GENERAL OVERVIEW

Like the cultures and customs of other countries, the culture and customs of Canada are distinctive and unique. They are distinctive and unique because Canada occupies a very specific piece of the world’s geography, and Canadians see, act, and position themselves in the world somewhat differently than people in other parts of the world.

Over the centuries, many factors - environmental, social, economic, technological, political, religious, artistic, educational, and the like - have shaped the country’s culture and customs. They have also received contributions from people who have come to Canada from many different parts of the world - Europe, the United States, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. These factors and contributions have combined to produce a culture and customs that differ from the cultures and customs of other countries in general, structural terms, as well as in specific, operational terms.

It is impossible to understand the culture and customs of Canada without coming to grips with the central circumstances of Canadian life. Foremost among these circumstances are: the colossal size and northern nature of the country; the high degree of creativity of Canadians; the diversity of the Canadian population; the bilingual and multicultural character of Canada; French-English relations and the situation with respect to Quebec; relationships between Canada and the United States; the quest to achieve a high standard of living and decent quality of life; and the distinct way of life Canadians have evolved over the centuries. There is not a single aspect of Canadian culture and customs - from food, clothing, housing, architecture and leisure time activities to artistic pursuits, religious practices, economic and educational endeavours, lifestyles and gender relations - that is unaffected by these circumstances.

How all these circumstances, factors and contributions combine to form Canadian culture and customs is what this publication is about. It is hoped that it will give the reader a good understanding of Canadian culture and customs as a whole, as well as insights into some of the most fascinating and revealing parts. It comes at a time when Canada is playing a more important role in the world, as well as coming into its own as a country in its own right.

Geography, Landscape, and Climate

As the second largest country in the world, Canada stretches across five and a half of the world’s twenty-four time zones. It occupies an area of some ten
million square kilometers, from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west and the Arctic Ocean in the north.

The best way to get an impression of the colossal size of the country is by car or rail. By Canadian National Railway - that amazing engineering feat which, together with the Canadian Pacific Railway, dominates an entire era in Canadian history - it takes six days and nights to travel from Saint John’s on the Atlantic to Victoria, the closest rail centre to the Pacific. And this is travelling at speeds averaging a hundred to a hundred and fifty kilometers an hour.

This central circumstance of Canadian life - the seemingly endless sense of space - has always been a source of inspiration and fear for Canadians. On the one hand, there is nothing quite like a huge landmass to titillate the imagination, despite the fact that even the boldest and most reckless acts of abandon seem like an infinitesimal drop in a bottomless bucket. On the other hand, Canadians are perpetually haunted by the possibility that Canada is so gigantic that it may prove impossible to keep intact.

A country of this size is bound to have a highly diverse geography, landscape and climate. Canada certainly does. It separates rather naturally into five well-defined and very distinct regions, each with its own unique character and characteristics and specific flora and fauna.

In the east, there is the Appalachian region, comprising the Atlantic Provinces - Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island - as well as the southeastern part of Quebec. As the northern extremity of New England in the United States - with which it shares certain similarities - this region is filled with low-rounded hills, fertile valleys, and a great deal of rugged coastline. There can be no mistaking its maritime quality. Its misty mornings, sea-salt air, historic fishing villages, secluded coves and pastel-coloured homes could be mistaken for a coastal region in Normandy, the south-west coast of England, the Mediterranean, or indeed any coastal area that thrusts its inhabitants outward onto the sea.

In the central part of the country, there is the St. Lawrence Lowlands and the area around the Great Lakes, including most of Quebec and Ontario. It can get exceedingly hot in this region. Often, it is the sultry kind of heat found in places like Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, Bangkok, Singapore, Shanghai and Saigon. Fortunately, the region is dotted with millions of fresh water lakes. Indeed, this is the most densely-studded lake region in the world, thereby giving a strong recreational cast to the entire region and causing virtually all its inhabitants to thirst after a cottage on or near a lake where they can cool off, relax and
recuperate, even if they must endure endless traffic lines and frequent gridlock to reach it.

This is a region of extremes. In summer, it is possible to swelter in the heat. In winter, it is possible to perish in the cold, with temperatures falling well below zero, which explains why Ottawa, the country's capital, is the coldest national capital after Moscow. Springs and falls have a quality - and an aroma - all their own. In the spring, the hills and valleys of southern Ontario and Quebec shimmer with thousands of shades of yellow and green. In the fall, the region is ablaze with colour - reds, golds, oranges and browns from the millions of maple, oak, birch, elm and sumac trees. The frost acts as an early warning signal. It casts the leaves magnificent colours. It warns that another Canadian winter is on its way.

In late summer, the Interior Plains region - the third distinct region of Canada comprising the southern and central parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and much of eastern Alberta - is awash with colour. But this time, it is the golden glow of wheat, oats, barley, and mustard seed. This is a land of illusion, a natural wonder in a gigantic country. The land is so flat and the roads so straight at times that one can drive for hours without seeming to get any closer to the towns and cities etched against the eternal sky.

The fourth distinct region - the Cordilleran region - encompasses most of western Alberta and British Columbia and stretches far into the Yukon. A significant part of this region is majestic mountain country, rivalling in grandeur and length, if not always in elevation, the Alpine wonders of Switzerland or the glacial splendors of the Himalayas or the Hindu Kush, perched high on the roof of the world.

Like the steppes of Russia, the traveller reaches Canada’s majestic mountain country slowly at first. Gradually, the Prairies give way to the Alberta foothills. Suddenly, there they are! Jumping out of the sky from seemingly nowhere, the Rocky Mountains appear silhouetted against the sky. Largely uninhabited, this range of towering peaks, high plateaus and alpine meadows cuts British Columbia off from the rest of Canada. Even though this enormous barrier has been overcome in physical terms due to air, car and rail travel, it continues to constitute a psychic barrier for most Canadians, cutting British Columbians off from their counterparts in other parts of the country. In many ways, British Columbia seems like a different world, which further serves to emphasize the incredible size and diversity of the country in a geographical, climatic and environmental sense. Warmed by the milder climate and currents of the Pacific Ocean, vegetation on the western coast of Canada and Vancouver Island has a
waxed and profuse quality much like a rain forest in equatorial Africa, a plantation
in the South Seas, or, strange as it many sound, an English country garden.

The fifth and final region of the country - the Canadian Shield - hovers over
Canada and Canadians like a colossus. Covering over three million square
kilometers in northern Canada, it includes most of the Yukon, Northwest
Territories, Nunavut, the Arctic Islands, and the northerly parts of many of the
provinces. It serves as a constant and powerful reminder of the desolate and
inhospitable nature of much of Canada’s geography and landscape. For
approximately ninety percent of the country’s gigantic landmass, there is no
permanent settlement. In the Shield, this is closer to one hundred percent. Only
the Inuit have mastered its intimate secrets and mysteries.

As important as geography and landscape are in shaping the culture and
customs of Canada, it is the northern nature of the country and the country’s
climate that play the decisive role.

While many countries have two seasons - wet season and dry season -
Canada has four seasons - spring, summer, fall and winter. These seasons give
Canadian culture and customs a decidedly seasonal quality - a quality that is
manifested in economic occupations, employment practices, educational
procedures, statistical collections, recreational activities, ritualistic celebrations,
and virtually everything else.

While all seasons have a profound effect on the country and its citizenry,
what makes climate a decisive factor along with the northern nature of the country
in shaping the country’s culture and customs is the fact that all the seasons are
dominated by one season, namely winter. There isn’t a Canadian anywhere in the
country who is not haunted by thoughts of winter, even on the hottest and most
humid days of summer. While Canada is not quite the land of ice, snow and cold
it is often depicted to be in the media, there is no doubt that winter has a powerful
impact on all aspects and dimensions of life and living in Canada. It is a fact that
Canada shares in common with all northern countries, including Russia, Sweden,
Norway, Iceland, and Greenland.

The climate and northern nature of the country explain many things about
Canada, Canadians, and Canadian culture and customs.

For one thing, they explain why the majority of Canadians - some eighty
percent - live in the southern part of the country stretched in a narrow band from
coast to coast within two hundred kilometers of the American border. They also
account for the fact that Canada is one of the most urbanized countries in the
world, with the bulk of its population living in a few highly-urbanized centres like
Vancouver, Calgary-Edmonton, greater Toronto, greater Montreal, Halifax and Saint John’s. It helps to counteract the hardships of rural life and the risks of living in isolated and desolate areas.

For another thing, it explains why most Canadian conversations start with discussions about the weather. Regardless of where Canadians live, what they work at or where they meet - in an elevator, on a city street, in a parking lot, on the subway or at a cottage - the first comment is almost always about the weather. What is the weather like today, and what are the prospects for tomorrow? Talk about a unifying theme or common cultural characteristic!

The northern nature and climate of the country also explain why most Canadians have ambivalent feelings about “the land.” On the one hand, there is the intense love of the land that comes from the incredible beauty of the country, the remarkable transformations that take place from season to season, the numerous recreational and environmental possibilities, the pristine character of much of the country’s landscape, the seemingly endless expanse of space, the vast wilderness areas, and especially the sense of freedom that comes from the realization that it is possible to “escape from it all” in nature. On the other hand, there is the incredible fear of the land that Canadians have as a result of the inhospitable character of much of the country’s landscape and geography, as well as the difficulties that must be dealt with each year as a result of the cold, the snow, and the winter.

This has caused some of Canada’s most well-known authors to depict Canadians as victims of a nasty trick perpetrated by nature. This has led to the conviction that Canadians have been so terrorized by the hardships, harshness, cruelty, and inhospitality of the natural environment that they identify more with the hunted than the hunter, the animal than the human. Other authors have countered this claim by contending that the very fact that Canadians have confronted these difficulties and endured gives Canadians a kind of heroic quality - a quality that makes it necessary to view Canadians as victors rather than vanquished, heroes rather than victims.

It is for reasons such as these that survival is a constant concern for Canadians. Of course, survival is a concern for all people, since nature seldom surrenders its bounty without intense struggle. Nevertheless, survival takes on a very different meaning for people living in northern cultures and countries like Canada, despite the fact that much has been achieved over the last century to alleviate concern over survival as a result of foresight, planning, urbanization, and the realization of higher living standards. However, in a county where inclement weather can play havoc with the distribution of food supplies, transportation and communication can be disrupted at any time, ice storms can hit without warning
and with devastating consequences, wind can cream off a farmer’s top soil in the
split of a second, and people can freeze to death on city streets, survival takes on a
very special significance. And just as it is impossible for Canadians to escape
thoughts of winter even on the hottest days of summer, so it is impossible for
Canadians to escape thoughts of survival regardless of how much food is stored in
the freezer and how many overcoats are hanging in the closet.

