It appears that most Upper Canada students growing up before 1840 managed to achieve literacy, either through attendance at day schools, evening schools, Sunday schools or home study (Gidney 1975). Attendance statistics are not readily available for the first half of the nineteenth century; however, attendance figures from 1851 in Hamilton, show that less than half of the children aged 5-16 attended school and more boys than girls attended (Katz 1975). Houston and Prentice (1988) note that even in the 1840's pupils came and went during the school term.

In general, then, students in Upper Canada attended school irregularly, the school term often lasted only a few months of the year, schooling rarely extended beyond three or four years, and more boys than girls attended school.

3. Spellers

3.1. Use of Webster's Spellers

Rutlan's description of his early school days suggests the ubiquitous use of the Dilworth speller in the early 1800's. This speller is not, however, mentioned in later records. A wide variety of texts were used throughout the 1820's and 1830's: "In most cases pupils used the books they could get, which were often passed down from one member of the family to another" (Parvin 1965: 8).

Table 1: Books Used in the Morning Program of York Common School 1821

Class	Books Used
1st Class of Boys	Murray's English Reader; Murray's Grammar and Exercises; Gray and Walkinghame's Arithmetic
1st Class of Girls	Enfield's Speaker; Murray's Grammar and Exercises; Carpenter's Scholar Assistant; Walkinghame's Arithmetic
2nd Class of Boys	New Testament, Murray's Grammar and Spelling Book
2nd Class of Girls	Barrie's Reader, Murray's Grammar; Carpenter's Assistant; Scott's Lessons; Writing
3rd and 4th Classes	Testament and Murray's Spelling Book

Table 1 (Parvin 1965: 9) shows the books used in the morning program of York Common School in 1821. The afternoon program, not shown, is very similar to the morning and in all cases the books used for the afternoon program are the same as those used in the morning.

The York Common School used Murray's Spelling Book and Murray's English Reader. Sherwood Fox, writing in the *Queen's Quarterly* in 1932, notes the wide use of Murray's texts in both Canada and the United States before 1820:

> "I am strongly inclined to believe that the contemporaneous use of the Murray Readers in both countries [Canada and the United States] was by far the most potent factor in determining the similarities of social outlook. The fact that the original Readers were produced in England by an Englishman and set forth the accepted English opinions, tastes and practices of the time, is of very great significance. It means that the great-grandfathers of this generation of Canadian and United States citizens solidly laid the foundations of their intellectual and moral life on the same English standards. The differences between the two national groups were almost wholly differences in politics that had been magnified by the bitterness and hatred of armed strife. The real divergence in manner of thought and attitude toward life began about 1820 with the introduction of the distinctively United States Readers, the McGuffey Series." (Parvin 1965: 15)

Fox's comments gives some perspective to the charge of American influence in Upper Canada schooling, for he points out that similarities in educational practices between the two countries were due to strong British influence on both Canada and the United States. For example, Abraham Lincoln, born in 1809, told his biographer that his first speller as a child was Dilworth's, the same British speller used in early Upper Canada.

It is interesting to note that Lindley Murray was actually an American, born in Pennsylvania in 1745 and educated in Pennsylvania and New York. He retired to Britain where he then wrote his educational books, published in 1795 and after. His books were, evidently, considered to be English and must have shown no identifiable American characteristics.

Educators made efforts to promote the use of British, rather than American texts. In 1825 Rev. John Strachan, President of the General Board of Education of Upper Canada, ordered 1,100 copies of the 'Charity School Speller' written by "that staunch churchwoman of England, Mrs. Trimmer" (Parvin 1965: 8).

Table II: Books Used in Norfolk County Schools in 1828

Title of book	**Number of schools using the book**
Murray's Speller	6
Mavor's Speller	3
Webster's Speller	2
Charity School Speller	1
Universal Speller	1
Vyse's Speller	1

Table II (Parvin 1965: 10) shows the spelling books used n Norfolk County schools in 1828. Webster's is one of six spellers listed and is used in only 2 of the 14 schools. All of the other spellers listed are British. Murray's Speller is by far the most popular.

In 1829, 2000 copies of Mavor's spelling book were distributed free in Upper Canada in an effort to achieve some uniformity in the textbooks used (Parvin 1965: 10). Mavor's text was printed in Upper Canada at Niagara in 1820 and at Kingston in 1831.

The shift in text usage continued during the 1830's: "Cobb's and Webster's Spelling books afterward gave place to Mavor's" (Parvin 1965: 12). Lyman Cobb was an American who was very critical of Webster's orthographic innovations. In his 1831 critique he asked whether the American community would keep with traditional orthography or "adopt a new and contradictory system of innovations, neither warranted by usage nor analogy" (Cobb 1831: 3). It can be assumed that his speller followed traditional British spelling.

