

## Essay Contest 2015/16, Zentrum für Kanadastudien

Katharina Kirchinger, BORG Schwaz, 6. Klasse, Spracherwerb 6 Jahre

### The astonishing diversity of modern Canada

„Diversity is Canada's strength.“

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau could not have been more right when making this statement on the 26th of November 2015 in London, England, for we have diversity to thank for nothing less than the very creation of Canada. The country has indeed been involved with everything diversity-related throughout all of its history, thus speaking of 147 years.

In order to be able to closely examine the overall structure, as well as the starting point of Canada's exemplary path towards a peaceful and complementary coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities, one has to travel through time, all the way back to those previously mentioned 147 years ago, to the founding, the beginning of Canada\*.

On the 1st of July, 1867, after seemingly endless periods of suppression fuelled rebellion and a final „defeat“ of those Britons that refused to give up on the full control they had over Canadians, the *Dominion of Canada*, consisting of the four provinces Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, was finally formed, the term *dominion* indicating self-governance of the British Empire colony.

But the very diverse country, in terms of the dominant standards at that time, did not handle conflicts as calmly as nowadays, with the political parties Reform Movement, Parti Rouge and Parti Bleu frequently finding themselves in often violently ending dispute over the possibility of a decentralised union.

But even this post-confederate obstacle was eventually surpassed, and Canada's path towards unity characterized by tolerance was finally free and even enough to be taken on.

\*(Annotation: This essay focuses solely on the actual country Canada, the start of my history timeline thus being set on the date of the 1st of July 1867. I, personally, am well aware of the fact that the regional history begins with aboriginal inhabitants, and that there was a period of 104 years during which Canada was under British rule.)

As there were already two nations, Britain and France, involved in the creation of Canada, its citizens' opinions on immigration and different cultures finding common ground were much kinder than they might have been elsewhere at the time. This was also shown in the open-armed welcoming of immigrants during a period called The Great Migration of Canada, during which over 800,000 immigrants arrived in the West, despite the industrial revolution motivated by low job numbers as a result of European population growth. From that point in Canadian history onwards, the Canadian immigration concept has never stopped evolving, and is nowadays one of the finest.

With that leading me back to the present, let us see what all those historical immigration- and colonisation-related events have brought forth. That question is, in the case of Canada, incredibly easy to answer. A record is what has been brought forth. With one out of five Canadians being foreign-born, Canada has the highest proportion of foreign-born inhabitants/citizens amongst G8 countries.

As a matter of fact, the most impressive result is the so widely expanded spectrum of different nationalities, for latest statistics show that modern Canada consists of over 200 ethnic origins, with 13 different ethnic groups surpassing the 1-million mark, and, as previously mentioned, in total 20,6% of the population being foreign born.

Additional to the wide ethnic variety, 19,8% of the total population's mother tongue is a language other than English and French, in that case Chinese being the most common.

The statistics also show an only slightly less diverse aspect of Canada in terms of religion, with two thirds of the population stating their affiliation with a Christian religion, one million people identifying as Muslim, Hindus representing 1,5%, 1,1% being affiliated with Buddhism and 1,0% of the population being Jewish. Interestingly, more than 7.8 million people, thus speaking of 23,9% of Canada's total population, have no religious affiliation.

What is also most impressive when it comes to Canada and its diversity is the way the different groups literally „melt“ together and form a strong and overall internally supportive union. A wonderful example for that is the recently elected Canadian Parliament, most diverse of its kind and a truly humanitarian hope reconstructor, with, on a feminist side note, 88 of the 338 MPs being women; according to news service Al Jazeera there is also a record number of Muslim candidates. The new parliament also includes a record 10 of indigenous members; natives sadly still only making up a slightly disappointing 3%. But, hopefully, future campaigns will raise native awareness of the importance and impact of political involvement, the positive effects on indigenous lifestyle and more productive cultural preservation without lack of peaceful and fair coexistence between modernity and tradition. Of course, the recent happenings in Syria, Afghanistan, etc., and the resulting international refugee crisis have, overshadowed by all the dread and despair they are accompanied with, once again brought the greatness, kindness and open-heartedness to surface Canada is so gladly able to call its own.

It is Canada's plan to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees, providing protection, empathy, and warmth for those in such desperate need. As the official website of the Canadian Government calls it: „Welcoming Communities: It's the Canadian way“.

Several touching news-broadcast videos have shown the rare beauty of smiling faces as the refugees arrived at Canadian airports, anxiously anticipated by countless kind-hearted volunteers, accompanied by piles of food and toys for the children. Hugs were captured, language barriers not even once diminishing the tear-tempting mutual expressions of gratitude and deepest condolences amongst complete strangers. It was those moments that, to me, uncovered the great truth behind the immigration-friendly concepts of Canada; the reason why all of the selflessness woven into this beautiful country's social system works so well.

And it seems that it is not just a tactic in order to keep up their image. It is the people. Canadians are, literally, foreign to prejudice. These people believe in the power of acceptance, tolerance, and kindness. And it thus is the Canadians themselves that make Canada such a well functioning country, full of astonishing diversity.

My sources:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration\\_to\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration_to_Canada)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Canada)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftFZw6UGQ4>

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/>

<http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/11/26/diversity-canadas-strength>

Received help: Advice on essay-writing given to me by my 9th grade English teacher.