Given the incredible spatial, environmental and climatic challenges
Canadians have been compelled to confront over the centuries - which caused one
of Canada’s most distinguished scholars, Northrop Frye, to contend that the most
important question for Canadians is not “who are we?” (the question of individual
and collective identity) but rather “where is here?” (the question of place and
physical location in the world) - it is not surprising that Canadians have
manifested a high degree of creativity over the centuries in many areas of cultural
life. The spatial, environmental and climatic dictates of the country and the need
to move people, products, information, images and ideas over long distances in
shorter and shorter periods of time have demanded it.

**Transportation, Communications and Creativity**

In earlier times, there was the creation of the kayak, the umiak, and
especially the canoe that made penetration into the interior of the country and the
North American continent possible. Over the last two centuries, these
developments have been matched by countless other devices to facilitate
transportation by boat, rail, plane and car, as well as communication by print, post,
radio, television, film, video, computer, and the Internet. These initiatives are best
epitomized by some well-known Canadian institutions, including the Canadian
National Railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway, Bell Canada, Air Canada, the
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, Canada Post, and
TELUS. The country would not exist without historical and contemporary
institutions, devices and developments like these.

Given the phenomenal transportation and communications challenges
Canadians have been compelled to confront, it is not coincidental that Canada
possesses the longest highway in the world - the Trans Canada Highway at 4,860
miles or 7,821 kilometers, the longest street in the world - Yonge Street at 1,900
kilometers from Toronto, Ontario to Rainy River, Ontario, the tallest free-standing
structure in the world - the CN Tower at 553 meters, and the longest recreational
trail in the world - the Trans-Canada Trail - at 15,000 kilometers. Nor is it
coincidental that some of the world’s most distinguished communications
scholars, such as Marshall McLuhan, Harold Innis and Northrop Frye, have been
Canadian. Canadians probably own more transportation and communications
equipment per capita - boats, cars, vans, radios, telephones, cellphones,
BlackBerries, television sets, pagers, printers, fax machines, cameras, computers and the like - than any other people in the world. This caused Bruce Powe, one of the country’s most prominent communications’ experts, to claim that Canadian culture is first and foremost “a communications culture” and Canada is the first “wired” or “electric” nation in the world. The country could not stay together and Canadians could not stay in touch without this.

While a great deal of Canadian creativity has been channelled into transportation and communications, a great deal of creativity has also been channelled into other fields as well. In addition to the invention of the kayak, the umiak and the canoe, Canadians invented originally - or made seminal contributions to - the creation of the telegraph, the telephone, radio, television, standard time, national atlases, marquis wheat - which made Canada the bread basket of the world in the twentieth century - satellite communications, jet travel, kerosene, acetylene - which played a crucial role in the development of the automobile and steel industries - combine harvesters, snowmobiles, skidoos, the hydrofoil boat, the bush plane, the wire photo transmitter, walkie-talkies, petrochemical refining, pulp and paper production, the newspaper industry, and automation.

These highly creative contributions have been matched by creative contributions in other areas, most notably health and welfare, sports, recreation, film, and education. Medicare, insulin, the pace maker, the mobile blood bank, pabulum, credit unions, the snow blower, the gas mask, the paint roller, hockey, basketball, lacrosse, curling, trivial pursuit, film animation and adult education are all activities and devices that Canadians invented originally or played a pivotal role in their development over the years. This should come as no surprise, as the demands of geography, climate, landscape and space have caused Canadians to be highly inventive in order to survive, prosper, and create a sovereign and independent nation in the northern half of the North American continent. If necessity is the mother of invention, surely it has manifested itself profusely in the Canadian case.

People, Diversity and Multiculturalism

Canadian creativity has come from people who have immigrated to Canada from virtually all parts of the world. A highly diversified pattern to the country’s population was set early when the aboriginal peoples - or First Nations as they are called today - crossed the Bering Strait and entered what is now known as Canada. Commonly seen as a homogeneous group, the aboriginal peoples of Canada or First Nations were - and still are - a highly diverse group with many different tribes, ethnic backgrounds, dialects and languages.
This diversified cast to the country’s population was sustained in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when immigrants came largely from Europe but also other parts of the world. While the bulk of the immigrants at this time came from France and Great Britain - thereby explaining why Canada’s current population of thirty-one million is composed mainly of people of British and French descent and English and French are the two main languages spoken in Canada - significant numbers of immigrants came from other European countries such as Germany, Italy, Russia, the Netherlands, Poland and Austria, as well as Asian countries such as China, India and Japan.

Over the last fifty years, the multicultural cast to the country’s population has broadened and deepened considerably as a result of immigrants and refugees from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and elsewhere in the world. This caused one of the country’s most celebrated and distinguished authors, Margaret Atwood, to claim that Canada is “a land of immigrants” since virtually everyone comes from somewhere else.

It is developments like these that account for the fact that Canada has been officially designated “a bilingual, multicultural country” by the Government of Canada. For the steady influx of immigrants and refugees from other parts of the world has not only had an important impact on linguistic and religious practices and artistic and culinary activities in Canada, it has also had, and much more fundamentally, a profound effect on the underlying character of the country, its population, and the nature of its culture and customs. This is why Canada is often referred to as “a microcosm of the global macrocosm” in many parts of the world today.

Exactly how Canada came to be officially designated “a bilingual, multicultural country” sheds a great deal of light on the innermost character of the country and its highly variegated culture, customs and population.

While Canada was steadily becoming a multicultural country in a very real sense in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this development was not addressed officially until the Government of Canada established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963.

When the Commission concluded that “bilingualism and biculturalism” were the defining features of Canada because French and English Canadians were the “founding peoples” of the country, many people from other ethnic groups, backgrounds, origins and communities - including the aboriginal peoples, the Métis, German-Canadians, Italian-Canadians, Ukrainian-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, Japanese-Canadians, and the like - took grave exception to this highly partisan way of looking at the country and its development over the centuries.
While these peoples and groups were willing to accept the fact that English and French were the two main languages of Canada and this should be recognized in an official, political sense, they emphasized that Canada was not a “bicultural country” because many other people and groups had made - and were making - substantial contributions to the development of Canada and its culture and customs that were not recognized in the official concept of “biculturalism.” As a result, the Government of Canada was compelled to respond to Book IV of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism by proclaiming in 1971 that Canada would henceforth be designated a “bilingual, multicultural country.” Since that time, numerous developments throughout the country at the federal, provincial and municipal level, as well as throughout the private sector, have confirmed and reinforced this designation.

**French-English Relations and Quebec**

It is impossible to discuss the country’s official bilingual, multicultural status without dealing with another fundamental aspect of Canadian life. It is the relationship between English and French Canadians in general and Quebec and the rest of Canada in particular. Like the country itself, this relationship has a long and difficult history with strong feelings, emotions and developments on both sides.

These feelings, emotions and developments have their origins in what is often referred to as “the French fact” in Canada and North America. While people from France were the first Europeans to settle in Canada in significant numbers and make a crucial contribution to the opening up of the country and the North American continent, the percentage of people of French origin and descent has been steadily declining as a percentage of the Canadian and North American population as a result of the increase in immigration from other parts of the world and the falling birth rate in Quebec. This has made it exceedingly difficult for French-speaking people in Quebec - as well as in other parts of Canada and North America - to retain their culture, identity, language, and distinctive way of life.

While this situation has a long history dating back to relations between Great Britain and France, English and French, it was aggravated considerably in Canada in the latter part of the twentieth century with the separatist movement in Quebec, the election of the Parti Québécois in 1976 whose espoused aim was to bring about the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada and establish sovereignty-association between Quebec and the Government of Canada, and the establishment of the Bloc Québécois in 1991 as a major political party at the federal level whose avowed intention was to focus exclusively on Quebec and Quebec’s interests in Canada and promote Quebec’s sovereignty ambitions and intentions in the Government of Canada.
While tensions over this divisive issue eased somewhat throughout the country as a result of the narrow defeat of the Referendum on Quebec separation in 1995, the passage of the Clarity Act in 2000, and the election of a Liberal Government in Quebec in 2003, they have produced some peculiar political practices in Canada. In many ways, these practices can be traced back to the Quebec Act of 1774, when the French and English decided to settle their political, linguistic and cultural differences in Canada by pursuing a policy of toleration and “integration” of the two distinct peoples and cultures rather than intolerance and “assimilation” of the French people and culture into the English mainstream. While this commitment to tolerance and integration has contributed significantly to Canada’s present policy of multiculturalism - and therefore the conviction that Canada is “a mosaic rather than a melting pot” with many different cultures and cultural traditions existing under one roof - it has also produced some odd political realities in Canada. One of these is the existence of the Bloc Québécois at the federal level and its belief that eventually it will be possible to create an independent and sovereign Quebec.

In a world where most countries emphasize similarities rather than differences and focus on “uniformity” rather than “diversity,” Canada’s current policy of multiculturalism and recognition of “multiple cultural identities and allegiances” is not without its challenges and risks, even if this seems to be the direction the whole world is moving at present. Canada could well prove to be a “test case” for the world in this respect, where the problems of multiculturalism, multiple cultural identities and allegiances, and “the politics of pluralism” will be played out in earnest. There could be much to be gained from this, especially in a world characterized by increased interactions between the different cultures, peoples and countries of the world and a great deal more immigration, emigration, and cultural mixing and interaction. However, it is not without its dangers, which explains why people and countries in all parts of the world are watching Canada, Canadians, and Canadian culture very carefully to see how this bold political initiative will work out in fact.

**Canadian-American Relations**

If understanding of the French fact and the relationship between English and French Canadians, Quebec and the rest of Canada, is of pivotal importance in understanding Canadian culture and customs, so is understanding relations between Canada and the United States. For United States, like Great Britain and France in earlier periods of history, has had - and continues to have - a powerful impact on Canada and Canadian culture and customs.

Like relations between English and French Canadians, Quebec and the rest of Canada, relations between Canada and United States have a long and complex
history. It is a history filled with many challenges, opportunities and developments, some painful but most extremely pleasant.

The fact that Canadians and Americans share the longest undefended border in the world - despite the fact that security along the border has tightened up considerably since the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 - attests to the realization that the large majority of these challenges, opportunities and developments have been dealt with in peaceful rather than provocative ways and produced friendly relations between the two countries and the two peoples. However, there have been times when relations between the two countries and peoples have been strained and put to the test, such as the conflict between the original French, British and American colonies, the Manifest Destiny movement in the United States in the nineteenth century, the battles over the 49th parallel and jurisdiction over Alaska, and most recently, the unwillingness of Canada to participate in the invasion of Iraq because proof was not forthcoming that Sadam Hussein was harbouring weapons of mass destruction.