Table III (Parvin 1965: 13) shows the Spellers used in the Common Schools in seven districts in 1838. Only Mavor's and Cobb's spellers are listed.

Table III: Books used in Common Schools by District 1838

Name of district	Books used in the common schools
Johnstown	Mavor's Spelling
Bathurst	Mavor's Spelling
Prince Edward	Cobb's Spelling Book
Newcastle	Mavor's Spelling
Ottawa	Mavor's Spelling
Western	Mavor's Spelling
London	Mavor's and Cobb's Spelling Books

Despite the absence of Webster's speller from this list, there is evidence that it was used throughout the 1830's. Editions of Webster's speller were published in Upper Canada during these years. Canniff (1872) claims to have started his education with Webster's speller; since he was born in 1830, Webster's speller must have been in use in Upper Canada during the 1830's. References to Webster's speller in the introduction to, and recommendations for, Davidson's Canada Spelling Book (1845), make it clear that Webster's speller was still in use. Davidson writes in his Preface:

> During a residence of nearly twenty years in Canada, the compiler of the following pages often had occasion to notice the great diversity of elementary books in use, and how exceedingly inappropriate many of them were to the object for which they were professedly designed. At the present time this diversity is not diminished; and it cannot be denied, that, in different sections of the country, those of United States' origin are the most numberous.

> While Spelling Books from England are to us necessarily defective, not being suited to our scenery and other Localities, those of a foreign origin are liable to more serious objections.

The following recommendations for Davidson's speller were written in 1840 by Rev. A. N. Bethune and Rev. Thomas Creen respectively. Note that here, too, 'foreign' is synonymous with 'American'.

> I cannot but express a strong hope that it will entirely supersede the use, in any of our common Schools, of that very questionable work, Webster's Spelling Book.

> I therefore wish you success in the publication, and beg to add my humble recommendation of the Canada Spelling Book to public patronage, as well entitled to supersede the foreign Spelling Books now too generally used in our common Schools.

This overview of the use of spellers shows that, while the Webster speller was in continuous use in Upper Canada, it was by no means the only nor the most frequently used.

3.2. Comparison of Spellers

In order to evaluate the influence of American spellers, it is necessary to establish how they differed from contemporary British and Canadian texts. I chose 15 words with which to compare the spellings in four spellers available in Upper Canada in the nineteenth century.

Table IV: Comparison of Spellings in 19th Century Spellers

C20 British Spelling	**C20 American Spelling**	**Dilworth 1751 /1793**	**Webster 1800 /1830 /1833**	**Mavor 1820**	**Davidson 1845**
<u>arbour</u>	arbor	arbor*		arbour	arbour
<u>colour</u>	color	colour		colour	colour
<u>favour</u>	favor	favour	favor	favour	favour
favourite	<u>favorite</u>	favorite*			favourite
<u>neighbour</u>	neighbor	neighbour	neighbor	neighbour	neighbour
odour	<u>odor</u>		odor	odour	
mould	mold	mould	mould* (1800) mold (1830)		
<u>plough</u>	plow		plow	plough	plough
centre	<u>center</u>			centre	centre
<u>lustre</u>	<u>luster</u>	lustre	luster		lustre
<u>axe</u>	ax	ax*			axe
<u>defence</u>	<u>defense</u>	defense*	defense	defence	defence
fulfil	<u>fulfill</u>		fulfil*	fulfil	fulfil
<u>judgement</u>	judgment	judgment*			judgmen(t)*
woollen	<u>woolen</u>		woollen*		

The words chosen show variation between the British and American spellings and represent such spelling categories as -*our/or, -re/re, -ce/-se,* and -*l/-ll*. These spelling variations are discussed with respect to differences between 20th century British and American spellings in Pratt (1993). Pratt used data from Ireland's 1979 study of 3235 students from across Canada in his discussion of Canadian preferences for either the British or American spelling.

Pratt's categorizations of the British and American spellings of each word are shown in columns 1 and 2 of Table IV. The underlining indicates the Canadian preference, according to Ireland: both words are underlined if the spellings showed equal amounts of use; the Canadian preference was not indicated for *mould/mold*.

There are many gaps in Table IV because not all words are listed in each speller. For the Webster's spellers, I have indicated the edition containing a disputed spelling. The words in the four 19th century spellers are starred where the spelling given is not what one would predict given the British or American provenance of the speller.

The Mavor speller, a 19th century British speller, shows, as expected, all the same spellings as those in Column 1, 20th century British spelling. Similarly, Davidson's text, the mid-19th century Canadian speller, shows the same spellings as the British standards in Column 1, except that there is no *e* in 'judgment' (I attribute the missing final *t* to typographical error).

