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Climate Classification

One of the best-known climate classification systems is that developed by W. Köppen. It divides the world's climates into five major categories from tropical (A) to polar (E), each subdivided into climatic types based on temperature differences and precipitation patterns.

Under the Köppen System, the Wood Buffalo Region—and, in fact, 53% of Canada—is classified **Dfc**, based on climate data from 1921 through 1950 (NRCAN 2003):

- **D** indicates Humid Microthermal Climates, that is, rain-snow climates with cold winters. D-type climates have mean temperatures of less than -3°C in the coldest month, and greater than 10°C in the warmest month.
- **f** indicates that precipitation occurs throughout the year.
- **c** indicates cool, short summers, with only one to three months with a mean temperature greater than 10°C .

One part of the Athabasca River headwaters – the Columbia Icefield – lies within a region classified EF (Polar Climates), where the mean temperature in *every* month is less than 0°C .



Springtime

Source: Michael Strickland

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