While conflicts, pressures and tensions between the two countries have always been resolved in peaceful rather than provocative ways, Canadians are often asked what it is like to live next door to the most powerful nation on earth. Their response is invariably that it is very difficult to say the least. It is often described as the problem of the elephant and the mouse: every time the elephant twitches, groans or rolls over, the mouse feels threatened and fears for its life. The reason for this trepidation is not difficult to detect. The population of the United States is ten times greater than the population of Canada. Moreover, the United States is a far more powerful country in economic, political, military, and commercial terms. The consequences of this for Canada, Canadians, and Canadian culture and customs are profound and profuse. Americans own countless corporations in Canada, and many Canadian companies are merely branch plants of American companies with their head offices in the United States. Furthermore, some eighty to ninety percent of the films and television programs Canadians watch are American. Most of the largest publishing and sound recording companies in Canada are owned or operated by huge American conglomerates, as are most of the country’s movie chains and cinemas. As a result, the bulk of what Canadians watch, see, hear, read, and listen to every day is American rather than Canadian. In what other country does this happen? In what other country would it be allowed to happen?

While American dominance over Canada has grown steadily over the last fifty years, it was strengthened considerably in 1994 with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, United States and Mexico. While this gave Canadians access to the huge American market - so
much so that more than eighty percent of Canada’s exports now go to the United States and more than fifty percent of the country’s imports come from the United States - it increased American ownership, control and influence over the Canadian economy and the country’s natural resources and cultural industries even more, despite the fact that culture is officially “off the table” as far as the North American Free Trade Agreement is concerned. People in other parts of the world would be appalled if another country owned, controlled or influenced their commercial, economic, political, military and cultural operations to the extent that Americans own, control or influence commercial, economic, political, military and cultural operations in Canada. And yet, for most Canadians, this is the price that has to be paid for living next door to the American monolith, gaining access to the huge American market, and entering into a free trade agreement with the United States. There are even some who favour strengthening Canada’s ties with the United States through some form of customs union or continental integration.

And yet, ironically, most surveys and opinion polls indicate that while American ownership, control and influence over Canada is increasing, Canada’s shared values, customs and distinctive way of life are strengthening rather than weakening, and diverging rather than converging from those of United States.

What is going on here? There are many explanations. One is that Canadians are manifesting much more interest in their own history, culture, development and traditions, as epitomized by the popularity of the country’s authors and artists, the highly successful Canada: A People’s History produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the work of institutions like the Department of Canadian Heritage, Canada Post and the Bronfman Foundation in promoting greater interest in Canada’s historical and contemporary development. Another is the promotion of multiculturalism, pluralism and diversity in Canada, which is increasingly differentiating Canada and Canadians from Americans and the United States. Another is the growing difference between the two countries in social terms, where much more emphasis is being placed in Canada on same-sex marriages, gay and lesbian rights and the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes compared to the United States. And a final reason is the aforementioned decision on the part of the Canadian government not to participate in the invasion of Iraq. Many Canadians interpret this as a sign that Canada is prepared to stand up to United States and pursue an independent course of action when this is required.

Nevertheless, it must be said that Canadians and Americans share a great deal in common. Not only do the two countries share similar geographical and topographical features, including stretching from coast to coast and possessing numerous mountains, plains and alluvial areas in common, but also both countries were settled by similar groups of people and about the same time. This makes it difficult for people in other parts of the world - and even many Canadians and
Americans - to differentiate clearly between Canadians and Americans, Canada and the United States, Canadian culture and customs and American culture and customs.

Despite this, there are fundamental differences between the two countries. Unlike the United States, Canada has never had a revolutionary or civil war. As a result, tensions and hostilities between different groups of people and home and mother countries have been settled far more peacefully in Canada compared to the United States. This helps to explain why Canada is often described as a “gentler and kinder country” than United States, since Canadians did not have to endure the trials, tribulations and horrors of a revolutionary or civil war. Moreover, the constitutions of the two countries are very different. Whereas the constitution of United States is predicated on “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” the constitution of Canada is predicated on “peace, order and good government.” This probably sums up the differences between the two countries better than anything else, since the internal and external implications and consequences of this are considerable. It has caused Canada and Canadians to focus much more attention on compromise, concession, conciliation, multilateral relations, and public sector development than the United States.

High Standard of Living and Distinct Way of Life

In one form or another, all the aforementioned factors - and many others - contribute to the high standard of living and quality of life that Canadians enjoy today. In order to achieve this, it has been necessary to build a strong and dynamic economy, comprehensive and compelling health care, educational and political system, diverse and creative culture, and enlightened and effective social network. For what are cultures and customs for if they are not to improve the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of people’s lives, as well as make it possible for them in principle - if not always in practice - to live in harmony with the natural environment, each other, and other people and countries in the world?

This will not be possible in Canada in the future without drawing fully on the distinct way of life that Canadians have built up over the centuries. It is a way of life that shares certain similarities with the ways of life of other countries, most notably Britain, France, and especially the United States, but in the end is distinctive and unique because it is concerned with the way Canadians see and interpret the world, organize themselves, conduct their affairs, elevate and embellish life, and position themselves in the world. Just how this manifests itself in some of the most fascinating and symbolic parts of Canadian culture and customs - and therefore the activities, character traits and collective behaviour of Canadians - can now be examined in earnest.
Notes

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In her fascinating book, *You Eat What You Are: A Study of Ethnic Food Traditions*, Thelma Barer-Stein emphasizes the crucial role food plays in all the diverse cultures, customs, countries and cultural heritages of the world:

Food plays an inextricable role in our daily lives. Without food we cannot survive. But food is much more than a tool of survival. Food is a source of pleasure, comfort, security. Food is also a symbol of hospitality, social status, and has ritual significance. What we select to eat, how we prepare it, serve it, and even how we eat it, are all factors deeply touched by our individual cultural inheritance.(1)

Food is such an essential element of people’s lives that many people think of countries first and foremost in terms of their food and cuisine. Think of China, France, India and Italy for example. Not only are these countries known throughout the world for their delicious foods and foodstuffs and inventive and distinctive cuisines, but also they have made phenomenal contributions to world gastronomic practices and global culinary accomplishments.

While Canada is not known internationally for its culinary contributions or accomplishments the way China, India, France and Italy are, it is known in many parts of the world for its diverse foods and foodstuffs, as well as its regional specialties and escalating gastronomic achievements. This is due to the incredible diversity of the country’s environment, its multicultural character, and its rapidly growing coterie of world-class chefs, cooks and culinary specialists.

With easy access to the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans, millions of fresh water lakes, a great deal of agricultural land and alluvial soil in the southern part of the country, and numerous forests and wilderness areas, it is not surprising that Canada teams with flora and fauna. Many different types of plants, vegetables, fruits and vegetation exist throughout the country, as do many types of fish, shellfish, game, poultry and wildlife. These are the things gourmet’s dreams, chef’s visions, and solid culinary traditions are built on.

The country’s natural bounty was of vital importance to the first inhabitants. According to historical accounts, aboriginal diets included roasted reindeer and polar bear, moose meat soup, pickled woodchuck, beaver and squirrel, stuffed whale breast, steamed muskrat, boiled porcupine and caribou, dried buffalo meat, roasted corn, acorn bread, squash, and many others types of fish, game, vegetables, berries, grains and fruit.
Over the centuries, the profuse natural bounty of the country has found its way into the homes of Canadians as well as onto the menus of restaurants and hotels. As a result, Canada is well known throughout the world today for the quantity and quality of its fresh-water fish, ocean fish, and shellfish - Atlantic and Pacific salmon, Arctic char, cod, eel, clams, oysters, mussels, lobsters, mackerel, sturgeon, gold eye, white fish, mullet, pickerel, pike, bass, trout, and the like. Many of these delicacies are packed up in fresh, frozen, or smoked form and shipped off to destinations in other parts of the world in response to the high demand for them. The same holds true for the country’s meats and game, especially beef, pork, chicken, turkey, partridge, pheasant, quail, duck, buffalo and caribou. Many of these foodstuffs are appearing with greater regularity on menus in Canada and other parts of the world.

The country is also well-known for its fruits, grains, vegetables and berries, particularly wild rice, an international favourite, fiddleheads, wheat, corn - a basic staple enjoyed originally by the aboriginal peoples but now loved by all Canadians as buttered corn on the cob - peaches, potatoes, pears, plums, blueberries and apples. Not only is the world’s largest potato and french fry processor, McCain Food Limited, located in Florenceville, New Brunswick, but also there are world-famous fruit orchards in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia and Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia, as well as in Ontario and Quebec. Interestingly, these orchards produce more than fifty varieties of apples, such as Macs, Spys, Tom and Sweets, Red Delicious, Cortlands, Wolf Rivers, Granny Smiths, Gravensteins, and others. In many parts of the world, “an apple is just an apple.” But in Canada, an apple is a basic staple, as well as the main ingredient in the country’s famous apple pie. As the old saying goes, “an apple a day keeps the doctor away.”

While Canada’s oceans, lakes, agricultural lands, forests and wilderness areas yield many of the foodstuffs that Canadians and people in other parts of the world enjoy today, dietary and culinary practices have changed considerably in Canada over the last fifty years. Like many countries in the world, Canada is rapidly becoming a “fast food nation,” with more and more people anxious to “eat on the run.” As a result, the country has its fair share of McDonald’s, Burger King’s, Wendy’s, Colonel Sanders, and so forth. However, many Canadians prefer Tim Hortons - a fast food chain started by a well-known Canadian hockey player and named after him. It is known throughout the country for its fine coffee and excellent bagels, donuts, muffins, salads and sandwiches.

Frozen and pre-prepared foods are also rapidly becoming favourites with Canadians, largely because they can be heated up quickly in microwave ovens and ready to eat in minutes. Interestingly, one of Canada’s largest food chains - Loblaws - has predicated much of its development over the last two decades on frozen and pre-prepared foods - often characteristic of the different cuisines of the
world - as well as numerous gourmet specialties and culinary delights. Its “President’s Choice products” have been so popular that they have forced most competitors to follow suit with their own select brands.

Despite the penchant for frozen and pre-prepared foods and gourmet items, many Canadians continue to stick to traditional favourites: chicken, beef, turkey, steak, ham, pork, potatoes and rice. Chicken and ham are favourites on festive occasions, particularly Christmas, New Years and Easter. Turkey is popular at Thanksgiving, together with mashed potatoes, gravy, dressing, and cranberries. However, cooking methods have changed dramatically over the last half-century. Many Canadians have a gas or propane barbecue stationed close to the back door so they can barbecue winter and summer. There is nothing quite so amusing as seeing someone huddled over a barbecue on the back porch in the middle of a snow storm cooking a steak.

Like most countries, every region and province in the country has its own specialties. The Prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are best known for their excellent meats and grains; Ontario is best known for its pork, bacon, cheddar cheese and maple syrup, produced by boiling down the sap from maple trees until nothing is left but a delicious syrup and one of Canada’s most popular exports; and the Atlantic provinces and British Columbia are known for their outstanding “fruits of the sea” and “fruits of the land.”