Dilworth' s speller, the earliest British text, shows a surprising number of spellings at variance with 19th and 20th century British spelling. Spellings of such words as *arbor* (he also lists *flavor), favorite, ax, defense, judgment* are usually associated with Webster's American spellings and suggest that the American forms are not innovations but continue earlier British variants. This proposal is supported by Cobb's 1831 critique of Webster's orthography. Cobb chastises Webster for his reliance on Dilworth. He claims that much of Webster's Spelling Book is copied from Dilworth and continues many of Dilworth's "erroneous" spellings (Cobb 1831: 32). Cobb gives over 150 examples of such spellings following Dilworth. He also points out that in following Dilworth, Webster often contradicts the spellings in his own dictionary and notes that there are dozens of inconsistencies from one edition of Webster's speller to the next and from one edition of Webster's dictionary to the next. Cobb gives the example of 'woollen' in an earlier edition, 'woolen' later. It can be seen in Table 1V that the spelling *woollen* is found in Webster's speller, as are *fulfil* and *mould* in an 1800 edition, all considered British spellings.

Therefore, Webster's spellers did not consistently propagate what is now considered the American spellings of words, and some of what we consider American spellings can be found in the British Dilworth speller used in the early 19th century in Upper Canada. In evaluating the influence that Webster's Speller had on Canadian English, one must consider, first, that its use in Upper Canadian schools was more limited than has been claimed, and, second, that its spellings were not as dramatically different from earlier and contemporary British spellings

as previously supposed. Therefore Webster's Speller cannot have had extensive influence on Canadian English in Upper Canada.

4. Teachers

Throughout the period considered here, concerns were expressed about the number and quality of American teachers. An 1813 commentator noted that by 1799 it was government policy "to exclude schoolmasters from the States lest they should instill Republicanism into the tender minds of the youth of the Province" (Wilson 1974: 219).

It is very difficult to ascertain the actual proportion of American teachers in the early years of Upper Canada. The earliest teachers were evidently not American: "We find it stated that the first school teachers were discharged soldiers, and generally Irish" (Canniff 1872: 330). Canniff lists the origin for eight of the early teachers; given that there were an estimated 22 private schools before 1800 (Wilson 1974: 219), this is a very incomplete list. Nonetheless, the variety may be representative: 3 Scots, 2 Americans, 2 Irish, and 1 Englishman by way of America. Houston and Prentice also describe the teachers of Upper Canada as being, variously, Irish, British, Scots and American.

Wilson (1978: 12) describes the situation of American teachers thus:

> There were many American teachers in Upper Canada before the War of 1812, particularly in the rural areas since the town-centred grammar schools provided for by the act of 1807 were usually staffed by Anglican clergymen from Great Britain. Most of the Americans were little more than adventurers who moved from place to place wherever they could gather a few students in return for room and board and, if they were lucky, a few shillings.

Concern about the presence of American teachers heightened after the War of 1812 and is reflected in the Common School Act of 1816 which stipulated that a teacher must be a British subject by birth or naturalization or have taken the oath of allegiance. In 1817, Father Alexander Macdonell, "undoubtedly exaggerating" according to Wilson, claimed that: "with the exception of 8 District Grammar Schools, which are principally taught by Clergymen of the Established Church, the education of youth of both sexes in Upper Canada is exclusively entrusted to American Teachers" (Wilson 1974: 221).

In 1820 Lieutenant-Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland tried to counteract the 'mischief' of American schoolmasters by establishing a system of National Schools headed by Church of England teachers. Maitland believed the system would "instruct all the youth of the province to the exclusion, not only of American masters, but of their republican apparatus of Grammars and Lesson books" (Wilson 1974: 221).

The Common School Act of 1824 included a clause requiring teachers to obtain certification from a more centralized body than local trustees; this clause was aimed at controlling the number of American teachers (Wilson 1974: 221).

The Rebellion of 1837 brought a new focus on the dangers of alien teachers. In 1838 Sir George Arthur denounced "the madness of allowing Americans to be the instructors of the Youth of the Country" (Love 1978: 109). Once again legislation attempted to reduce the number of American teachers: the Education Act of 1841 stipulated that only British subjects could be certified as teachers.

