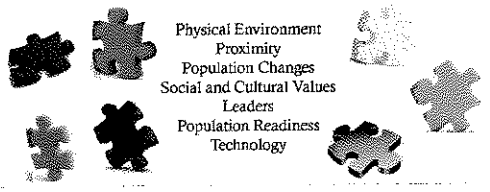
Learning Goal... I will know which factors influence changes in society and be able to evaluate which I think are more significant than others

Factors that Influence Change



Physical Environment
Proximity
Population Changes
Social and Cultural Values
Leaders
Population Readiness
Technology

Physical Environment

Climate, weather, vegetation, animal populations and humans all affect the physical environment

- Natural disasters can wipe out core resources that people in a society depend on
  - Examples... Floods like Hurricane Katrina, Tsunamis in Indonesia and Japan
  - Entire towns and cities were wiped out and areas completely destabilized – infrastructures and institutions affected, taking years to recover from
- Environmental issues cased by humans such as pollution and global warming can cause serious negative changes to the environment and populations
  - Examples... Skin cancer rates in Australia are the highest in the world, partly due to the damage to the ozone layer next slide

Where are these kids playing, what is the temperature & why are they dressed like this?

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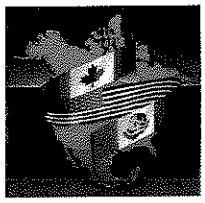
Proximity

How close another cultural group is to a society can cause it to change

- Exchanges between cultures are known as intercultural contact
  - In the past this occurred through wars, exploration and trade
  - Today this includes the exchange of ideas, trade, globalization and tourism



Population Changes

Changes in population due to immigration and emigration affect society

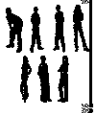
- New immigrants can create diverse cities and challenge the social system to expand to meet the unique needs of its new members
  - Ex. Where does everyone live?
- We need population growth through immigration, so birth rate
  - but there are limits on the number of people who can come in to avoid overwhelming existing social systems and infrastructures
- Losing population to emigration also affects a society,
  - They lose workers, brain power, taxes and so on

Social Environment

There are different types of societies, collectivist and individualistic; singular, pluralistic and inclusiveness

- Collectivist societies emphasize the group rather than the individual, survival and doing well is measured collectively – behaviour is guided by duties & responsibility to the group this can make change difficult because...
  - and because these societies are more likely to be quite traditional

- Individualistic societies emphasize the individual rather than the group, survival and doing well is measured personally- behaviour is guided by privileges & freedoms
  - theoretically more tolerant of differences and therefore more accepting of changes



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Leaders

Charismatic leadership

The emergence of a leader with charisma is an important component of social change

- a leader who places demands on the populace but also promises rewards for their support
  - one who maintains distance between herself & the people
    – she is on a pedestal in a sense
  - this leader may be good or bad, but for sociologists these critiques should be **value free** and focus on the **leadership skills** – example... Were they an effective leader? Not ...Were they a moral leader?

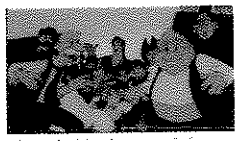
Leaders

The Role of Elites

- Many societies in fact have one or more "**modernizing elites**"
- Modernizing elites are groups of people who create significant social change and influence the direction in which it goes.
  - Example from Braveheart would be the Scottish noblemen who banded together to initially fight off the British with William Wallace

Population Readiness

- If the population isn't ready for the kind of social change proposed by the leader or the elites, then change will not necessarily occur
- Sometimes there are impediments that affect population readiness



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Impediments

- 2 impediments or things that get in the way include **tradition** & **expense**
- **Tradition** refers to people being unwilling to accept certain changes in society
  - Example ⇐
- The **cost** of social change can be prohibitive or too high for society to support
  - Example ⇐

go back

Technology

The development and use of technology in society has wide reaching implications on a culture's social institutions, customs and values ⇐

- Technology affects the way we interact with our environment
- Technology can drive progress in society