But it is Quebec that is best known for its regional specialties and distinctive cuisine. This is not surprising in view of the fact that Quebec inherited France’s rich gastronomic tradition, and can trace its culinary roots and accomplishments back to the sixteenth century when the Order of Good Cheer was created by the first French settlers who settled in Nova Scotia and later moved to the area around Quebec and Montreal. As a result, Quebec specialties abound. Brome Lake duck, Rougemount apples, Matane shrimps, cider vinegar, honey salmon, Habitant pea soup, sugar pie, tortière - a pork pie made from ground pork, pastry and spices, and especially poutine - french fries with gravy and often cheese - are merely some of the regional specialties Quebec and Quebeckers are known for in Canada and other parts of the world. And in the finest French tradition, Quebec is also well known for its outstanding cheeses and dairy products. Many of its cheeses, especially Oka and Ermite, are Canadian favourites. They are made by monks in monasteries in the Eastern Townships south east of Montreal.

While drink is an essential part of the food and cuisines of all peoples and countries in the world - think of what tea means to China and Japan and wine and beer mean to Germany, France, and other European countries - Canada does not have a long tradition in this area. Nevertheless, there are some well-known Canadian favourites. Ginger ale - a Canadian invention - is known throughout the
world, as is Crown Royal Whiskey and Molson’s beer. Interestingly, there is a proposal being considered at present to merge Molson Brewery with Coors Brewery in the United States, making the two companies the fifth largest brewery in the world. This has alarmed many Canadians, since Molson Brewery has a history dating back more than a hundred and fifty years and is reputed to be the oldest continuously operating family business in North America.

It is only recently that Canada has made significant strides in developing a large and diversified wine and beer industry. Much of this has taken place in British Columbia and Ontario, where some of the country’s largest wineries and breweries are located. Taking advantage of favourable growing conditions in the Okanagan Valley, the Niagara Peninsula, and central Canada generally, a number of highly successful wineries and breweries have been established in these provinces in recent years, and are producing wines and beers that are gaining international prominence and winning coveted global awards. Canada is also gaining a worldwide reputation for “ice wine.” It is produced by picking the grapes at just the right time, usually after the first frost, and crushing and aging them under just the right conditions.

With growing interest in Canadian wines and beers has come growing interest in domestic foodstuffs and indigenous culinary practices. In recent years, many Canadian chefs and specialists have gone back to the country’s roots and bye-gone eras to produce culinary works that are more typical of Canada and Canadian traditions. As a result, it is more and more commonplace to find indigenous Canadian dishes on restaurant menus, as well as at banquets, political functions, and the Governor-General’s residence. Much of the kudos for this must go to people like Jehane Benoît who popularized Quebec’s culinary delicacies and accomplishments, heralded microwave cooking, and wrote the *Encyclopedia of Canadian Cuisine* and Michael Stadtlander who emigrated to Canada from Germany and is playing a major role in generating interest in Canada’s indigenous foodstuffs and unique Canadian dishes, as well as institutions like the CN and CP Hotels which have won many prestigious international awards in recent years based on Canadian foods, foodstuffs and recipes. As a result, Canada is now well on its way to establishing a cuisine of its own - a cuisine that is closely linked to the culture of the country and its particular gastronomic capabilities and customs.

It is impossible to complete this portrait of food and cuisine in Canada without commenting on the impact multiculturalism and the country’s diverse ethnic communities are having on culinary and gastronomic practices throughout the country.

While many immigrants have preferred to fan out and integrate into the Canadian mainstream, others have preferred to locate in specific areas and remain
isolated from the mainstream. In the country’s cities, this means that it is often possible to find sections of the cities that are dominated by a single ethnic group or community. In Toronto, for example, it is possible to find large concentrations of Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Chinese, Koreans, Polish, Sikhs, Pakistanis, Ukrainians, and the like living in specific areas of the city, so much so that there are areas of the city known as “little Italy,” “little India,” “little Athens,” “little Portugal,” “Chinatown,” “little Poland,” and so forth. In these areas, it is possible to find restaurants, grocery stores, and markets that cater almost exclusively to the culinary needs and interests of these groups and communities, thereby providing foods, foodstuffs, meals and delicacies that are typical of the countries from which these immigrants have come.

Residents and tourists find this one of the most irresistible and fascinating aspects of life, living, travel, and tourism in Canada. Not only can many different types of cultural experiences be enjoyed in these areas - much like travelling to another country without having to incur the costs and the inconveniences - but also this is having a profound effect on culinary practices in Canada and enriching the country’s gastronomic options and opportunities.

Thus, it is possible to see food and cuisine in Canada moving in two contradictory but interrelated directions. At the same time that the country is fashioning an indigenous cuisine of its own, there is more and more interest in - and demand for - the cuisines of other countries. This augers well for the future, because it means Canadians and people from other parts of the world will be able to benefit from unique Canadian dishes while simultaneously enjoying dishes from virtually every other part of the world.

Notes


References and Readings

Web site: http://www.culinaryhistorians.ca


HOUSING AND ARCHITECTURE

Like food and cuisine, housing and architecture constitute an essential part of Canadian culture and customs. In a country with long winters and a cold climate, people must not only eat to live and survive. They must also be protected from the elements.

From the outset, geography, landscape and climate have played a dominant role in shaping the character of housing and architecture in Canada. All the forms of accommodation created by the aboriginal peoples were constructed with the trials and tribulations of the country’s geography, landscape and climate in mind.

In the far north, igloos were built from snow and ice because snow and ice provided excellent sources of insulation against the wind and the cold, and were extremely durable. The entrances to the igloos were tunnelled and bent in order to trap the cold and exclude it from the interiors of the dwellings. Farther south, the teepees and wigwams of the Plains Indians and Algonquins were constructed of animal skins and were conical in shape with entrances pointing east in order to provide warmth, protection against strong westerly winds, and ease of movement from one area to another as they searched for food. The longhouses of the Hurons and the Iroquois were built of saplings and covered with bark. They often housed eight to ten families, stretched more than half a football field in length, and included sweat lodges, the early forerunners of steam baths in North America. And the plank houses of the Salish, Kwakiutl, Haida and West Coast Indians were constructed of cedar planks - often for extended families of twenty to thirty people - and usually included totem poles adjacent to the houses to commemorate the dead and express vital spiritual values and religious beliefs.

When settlers arrived in large numbers from France, Great Britain, Europe and elsewhere in the world, protection from the elements was crucial. Wood was often used because it provided this protection. As a result, wooden houses were very popular, since they could be constructed of massive logs hewn from the country’s numerous forests. This gave rise to “the Red River Frame,” “the Hudson’s Bay Company Frame,” and especially the log cabin which was extremely popular with trappers, fur traders, settlers and pioneers because it could be created of squared logs placed horizontally between vertical posts. Interestingly, homes and cottages of wood and constructed in the log-cabin style are still popular with Canadians today. They are often found in wilderness areas and around the perimeters of lakes.

Stone was also an extremely popular building material. Many homes, blockhouses, and public buildings were built of stone in Ontario, Quebec and
particularly Nova Scotia, where Scottish tenant farmers built stone huts or “crofters” which duplicated building styles popular in the Highlands of Scotland. Since stone and wood were not available on the prairies, other building materials had to be used. Grasslands were often used for this purpose. They were broken into “sod bricks,” placed grass side down, and stacked in rows. This made it possible to construct “sod homes” - “soddies” - which were extremely popular in the prairie regions of Canada because the walls were thick and the homes were fireproof. This provided warmth in winter, coolness in summer, and protection from fires common with wood dwellings.

Since most of the population was engaged in farming rather than fishing and trapping by this time, farmhouses were built with increased regularity in most parts of the country. Built of stone, wood, and occasionally brick, most were heated with large wood stoves in the kitchen. Since this was the warmest room in the house, most of the entertaining, social interaction, and family functions took place in this room - the eating of meals, family discussions and consultations, and socializing with friends, neighbours, and visitors. This tradition continues in Canada today, although it now occurs in living rooms and family rooms rather than kitchens, but often with fireplaces reminiscent of the old wood stoves.

In Quebec, a unique style of farmhouse evolved with a steeply pitched “cayou roof.” The style was definitely French, but adapted to Canada’s snowy and wintry conditions. A cayou is an extension fastened to the ends of the roof beams. Planking covers this extension to form a predominant overhang that carries the run-off from melting snow away from the dwelling. The curved roof is often covered with brightly painted orange or green sheet metal in more recent renderings, thereby making this traditional “maison Québécoise” a colourful symbol of Quebec.

While these developments were taking place in the countryside, corresponding developments were taking place in the towns and cities. Row houses, the forerunners of today’s town houses, were popular in St. John’s and elsewhere because they were joined together and economized on fuel and heat. Stone houses were popular in Halifax, complete with “Scottish dormer windows.” And while they appeared somewhat later, duplexes - with separate “upstairs” and “downstairs” entrances - were popular in Montreal. Many of these duplexes had wrought-iron external staircases that added a great deal of variety and distinctiveness to Montreal’s rapidly evolving streetscapes.

Towns and cities were also the places where people started to become aware of architectural styles and fashions popular in other parts of the world. Since France and Great Britain exerted a powerful influence on Canada in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, French and British architectural
styles and fashions had a particularly powerful impact on architecture in Canada at this time. In the late seventeenth century, for example, many religious and governmental buildings were built in the French baroque style. As the British influence exerted itself more and more forcefully in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British architectural styles began to dominate, particularly the Georgian, Palladian, Edwardian, Victorian and Gothic Revival styles, all of which were heavily influenced by architectural styles in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. There were, however, some notable exceptions to the dominant British architectural styles. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the French influence returned to Canada, not only in the Beaux-Arts Movement and the emergence of the Art Deco style after the Paris Exposition of 1925, but also in the popular “chateau style.” The CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) built a number of major hotels across the country that closely resembled the chateaux of the Loire Valley in France, including the Banff Springs Hotel in Alberta, the Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City, the Empress Hotel in Victoria, and the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa.

As more and more people flocked to the towns and cities, other types of architectural design and housing construction began to appear. Apartments and prefabricated homes were popular because they were less costly, as were bungalows (one story dwellings) and “Victory Homes” during and after the Second World War. It was about this time that the federal government became actively involved in housing as a result of the high cost of building materials and the shortage of inexpensive homes. In 1935, it passed the Dominion Housing Act, and in 1946, it created the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (now the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation). Both these initiatives were designed to provide low-cost housing for those who needed it, financial assistance to homeowners, and regulation of the housing industry in Canada. In conjunction with other initiatives taken since that time, they provide the foundation for Canada’s present system of housing policies and practices.