However, these decades-long complaints about the threats of American teachers do not necessarily indicate that American teachers were the rule or even the majority. Many teachers were born in Upper Canada or came from overseas. In 1838 Anna Jameson, wife of the vice-chancellor of Upper Canada, commented on the difficult lot of the schoolteacher:

> Who that could earn a subsistence in any other way would be a schoolmaster in the wilds of Upper Canada? Ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-paid, or not paid at all - boarded at the houses of the different farmers in turn - I found indeed some few men, poor creatures! Always either Scotch or Americans - and totally unfit for the office they had undertaken. (Wilson 1974: 222)

Bloomfield also refers to the large number of schoolteachers with Scottish backgrounds and claims:

> "Canadian English then is basically eighteenth century American English modified by other influences, notable among which are Southern Standard English and the English taught by Scots school teachers." (Bloomfield 1948: 6)

How then can we evaluate the influence of American teachers on early Canadian English? That there were many American teachers cannot be doubted; that their numbers were overstated for political reasons is also clear. However, given the circumstances in which they taught, what influence would they have had on the language of their charges? In general, Americans taught in the poorer, rural settings; positions at the Grammar schools were given to Church of England clerics. In these rural settings, those students who did attend, came for a few months of the year, for a limited number of years. It was not a position of esteem and so the teacher's dialect would not have been considered prestigious. If they spoke the same dialect as their students, it can be claimed that they reinforced that dialect, just as other community contacts would have. However, if the teacher's dialect was different from the students' it is unlikely to have had much long term effect. I therefore conclude, that, like the American spellers, the language of American teachers would have had little influence on Canadian English in the years of Upper Canada, 1791-1841.

5. Conclusions

I conclude that complaints about American teachers and texts had more to do with prevailing anti-Americanism and political anxieties than with actual extensive influence on the children's language. In spite of the frequent complaints it is clear

that there were many teachers other than Americans and many texts other than American texts.

My conclusions about the extent of influence of American teachers and texts on Canadian English are supported by the findings of historians in other disciplines. Smith writes: "much of the concern felt by Upper Canadians in the 1820s and 1830s over the presence of American teachers and American texts in their schools grew out of anxiety that it would weaken the imperial orientation of their pupils."

Love (1984: 171) discusses this phenomenon in some depth. He says:

> . . . anti-American rhetoric regarding educational matters accompanied a general anti-American ideology which both pervaded public discourse and influenced public decision-making not only during the Rebellion period but throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in Upper Canada.

Love goes on to explain that inhabitants of Upper Canada had good reasons for fearing the U.S., whether from experiences with the American Revolution, the War of 1812 or border skirmishes of 1838. He argues that these fears combined with a desire for educational reform and so led to an exaggeration of the American influence in education:

> . . . the extent of direct American influence on education was clearly exaggerated, Upper Canadian schools in the pre-reform period being neither as scarce, as badly taught, nor as dominated by alien culture as the reformers claimed. . anti-American ideology had far greater form than substance when applied to education concerns, a rhetoric which far out-paced the reality. (Love 1984: 177).

The extent of American influence on education in general in Upper Canadian schools was exaggerated in contemporary accounts; I argue too that we must be careful not to exaggerate the extent of influence that American teachers and texts had on written and spoken early Canadian English. Given the low prestige and limited contact, it is unlikely that American teachers had any influence on their students' oral language. Given the predominance of British spellers and the many similarities between British and American spellers of the time, it is similarly unlikely that American spellers had much influence on early written Canadian English.

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â€œTeachers, Texts, and Early Canadian English: Upper Canada 1791-1841â€ in Sophie Burelle. and Stanca Somesfalean, eds., Proceedings of the 2003 Annual Conference of the Canadian. Linguistic Association, 2004, 85-96.â€"Eds. Canadian English: A Linguistic Reader. 17.Â Since Newfoundland joined the Confederation, Canada has come to encompass a large and influential enclave where the speech descends from Irish ancestors. The second impression was made at the opposite pole, so to speak. Though the English immigrants could not impose their speech sounds on their offspring, they often did succeed in imposing norms of propriety and correctness on them, and on the community in general. Canadian English. Linguistic features Newfoundland Phonology & lexis. Historical outline John Cabot landed in Newfoundland in 1497 and so began the settlement of Canada by Europeans. Up to this date indigenous tribes peopled the country.Â The constitution of 1791 acknowledged this and created two halves in Canada: Upper-Canada (mainly British) and Lower-Canada (mainly French). The Americans tried once again unsuccessfully in 1812-14 to conquer Canada.Â Canadian English can be said to occupy an approximate position between American and British English. This can be explained historically, seeing as how Canada was under the influence of Britain for very much longer. Canada is officially bilingual in English and French, reflecting the countryâ€™s history as ground once contested by two of Europeâ€™s great powers. The word Canada is derived from the Huron-Iroquois kanata, meaning a village or settlement.Â Elsewhere in Canada, French influence is less apparent, confined largely to the dual use of French and English for place names, product labels, and road signs. The French and British influences are supplemented by the cultures of the countryâ€™s native Indian peoples (in Canada often collectively called the First Nations) and the Inuit peoples, the former being far greater in number and the latter enjoying semiautonomous status in Canadaâ€™s newest territory, Nunavut.