

Preface

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Many years ago, long before we could look things up on the Web, a friend from the US had a problem: he abruptly needed to move to Canada. When we both were in university, he described how hard it had been to make the move. So we thought about writing a guide-book about his journey.

Alas, we never did. Researching it turned out to be *painfully* hard.

However, we now have the web. There is a ton of information out there. Research is still hard, but now it's a matter of finding information in the noise. What we need today is a **research guide** to all the available books and web pages, so you can find the ones you need.

Purpose of the Book

This is a book is for:

- people for whom the United States *is* Gileadⁱ, and need to move now,
- people who expect to be at risk later, and want to plan ahead,
- people who would like to study or work remotely from here, with an option to make it permanent, and
- everyone else who wants to move to Canada.

There are roughly five ways to move to Canada, that often overlap:

- to just visit for a while,
- as a student,
- as a “Digital Nomad”,
- as a regular applicant, or
- as a true refugee.

This book is a resource guide for persons moving to Canada from the US, ranging from student visas to refugee applications. It was originally written for American citizens who wish to become Canadian permanent residents.

I'm an incurable optimist, so I've also included some stories about the hard parts, just to keep things on an even keel.

Last Updated Date

- 4 April 2026 – added resources for getting prescriptions
- 2 April 2026 – added Facebook group *Canadian Citizenship by Descent* to Chapter 6
- 31 March 2026 – Added self-defence resources to Appendix A
- 30 March 2026 – Chapter 9 now reflects the C-12 changes to refugees.

Organization of the Book

This book surveys the various way an American can get into Canada, work in Canada, become a permanent resident and finally a citizen. It touches on a related subject, refugees in the US who need to flee to Canada.

It starts with the easy approaches, and works its way up to literally fleeing Gilead as a refugee. You'll arguably want to use the easiest you qualify for. Immigration anywhere is slow, bureaucratic and disorganized. Canada is no exception.

Each chapter provides an overview, containing references to available books and pages for you to drill down into.

Chapter 1 – Getting started

There are many groups in Canada who will help out. There is help:

- for LGBTQ+ people,
- for people in the health industries specifically, and
- for everyone else.

Unlike in the US, the federal and provincial governments want to help, too. They have written guides for people who want to move here.

This chapter is a list of groups that will help. With links, of course, as this is a resource guide.

Chapter 2 – Just for a While

Absolutely come and see what it's like. You can visit 6 months at a time without a visa, as long as you're either returning to Gilead or going on visit to another country.

There are also some special cases, like "Digital Migrants", described in Chapter 4, who can work remotely for a foreign firm while visiting Canada.

Chapter 3 – As a Student

There are at least four different ways you can come as a student, and you can start a regular application from here. The normal way is as a normal student, allowing you to work 20 hours a week while studying, and then up to three years after graduation.

The rest are part of *International Experience Canada*, a recruitment program:

- working holiday participants receive an open work permit that allows them to work anywhere in Canada to support their travel and stay;
- international co-op (internship) participants receive an employer-specific work permit that allows students to gain experience in their field of study; and
- young professional participants receive an employer-specific work permit to gain professional work experience within their field of study or career path.

Chapter 4 – As a “Digital Migrant”

You can live here and work remotely for a company in your home country, for up to 12 months. While you’re here, you can start an application. After that period, you need to move to another country, usually as the same kind of “Digital Migrant”.

There originally was an entrepreneur program for people starting businesses, but it failed.

Chapter 5 – International Experience Canada’s Programs

Canada quietly recruits desirable immigrants with three programs, which are partially applicable to Americans:

- working holiday,
- international co-op, and
- young professionals.

Chapter 6, “Lost Canadians” and Family Reunification

Canada allows citizens and permanent residents to sponsor their spouse/partner and children, which we call “family reunion”.

A related path to residency is by gaining citizenship because you descended from a Canadian ancestor. The rules for this used to cause “lost” Canadians, but we fixed that last year.

Chapter 7, NAFTA and Work Permits

The North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA (now CUSMA) includes an agreement that Canadians can work in the US, and Americans in Canada.

Similarly, there are regular work permits, for Canadian jobs an employer can’t fill. Both allow an application for permanent residency.

Chapter 8 Express Entry

Express entry is a replacement for slow entry (:-))

It was introduced in 2015, as a streamlined path to permanent residence based on points for skills.

Express means “about six months” on a good day.

Chapter 9 – As a True Refugee

This is a “last chance” approach, if nothing else works. It depends on Canada recognizing that you are not safe anywhere in Gilead, even if that’s where you grew up. The *very* thing this book is most about turns out to be the hardest way to move to Canada.

The first step is, showing you are a refugee, and at risk, after which you will be able to work and apply for permanent residence.

Chapter 10 – After You Get Here

Once you’re in Canada, there are still lots of things to learn, ranging from how to find an apartment to how to transfer your kids to a Canadian school.

This is not Legal Advice

Consult the law firms found in section 1.11 for that.

Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank folks, but then I’d have to mention their names. *You know who you are:* thanks!

This is a “Live” Document

I accept emails, problem reports, and “pull requests” if something has changed, if there is a new opportunity, or I’ve just plain got something wrong.

The readable document is found at <https://tinyurl.com/Fleeing-Gilead> in PDF, HTML and ePub. Right now, PDF and ePub are the most readable.

The repository for it is at <https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/>

Anyone can create a problem report or make a suggestion at <https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues> or by sending me email at tokugawa.behr@proton.me

- i Atwood, Margaret, 1939-, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Anchor Books, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, 1998.
- ii Duck.ai, Sketch of a "Handmaiden", AI-generated image, 2026.