After the Second World War, architectural influences and styles from the United States and other parts of the world began to exert themselves. Like many other countries in the world, Canada was going modern. By the middle of the twentieth century, modernism and the skyscraper era had begun, although this era did not assert itself in earnest in Canada until the construction of the Toronto Dominion Centre by the famous Bauhaus architect, Mies van der Rohe, and the Canadian architect, John Parkin, in 1964-68. With this came keen competition among the country’s major corporations, banks, and insurance companies to see which company could build the highest and most conspicuous skyscraper or office tower.

While Canadian architects were distinguishing themselves throughout the French, British and American periods, they did not get a real boost until Expo and
the Centennial celebrations in 1967. This was particularly true for Expo. Many Canadian architects and architectural firms were commissioned to design important buildings for the Expo site in Montreal, as well as for other parts of the country. The architectural firm of Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold and Sise designed a number of major theme pavilions for Expo, as well as the Place Bonaventure Hotel in Montreal and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Arthur Erickson, one of the country’s most distinguished architects and the principal architect of Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, the Canadian Embassy in Washington, and the Tacoma Glass Museum in Washington State, designed a number of outstanding Canadian pavilions. John Andrews designed a number of superb exhibition facilities, and Moshe Safdie designed a unique accommodation structure called Habitat that was built of component parts and multi layers and situated perfectly on the Expo site. In conjunction with a number of other Canadian architects making their names at this time, such as Raymond Moriyama who designed the Ontario Science Centre and the Toronto Metro Library and Ron Thom who designed Trent University in Peterborough and Massey College in Toronto, it was clear that a distinctive style of Canadian architecture was beginning to emerge to take its rightful place alongside the French, British, European and American architectural styles of previous generations and centuries.

It is a style that includes not only the design of public buildings and private homes, but also many other types of architectural accommodation. One of the most conspicuous of these is indoor malls and shopping centres and underground pedestrian walkways. They make a great deal of sense in Canada, and Canadian architects are very good at it. Since Canadians must spend a considerable amount of time wrestling with winter, indoor malls, shopping centres and underground pedestrian walkways are ideal ways to combat the elements. Ever since Eberhardt Zeidler designed the Eaton Centre in Toronto, developments in this area have escalated rapidly. In addition to the Eaton Centre, there is the world-famous West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Plus 15 in Calgary, and colossal underground walkways in Toronto and Montreal. It is possible to walk for miles in these underground walkways without going outside. Who knows, they may even prove to be the forerunners of the “underground cities” which have been predicted for years by architects and science fiction writers.

If there is one place where all the major styles and influences that exist in Canadian architecture can be seen in close physical proximity, surely that place is Ottawa. Standing cheek by jowl in the central core of the city are the Parliament Buildings and the Chateau Laurier, so reminiscent of the French and English influences on architecture in Canada and the historic struggle French- and English-Canadians have waged over the centuries to achieve social harmony and cultural equality. Standing slightly behind and to one side of the Parliament Buildings and
the Chateau Laurier are the National Gallery of Canada - built almost entirely of glass and similar in some respects to Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic dome - and the newly-constructed American Embassy. Both are reminiscent in their way of the American influence on architecture in Canada, as well as the strong relationship between Canada and the United States. And kitty corner across the street from the Chateau Laurier is the Rideau Centre. An enclosed mall with several hundred shops and numerous restaurants, shoppers can walk in it and enjoy it for hours without having to go outdoors to brave the elements.

And the symbolism does not end here. Directly behind the Parliament Buildings and across the Ottawa River in Hull, Quebec is the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Designed by Douglas Cardinal of aboriginal and Métis descent and one of Canada’s foremost architects, it is constructed in curvilinear fashion using indigenous materials and aboriginal and Canadian themes and sources of inspiration. It serves as a vivid reminder of the quest to create a style of architecture in Canada that is distinctively Canadian. It is a style that Canadians are becoming more familiar with, thanks to world famous architects like Frank Ghery who grew up in Toronto and is redesigning the Art Gallery of Ontario and Daniel Libeskind who is transforming the Royal Ontario Museum, as well as organizations like Heritage Canada, the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, and especially the Canadian Centre of Architecture which are doing so much to generate interest in Canadian architects and Canada’s own architectural history and accomplishments.

**References and Readings**


If housing and architecture are required to provide protection against the elements, so is clothing. For protection against the elements is ensured not only by the physical structures people create to provide shelter where they live, work, shop, and spend their leisure hours. It is also provided by clothing and what people wear.

What is most distinctive about clothing in Canada is how much there is of it. In countries with two seasons, people do not require a lot of clothing, or frequent changes in it. However, in a country like Canada with four seasons, especially a country where all the seasons are dominated by one season and climatic changes are frequent, a great deal of clothing is required as well as numerous changes in it.

This is apparent as soon as one enters any Canadian home. No sooner is one inside the front door than one encounters a closet full of boots, goshes, gloves, raincoats, topcoats, spring jackets, windbreakers, fall jackets, hats, umbrellas, scarves, toques - a Canadian classic - and much more. And this is only the beginning! Go upstairs and look in any bedroom and the same pattern repeats itself - chiffoniers, dressers and closets full of different types of shoes, short sleeved and long sleeved shirts, light sweaters, heavy sweaters, blouses, pants, shorts, long and short underwear, and many other types of apparel.

Most people in the world would consider this to be excessive in the extreme. And perhaps it is for Canadians who are hooked on shopping, clothes, and fashion. But for most Canadians, it is merely protection against the elements and precaution against the numerous changes that take place in climate and the seasons. Many different types of clothing are the price that has to be paid for living in a country where it is never possible to know what type of clothing will be needed tomorrow, or possibly even later today.

Inhabitants of the country have been conscious of this from the beginning. The aboriginal peoples of Canada were compelled to create many types of clothing - usually made from animal skins - to protect themselves against the elements. Fur was extremely popular because it provided warmth and the best protection of all against snow, ice, wind, and the cold. Seal in the far north and beaver in the south were in great demand, so much so that an entire period of Canadian history was dominated by the development of the fur trade, as documented in detail in Harold Innis’s classic book *The Fur Trade in Canada*. In this book, Innis contended that much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was spent chasing that “furry little animal” - the beaver - across Canada, largely through the formation and
development of the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company. Fur in general, and beaver pelts in particular, were coveted not only for reasons of survival. They were also coveted for reasons of fashion. They were much in demand in Europe, especially when they were made into fur hats and coats that became the rage in Europe and a key element in European fashion. In consequence, fur and beaver pelts quickly became one of Canada’s greatest exports, along with cod that Innis also immortalized in his other classic publication on *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy*.

While beaver, seal and fur have lost their attraction today due to incredible pressure from animal rights’ groups, they do explain a great deal about the development of clothing in Canada in the early years. After the founding of the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1690, the Company went on to become the largest clothing manufacturer in Canada. Although it is threatened today with take-over by the American giant Target Corporation - thus bringing to an end if it occurs the oldest company in Canada with a history of more than three hundred years and numerous “Bay stores” across the country - the Hudson’s Bay Company has produced many different types of clothing over the course of its history that have been popular with Canadians and people in other parts of the world. Two of the best examples are the Hudson’s Bay coat, a winter parka made of cloth and fur and decorated with aboriginal designs and motifs, and the Hudson’s Bay blanket, an exceedingly colourful item made of wool and designed for winter use.

As the fur trade receded and Canada became more settled and urbanized, European fashions began to predominate. In Quebec, French and Italian fashions were popular; they still are today. In other parts of the country, British fashions were the order of the day, particularly Victorian fashions that required many layers of clothing and a strong commitment to “covering up.” Long-laced boots, corsets, slips, and floor-to-neck dresses were worn by the women, high cut boots, trousers, shirts, ties, suits, and suit jackets were worn by the men. However, just as British and French styles in architecture gave way to American styles in the early twentieth century, so British and French fashions in clothing gave way to American fashions about the same time.

With this came fewer clothing styles from Europe and more clothing styles from the United States. One of the first companies to capitalize on this was the T. Eaton Company. Founded by Timothy Eaton in 1869, the T. Eaton Company built numerous department stores across the country. Its reputation was predicated on cash sales, fixed prices, and allowing customers to return items if they were not completely satisfied. In conjunction with its brisk catalogue business, which commenced in 1884, this made it possible for Eatons to capture the clothing market in Canada and catapult itself into the forefront of the clothing business. It did not enjoy a monopoly, however. There was competition from the Hudson’s
Bay Company, especially in the west, and from Simpsons, which opened a department store directly across the street from Eatons’ flagship store in Toronto.

For many years, these two major department stores dominated the retail clothing industry in Canada and engaged in keen competition not unlike the competition between Macys and Gimbels of New York, although on a much smaller scale. Nevertheless, both these major players in the clothing business have now disappeared from the scene. Eatons was forced out of business in the late nineteen nineties when members of the Eaton family lost interest in it, and Simpsons was taken over by Sears, the huge American conglomerate which has thrived in Canada as a result of its numerous stores across the country, its strong customer service, and its successful mail order business.

Over the last few decades, many different kinds of specialized clothing stores have opened up in Canada. A few of these stores are Canadian, such as Northern Reflections, Reitmans, Suzy Shier, and Mark’s Work Warehouse. However, the majority is American, including The Gap, American Eagle, Old Navy, and others. A number of huge all-purpose American department stores like Winners and Wal-Mart are operating in Canada as well. Wal-Mart is especially popular with many Canadians because of the large discounts it provides, despite the fact that it has experienced resistance across the country as a result of its labour practices in Africa, Asia and Latin America and its resistance to unions.

As a result of the aforementioned developments, and others, it is possible to see many different types of clothing stores in malls and shopping centres across the country today, from specialty shops to a few huge department stores and everything in between. These stores offer a variety of clothing styles and types, the large majority of which are casual and informal rather than traditional and formal as a result of changing lifestyle and social practices in Canada and other parts of the world. Like most countries, Canada has come a long way since the straight-laced and suffocating fashions of earlier generations.

While Canada has made few notable contributions to the international world of fashion, things are starting to change. The impetus for this was provided when Fashion/Canada was created in 1967 and the Fashion Designers Association of Canada was created in 1974. Included among the founding members of the latter organization were world-acclaimed designers such as Leo Chevalier, John Warden, Michel Robichaud and Hugh Garber of Montreal, and Alfred Sung, Elen Henderson, Claire Haddad and Pat McDonough of Toronto.

Peter Nygård must also be added to this list of world-acclaimed Canadian designers. Son of Finnish immigrants who settled in Deloraine, Manitoba, he founded Nygård International, a major player on the international fashion scene.
and a real pioneer in women’s clothing throughout the world. But for many Canadians, the country’s major success story in the world of fashion and clothing is Roots Canada. Created by Michel Budman and Don Green who claim to have come up with the idea while they were sitting around a campfire in Algonquin Park north of Toronto, Roots Canada is known internationally for its unique Canadian designs, comfortable clothing, colourful caps and toques, and Olympic sports wear. Its success suggests that Canada’s most significant contributions to clothing and fashion lie in the future rather than the past.

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ARTS – PERFORMING, EXHIBITING AND MEDIA

Of all the various parts of Canadian culture and customs, none may be more essential in the final analysis than the arts. Not only do artists and arts organizations create many of the signs, symbols, stories, myths, legends, metaphors and insights that are required to understand Canadian culture and customs as a whole, but also they create many of the works that are needed to give Canadians a solid sense of identity and place.

During the last fifty years, Canada has experienced a renaissance in its artistic life. Many factors have contributed to this. By far the most important was the creation of the Royal Commission on the Arts, Letters and Sciences in Canada - the Massey-Lévesque Commission - in 1949. It painted a rather dismal picture of artistic life in Canada after the Second World War and paved the way for many improvements in the future. One of the most important of these improvements was the creation of the Canada Council - now the Canada Council for the Arts - in 1957. As a public, non-governmental agency responsible for funding the arts at the national level, the Council has dispensed hundreds of millions of dollars in financial support for the arts since its inception, thereby doing more than any other institution to build up a cadre of professional artists and arts organizations across the country and create the conditions for a healthy and vigorous artistic life.

These developments were strengthened considerably by Expo and the Centennial celebrations in 1967. Taking place in Montreal and across the country, these historic events marked the founding of Canada in 1867 as a result of the signing of the British North America Act in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. The Centennial celebrations led to the construction of countless artistic and cultural facilities across the country - arts galleries, museums, theatres, concert halls, arts centre, libraries, and community complexes. Expo, the jewel in the Centennial crown, proved that Canadians are capable of competing with the best the world has to offer in artistic terms, thereby giving Canada and Canadians a strong sense of national identity and aesthetic pride. These developments have been reinforced since 1967 by the work of many federal agencies and institutions, including the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, the National Arts Centre, the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission, Telefilm Canada, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and others.

As a result of these developments, and many others, the arts have taken off in Canada over the last half-century. With the establishment of provincial and municipal government cultural departments and funding agencies and support from corporations, foundations and private benefactors, Canada now possesses a large and diversified constellation of performing, exhibiting and media artists, arts
organizations and facilities in all parts of the country and at all levels of activity - amateur, semi-professional and professional. Although these individuals, institutions and facilities exist primarily to satisfy the artistic needs of Canadians, many are becoming well-known internationally for their outstanding artistic achievements and valuable contributions to world artistic activity. This is true not only for the performing arts, but also for the exhibiting and media arts.

The Performing Arts

Throughout the larger part of Canadian history, the performing arts have been dominated by European values, traditions and works. Most of the country’s theatrical, musical and dance organizations performed compositions, plays and ballets by such well-known European masters as Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Debussy, Tchaikovsky, Shakespeare, Shaw, Molière, and the like. As a result, there was a German ring to the orchestral and choral music, a Scottish, Irish and Polish flair to the jigs, mazurkas, hornpipes and dances, a Russian cast to the ballets, and an English and French tinge to the theatre.

A transformation in this historical pattern started to emerge after the Second World War. While European works continued to be audience favourites - much as they still are in Canada and many parts of the world today - Canadian works began to appear on the programs of performing arts organizations. Much of the initiative for this came from the country’s creative and performing artists as they searched for forms of artistic expression which resonated with Canadians and the country’s northern climate and geography.

In the field of music, composers like John Weinzweig, Jean Papineau-Couture, R. Murray Schafer, André Prévost, Harry Somers, Harry Freedman, Violet Archer, Glenn Buhr, Jacques Hétu, Alexina Louie, Christos Hatzis, Michael Conway Baker and others have had an important impact on the musical repertoire of the country in general and orchestras like the Montreal Symphony, the Toronto Symphony, the Winnipeg Symphony, the Calgary Symphony, the Vancouver Symphony, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, and the Esprit Orchestra in particular. Many of the works of these composers are indigenous in character, and relate to the quest to create a musical repertoire in Canada that is distinctively Canadian, such as R. Murray Schafer’s North/White, Princess of the Stars and Music for Wilderness Lake, John Weinzweig’s Red Ear of Corn, Jean Papineau-Couture’s Nuit polaire (Polar Night) and Paysage (Landscape), Harry Somers North Country Suite, Harry Freedman’s Tableau and Images, Violet Archer’s Northern Landscape, and Glenn Buhr’s Winter Poems.

As important as these initiatives are in creating a musical repertoire that is distinctively Canadian, Canada is probably best known throughout the world for
its performers rather than its composers. This is true in both the classical and popular sense. In a classical sense, Canada is best known for Glenn Gould, the eccentric, internationally-renowned pianist who hummed while he played in concert, played Bach and especially the Goldberg Variations with great brilliance, and told Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic how Brahms piano concertos should really be played! His pioneering achievements on the piano, both in the concert hall and later in the recording studio because he abandoned live performances later in his all-too-short life, did much to pave the way for generations of Canadian pianists who have gone on to achieve celebrity status in recent years, including Angela Hewitt, Marc-André Hamelin, Louie Lortie, Jane Coop, and others. These accomplishments are complemented on the jazz side by Oscar Peterson, one of the world’s most distinguished jazz pianists and Diana Krall, one of the world most outstanding jazz singers, as well as on the institutional side by Tafelmusik, a world-renowned chamber group that specializes in Baroque music and performs - often on original instruments - in churches and concert halls throughout the world as well as on discs, CDs, and tapes.

But for many people, Canada is best known throughout the world for its popular rather than its classical performers. Spurred on by the early success of folk singers like Hank Snow, Wilf Carter, Anne Murray, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Gordon Lightfoot, “Stompin Tom” Connors, Bruce Cockburn, Paul Anka, the Barenaked Ladies and Blue Rodeo, Canada is well known throughout the world today for talented singers such as Céline Dion, Shania Twain, Bryan Adams, Alanis Morissette, k.d. lang, Nelly Furtado, Sarah McLaughlin, Jann Arden, Avril Lavigne, the Guess Who, the Tragically Hip, and others. While it is difficult to ascertain the reason for this, Canada seems to have achieved success in popular music throughout the world out of all proportion to its small numbers.

In theatre, developments have followed similar patterns and trends to those established in music. The early years were dominated by preoccupation with European plays and playwrights: Shakespeare, Shaw, Beckett, Chekhov, Ibsen and others in English Canada; Molière, Racine, and others in Quebec. Nevertheless, over the last few decades, concerted attempts have been made to develop an indigenous theatrical repertoire that is consistent with the country and its culture.

The lead here was provided by such playwrights as George Ryga, who is best known for his play The Ecstasy of Rita Joe, David Freeman, who wrote the highly successful Creeps, and Michel Tremblay, a Quebec playwright who wrote a succession of powerful plays such as Les Belles-Sœurs (The Beautiful Sisters) and Hosanna - often in joual or Quebec slang - which proved to be extremely popular with Quebecers and people in other parts of Canada. In combination with many other developments taking place at the same time, this helped to spark interest in the works of Canadian playwrights, including David French’s Leaving Home, John
Gray’s *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, and Thomson Highway’s *The Rez Sisters*. In recent years, interest has grown considerably in the works of Canadian playwrights, particularly Timothy Findley, Robertson Davies, Robert Lepage, who is also a world-famous theatrical and operatic designer, Linda Griffiths, Morris Panych, Joan McLeod, Jason Sherman, Sharon Pollack and others, as well as children’s theatre where Young People’s Theatre and Roseneath Theatre in Toronto have made important contributions.

What is true for theatre is also true for opera. Historically speaking, opera in Canada was dominated by interest in European works, particularly those of Verdi, Puccini, Tchaikovsky, Britten, and others. It was only in the early nineteen-fifties that attempts were made to create Canadian operas. This occurred when Healey Willan’s opera, *Deirdre*, was premiered in 1951. This was followed by *Louis Riel* in 1967. It was written by Harry Somers, Mavor Moore and Jacques Languirand about a famous Métis leader who was hanged in Saskatchewan in the late nineteenth century under very controversial circumstances for leading what was claimed to be an uprising against the Government of Canada. Interestingly, some of the most important developments in this field in recent years have come from opera companies like the Canadian Opera Company and the Vancouver Opera Company, internationally-known opera singers like Ben Heppner, Russell Braun, Michael Schade and Richard Margison, and music theatre organizations like Tapestry New Opera Works in Toronto. This innovative organization has developed many new Canadian operas, including *Nigredo Hotel* by Nic Gotham and Ann-Marie Macdonald, and *Iron Road* by Chan Ka Nin and Mark Brownell. The latter opera documents the experiences of Chinese immigrants who came to Canada in the nineteenth century to work on the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Interest in theatrical and operatic works would not have been possible without the development of a network of professional theatre and opera companies across the country, from The Mummers and the Neptune Theatre in eastern Canada to the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and Canadian Opera Company in the centre and the Vancouver Playhouse and the Victoria Playhouse in the west. These theatre and opera companies have been complemented by a number of companies specializing in the works of Canadian playwrights and operatic composers and librettists. The impetus for this came in the late nineteen sixties and early seventies when companies like the Toronto Free Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Factory Lab Theatre and Tarragon Theatre were established in Toronto and the East End Cultural Centre was established in Vancouver.

Dance is yet another performing arts activity that has grown rapidly in Canada over the last fifty years. The impetus here came from three of the country’s most celebrated classical dance companies: the National Ballet of
Canada in Toronto; the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in Winnipeg; and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal. Interestingly, these companies were all started by women who emigrated to Canada later in life to pursue their artistic visions and aesthetic dreams. Celia Franca came from England and started the National Ballet of Canada; Gweneth Lloyd and Betty Hey Farrelly also came from England and started the Royal Winnipeg Ballet; and Ludmilla Chiriaeff came from Latvia - although her parents were Russian and Polish - and started Les Grands Ballets Canadiens. Their experience and international connections helped considerably to put Canada on the world ballet map. Not only were these four outstanding women able to draw on expertise developed in some of the greatest ballet capitals of the world, but also they were able to entice world-famous dancers like Rudolph Nureyev, Erik Bruhn, and Mikhail Baryshnikov to come to Canada and dance with Canadian companies.

It wasn’t long before Canada was producing major ballet stars of its own. Dancers like Karen Kain, Frank Augustine, Rex Harrington, Evelyn Hart and Veronica Tennant began winning prestigious international awards and dancing in major ballet productions and companies in Canada and others parts of the world. These achievements were strengthened considerably with the creation of the National Ballet School in Toronto by Betty Oliphant, another immigrant from England who settled in Canada. Recognized as one of the finest ballet schools in the world, the National Ballet School has provided dance companies across the country - both classical and contemporary - with outstanding dancers, artistic directors, choreographers, and teachers. This has produced a solid base for the development of dance in Canada - development that now includes not only many outstanding classical ballet companies, but also many exciting modern, contemporary and multicultural dance companies as well.

The Exhibiting Arts

Like the performing arts, the exhibiting arts were strongly influenced by European works in earlier periods of history. Most of the country’s first art galleries and museums were anxious to acquire the works of European masters, and most artists were content to work within the European tradition. There were exceptions, however. In the nineteenth century, Cornelius Krieghoff was known for his wonderful paintings of social life in Canada, Lucius O’Brien was known for his exquisite depictions of the natural beauties and waterways of Quebec, and Paul Kane was known for his portraits of Indian chiefs and Indian cultural life. But these well-known Canadian artists were exceptions rather than the rule.

Things started to change with the formation of the Group of Seven in the nineteen twenties and thirties. Following in the footsteps of Tom Thomson, generally recognized as one of the best landscape painters Canada has ever
produced, the Group rejected dependence on European styles and travelled to different parts of Canada to paint the country and its magnificent forests, waterways, wilderness areas, landscapes, and the far north in earnest. The Group - Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, Frank H. Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and Frederick Horsman Varley - had a vision of art in Canada and were anxious to share it with Canadians. They believed that art must grow and flourish in Canada, and be expressive of the country before Canada will be a real home to Canadians. It was a vision that has increasingly resonated with Canadians and been sustained to this day.

The best place to see the works of the Group of Seven is at the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg, Ontario. Built in the log cabin style reminiscent of earlier periods in Canadian history, the Gallery was created by a wealthy industrialist and his wife in splendid hills north west of Toronto. It houses the best collection of paintings of the Group of Seven in the country, as well as an outstanding collection of some of the country’s finest aboriginal artists and craftspeople, including Norval Morrisseau, Benjiman Chee Chee, Pitseolak, Allen Sapp, and others. It also has a number of paintings by Emily Carr, a well-known Canadian artist from the West Coast who painted Indian villages, totem poles, and the magnificent forests of British Columbia.

While Quebec has had its share of painters who have painted landscapes and social scenes, such as Ozias Leduc and Clarence Gagnon, painting in Quebec moved in highly innovative directions after the Second World War. The impetus for this came from a group of Quebec artists who penned Refus global in 1948. It was a radical statement which renounced traditional ways of thought and art in Quebec, as well as the influence of the church and religion generally. In conjunction with other developments taking place at the time, it gave rise to the development of a group of outstanding Quebec artists, including Alfred Pellan, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Paul-Émile Borduas, principal author of Refus global, and Marcel Barbeau. Many of these artists lived in Paris for extended periods of time, became well known for abstract expressionism and geometric abstraction, and paved the way for future generations of Quebec artists such as Guido Molinari, Claude Tousignant, Yves Gauthier and others, as well as organizations like the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal. In fact, just as France is well known throughout the world for its distinguished painters and strong visual arts tradition, so Quebec is similarly known in Canada and many other parts of the world for its outstanding painters and strong visual arts tradition.

Over the last five decades, painting in Canada has moved in many diverse directions. Some artists, such as Greg Curnoe, Dennis Burton, Graham Coughtry, Joyce Wieland, Michael Snow, William Ronald, Roy Kiyooka, Jack Shadbolt, Harold Town and others, preferred abstract styles consistent with contemporary
styles in vogue in other parts of the world. Others, such as David Milne, and most recently Doris McCarthy, stayed within the Group of Seven tradition and made arduous trips to the far north and wilderness areas to realize this. Yet still others, such as William Kurelek, who was born of Ukrainian parents and grew up on the Prairies, painted folk scenes reminiscent of Ukrainian life in Canada and provided an important impetus for Canadian artists anxious to draw on their rich ethnic roots and multicultural traditions. And yet still others, such as Christopher Pratt, Mary Pratt and Alex Coville, have preferred to finely tune what is known as the “hyperrealist style” and “magic realism.” Canada also is home to a number of artists, such as Robert Bateman, Glen Loates and Freeman Patterson, who have preferred to focus on the country’s wildlife and have evolved international reputations as “wildlife artists.”

It is impossible to complete this portrait of the exhibiting arts in Canada without commenting on the country’s material arts or crafts. For people living in many parts of the world, Canada is better known for its craft work than its painting. Not only does Canada possess a strong tradition in the crafts as a result of its long period of pioneer development and dependence on craft activity, but also it has many outstanding crafts people, especially in the aboriginal community. Most prominent here are Bill Reid, a world-famous carver from Alberta, the totem pole carvers of the west coast of Canada, and the Inuit peoples of Cape Dorset and other areas who specialize in whale bone and soapstone carvings. Many of these carvings are known and prized internationally for their simplicity, originality, and artistic sensibilities.

Media Arts

As a pioneer in modern communications, Canada has made many contributions to the development of the media arts over the years, particularly in radio, television and film.

In radio and television, these contributions began in 1936 with the creation of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Created to counteract strong radio signals from the United States, the CBC was compelled to produce a variety of programs in music, drama and the news that were of interest to Canadians and reflective of the country’s problems and possibilities. Many well-known Canadian actors, actresses and musicians, such as Barry Morse, John Drainie, William Hutt, W. O. Mitchell, Mazo de la Roche, Robertson Davies, Len Peterson, Lister Sinclair, Jean Louis Roux, Jean Gascon, Jon Vickers, Lois Marshall, Maureen Forrester, Mary Morrison, Elizabeth Benson Guy, Juliette, and Giles Lamontagne, got their start on CBC radio in programs like Wednesday Night, Stage, Rawhide, The Happy Gang, La Famille Plouffe, Theatre of the Air, Opportunity Knocks, and Singing Stars of Tomorrow. This was furthered when television commenced in
Canada in 1952. Since that time, numerous performers have appeared on television and many fine programs have been produced, not only by the CBC, but also by CTV, CanWest Global, City TV - internationally known for Much Music and community television - TV Ontario, and others.

It often comes as a surprise to Americans and people in other parts of the world to learn that a number of famous Hollywood stars, including Lorne Greene, Pa in *Bonanza*, William Shatner, Captain Kirk in *Star Trek*, and Christopher Plummer, co-star with Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, are Canadian and got their start on CBC radio. Capitalizing on this tradition, many Canadian actors, actresses and directors have gone to Hollywood and made it big over the years, such as Mary Pickford, Walter Pidgeon, Raymond Massey, Kate Reid, John Candy, Donald Sutherland, Mike Myers, Jim Carrey, Norman Jewison, and others. It is developments like these, particularly when they are combined with numerous domestic developments, that explain why Canada has one of the finest public radio and television systems in the world - a system that is anchored by the CBC, Radio Canada, and many fine private radio and television stations and companies across the country.

Canada has also made many important contributions to the art of film. The breakthrough here came at the beginning of the Second World War when the federal government created the National Film Board (NFB) in 1939. Created to enhance the war effort and be “the eyes of Canada” in much the same way that CBC radio was “the ears of Canada” - at least according to the NFB’s first director, the flamboyant Scottish immigrant John Grierson - the NFB has recorded many film firsts over the years. Not only is it one of the oldest and largest public film agencies in the world, but also it has produced thousands of films in its French and English divisions and made seminal contributions to the documentary film, documentary filmmaking, cinema vérité (what Grierson called “truth with a hammer”), multi-screen viewing, IMAX, and especially animation through the pioneering work of Norman McLaren and Frédérick Back who won an Academy Award for his film *The Man Who Planted Trees* in 1988.

Quebec and Quebec filmmakers were quick to capitalize on the experience provided by the National Film Board. Over the last fifty years, Quebec has produced many outstanding filmmakers and directors, including Claude Jutra, Michel Brault, Denis Héroux, and especially Denys Arcand who has won many Quebec and international awards for films such as *Jésus de Montréal* (*Jesus of Montreal*), *Le declin de l’empire américan* (*The Decline of the American Empire*), and *Les invasions barbares* (*The Barbarian Invasions*), for which he recently won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.
Unlike Quebec filmmakers and directors who have been able to capitalize on the fact that they are making films in French for a French audience, filmmakers and directors in other parts of the country have found it much more difficult to make, finance, and market their films. This is because their films are in English, and they must compete with American films and the fact that most movie houses in Canada are owned and operated by huge American film and entertainment conglomerates. Nevertheless, some well-known filmmakers and directors are starting to emerge in other parts of Canada, including David Cronenberg who produced *The Fly*, *Naked Lunch* and the controversial film *Crash*, Atom Egoyan, a film director of Armenian decent who produced *Erotica* and the equally-controversial *Ararat*, and Don McKellar whose most recent film, *Childstar*, was premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 2004. It is developments like these, along with support from Telefilm Canada and other film-funding agencies, which suggest that filmmakers from parts of Canada other than Quebec will be heard from much more frequently in the future.

**References and Readings**

Canadian Cultural Observatory website: http://www.culturescope.ca


If the performing, exhibiting and media arts are of vital importance to Canada and Canadians, so are the literary arts. Whereas the performing, exhibiting and media arts deal largely with sound and visual images, the literary arts deal primarily with words, stories, and historical and contemporary narratives. As such, they are of crucial importance to the country and its citizenry because they deal with how Canada came into existence, how it has evolved in the past, where it stands at present, and where it might be headed in the future.

In the process of dealing with these matters, Canadian authors have been compelled to come to grips with the trials, tribulations, strengths and shortcomings of life and living in Canada over the centuries. Included here are such problems, issues and themes as: the immensity of the land; the inhospitable nature of much of the country’s geography; what it is like to live in a cold climate; the conflicts that have occurred between different groups of Canadians and urban and rural areas; alienation; estrangement; and the tensions that exist between church and state, individualism and collectivism, and nationalism, regionalism and localism.

Strange as it may sound, some of Canada’s earliest literary works were written by explorers, humorists, and people who immigrated to Canada from other parts of the world. A number of the country’s most famous explorers, such as Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain, Samuel Hearne, Alexander MacKenzie, David Thompson and others, set out fascinating accounts of their exploits and journeys into the interior of the country in their journals and memoirs. Thomas Chandler Haliburton, a humourist who produced Canada’s first internationally-successful book, expounded on the escapades of the notorious Sam Slick in his literary masterpiece The Clockmaker, published in 1836. And Catharine Parr Traill, Suzanna Moodie, Louis Hémon and Frederick Philip Grove, immigrants who came to Canada in the nineteenth century from England, France and Germany, wrote about the trials and tribulations of immigrant and rural life in Ontario, Quebec and the Prairie provinces in books like The Backwoods of Canada, Roughing It in the Bush, Life in the Clearings, Maria Chapdelaine, Over Prairie Trails, Turn of the Year, and Fruits of the Earth. These books are generally seen as providing a solid foundation for future generations of Canadian writers and later literary developments throughout the country.

As the country became more settled, authors turned to other issues, problems and themes. Among the most successful authors writing in the first half of the twentieth century were Lucy Maud Montgomery, Morley Callaghan, Stephen Leacock, W. O. Mitchell, and Hugh MacLennan. Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote Canada’s most famous novel - Anne of Green Gables - in 1908. Based on the life of an adopted girl growing up in Prince Edward Island, it
has been made into a movie and a musical, and is often showcased at the Charlottetown Festival and other festivals across the country. Morely Callaghan, whose concern with “the little man” is legendary and is claimed to have defeated Ernest Hemingway in a boxing match, wrote about crime, deprivation and a variety of secular and sacred issues in urban communities in books like Strange Fugitive, The Loved and the Lost, and They Shall Inherit the Earth. Stephen Leacock, following in the tradition of Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and Thomas Chandler Haliburton, is one of Canada’s best-known raconteurs, nocturnal lecturers, and humourists. Satirizing social situations and pretensions and literary and political fads, Leacock is well known for his Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town which appeared in 1946. W. O. Mitchell, a much beloved literary figure from western Canada who was also a great raconteur, wrote about farm life and farmhands on the prairies in popular books like Who Has Seen the Wind and long-running radio and television programs like Rawhide and Jake and the Kid. And Hugh MacLennan, preoccupied with the problems separating English and French Canadians, Quebec and the rest of Canada, wrote the Two Solitudes in 1945. It did a great deal to expose the difficulties of two distinct peoples slowly but surely drifting apart. Canada was also very well served by French authors at the time. One of the most popular was Gabrielle Roy, a French-Canadian from Manitoba, who wrote Bonheur d’occasion (The Tin Flute) in 1945 and La Petite Poule d’eau (The Little Water Hen) in 1950.

Over the last fifty years, the literary arts have virtually “taken off” in Canada. There are many reasons for this. One is the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts mentioned earlier, and especially the assistance it provided to individual artists and not just arts organizations. Another is the development of several federal and provincial publishing policies and programs. They have done a great deal to provide financial assistance for publishing companies in Canada, particularly publishing companies like McClelland and Stewart, House of Anansi, Coach House Press, Douglas and McIntyre, Raincoast, and others that are committed to producing works by Canadian authors for the Canadian public. Educational institutions have also become actively involved in promoting interest in Canadian authors, largely through programs like the Canadian Studies program which became popular following publication of the report To Know Ourselves.

As a result of these developments, and others, interest in the work of Canadian authors has escalated rapidly in all parts of the country. Some of the country’s best known authors produced outstanding publications during the nineteen fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties. Included here, in addition to others, are: Pierre Berton who wrote Klondike, The National Dream and The Last Spike about the Klondike gold rush and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway; Farley Mowat who wrote about the plight of aboriginal peoples, wildlife in Canada and the far north in books like People of the Deer, Sea of Slaughter,
And No Birds Sang, and Never Cry Wolf; Antonine Maillet who wrote extensively about the expulsion of the Acadians from Nova Scotia in 1755 and Acadian life in Canada and other parts of the world in books like La Sagouine; Margaret Lawrence who wrote about living in communities on the prairies in books like The Diviners and The Stone Angel; Joy Kogawa who wrote Obasan to cast light on the trials and tribulations of Japanese Canadians and their internment during the Second World War; Mordecai Richler who wrote The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz about growing up in the back allies and side streets of Montreal; and Roch Carrier who wrote La Guerre, Yes Sir and The Hockey Sweater and other Stories. The latter book is a Canadian classic. It is about a French-Canadian boy growing up in Quebec who is compelled to wear a hockey sweater of the Toronto Maple Leafs, symbolic of English-speaking Canada. These authors have been complemented by many other outstanding writers, including Rohinton Mistry, Alice Munro, Jane Urquart, Neil Bissondath, Nino Ricci, Anne-Marie MacDonald, Austin Clark, David Adams Richards, Robertson Davies, who wrote The Salterton Trilogy and Fifth Business, and Margaret Atwood whose book Survival has done a great deal to acquaint Canadians with the problems and issues Canadian authors have dealt with over the centuries.

Developments like these account for the fact that Canadian authors have captured many prestigious international awards and recorded many world literary successes in recent years. Like the country’s popular singers, Canadian authors are winning recognition throughout the world out of all proportion to the size of the country’s population.

The best example of this is Margaret Atwood, surely Canada’s most internationally-recognized and celebrated author. As a poet, novelist and critic, she is respected throughout the world for her books on a variety of feminist problems, mythological matters, and human and societal themes. Her books - The Edible Women, Surfacing, The Handmaid’s Tale, Cat’s Eyes, Alias Grace, The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake, and others - have won a number of major literary awards, including a Governor-General’s Award for The Handmaid’s Tale and the Booker Prize - Britain’s top literary award for fiction - for Blind Assassin.

The same holds true for Michael Ondaatje, a Sri Lankan of Dutch-Indian descent who emigrated to Canada in the early nineteen eighties. He is the author of many books, including Skin of a Lion and The English Patient, which won the Booker Prize in 1992 and was later made into a movie. In addition, Yann Martel was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2002 for his celebrated novel The Life of Pi, Alastair MacLeod won the Impac Dublin Literary Prize for his novel No Great Mischief, and Carol Shields, winner of ten Pulitzer, Orange and Governor-General’s awards, is known internationally for such books as The Stone Dairies, The Orange Fish, and Dressing Up for the Carnival. It is books like these which
are making it possible for Canadians to become much more acquainted with their own history, culture and traditions, as well as project this effectively to other parts of the world.

References and Readings


LEISURE AND RECREATION

No aspect of Canadian culture and customs is more affected by the northern nature of the country and its climate than leisure and recreation. What Canadians do in their leisure time is strongly influenced by the climate, the seasons, and the time of year.

Most leisure and recreation in Canada take place during the summer months. Not only is summer a better time to enjoy recreational and leisure activities than winter - largely because it is easier to get around and spend much more time outdoors - but also most corporations and governments provide holidays to their employees at this time of year and the country’s elementary and secondary schools are closed during the summer months. As a result, summer is an ideal time to travel in Canada, or go abroad. Popular travel destinations in Canada include the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara Falls, the Muskoka region of Ontario, the Rocky Mountains, Vancouver, Victoria, and British Columbia generally. Popular destinations abroad include Europe and the United States.

It is not only Canadians who travel in Canada at this time of year. Many Americans travel in Canada in the summer - to fish, camp, and enjoy the scenery and the outdoors. In 2002, for example, some 16 million overnight trips were taken by Americans in Canada, the large majority of them occurring during the summer months. In conjunction with the millions of overnight trips taken by Canadians during the summer, this helps to explains why Canada is quickly becoming one of the more important tourist destination in the world.

A variety of activities and events are enjoyed by Canadians, Americans, and visitors to the country during the summer. Visits to arts galleries, museums, festivals and historic sites are very popular, since most towns and cities have well developed facilities and organizations in this area. Canada also has one of the most extensive, largest, and best organized park and conservation systems in the world. As a result, visits to national, provincial and municipal parks and conservation areas are extremely popular, as are visits to World Heritage sites such as Quebec City, Lunenburg, L’Anse aux Meadows, Nahanni National Park, Dinosaur Provincial Park, Sgaany Gwaii, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, Wood Buffalo National Park, the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, and Gross Morne National Park. Trips to Ottawa, the nation’s capital, are also extremely popular. Major attractions here include the Parliament Buildings, the National Gallery of Canada, and, across the Ottawa River in Hull, the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Canada also has many professional football, soccer and baseball teams playing over the summer months. It still irks American baseball fans that
the Toronto Blue Jays won two consecutive World Series Championships, the only team outside the United States to do so.

Many Canadians enjoy camping and cottage life during the summer months. As is true with communications, Canadians probably own more recreational facilities and devices per capita - cottages, cabins, shacks, tents, coleman stoves, camping equipment, boats, trailers, canoes, skidoos, skis, snowmobiles, snowshoes, and the like - than any other people in the world. This is not surprising in view of the pristine nature of the country’s geography and the numerous lakes and rivers that are popular for swimming, sailing, canoeing, white-water rafting, and so forth.

Many other summer recreational and leisure time activities have become popular with Canadians over the last few decades. Gardening is extremely popular with home owners, and is often referred to as Canada’s most important leisure or recreational activity. It begins on Victoria Day or the 24th. of May - the day when one can be reasonably assured that another frost will not occur - and continues until well into the fall. Golf and tennis are also rapidly becoming favourites with Canadians, particularly golf. While part of this interest may result from the fact that Canada has a large Scottish population and golf was invented in Scotland, it probably results more from the fact that many golf courses have been constructed across the country and Mike Weir - a Canadian - recently won the Masters Tournament.

While most leisure and recreational activities take place during the summer, winter leisure and recreation activities are growing steadily in popularity and importance. There are many reasons for this. One is the popularity of cross-country skiing, downhill skiing and snowboarding, spurred on by the construction of top-notch ski resorts at Whistler in British Columbia - the site of the 2010 Winter Olympics - Banff in Alberta, Collingwood in Ontario, and Mount Tremblant and Mount Ste. Anne in Quebec. Another is the popularity of curling, a sport Canadians have made phenomenal contributions to over the last century and Canadians of all ages enjoy. And another is the popularity of skidooing and snowmobiling. In fact, it was the invention of the skidoo and the snowmobile by a Canadian - Armand Bombardier - in the middle half of the twentieth century that transformed Canadian attitudes toward winter in general and winter recreation in particular. Prior to the invention of the skidoo and the snowmobile, winter was a time of year that most Canadians tolerated rather than enjoyed. However, since the invention of these innovative devices, Canadians have an entirely different attitude towards winter, the snow, and “the Great White North.” For many Canadians, it is a time to get outdoors and enjoy a variety of activities like downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, skating, curling, tobogganing, snowshoeing, and so forth.
Despite this, most Canadians prefer to spend the bulk of their non-working hours and holidays during the winter months indoors rather than outdoors. Some, the so-called “snow birds,” made up largely of retired seniors, flock south every winter to escape the cold and enjoy warmer climes in Florida, Arizona, California, Texas, and the Caribbean. However, many Canadians hibernate during the winter months and enjoy a variety of indoor activities. Most of these activities revolve around “home entertainment centres” - combination stereos, television sets, DVDs, computers, and the like - which have become exceedingly popular in Canada in recent years. These facilities make it possible for Canadians to enjoy a variety of winter indoor activities like watching television and films, listening to music and the radio, playing computer games, and reading.

It all starts with the Grey Cup game in November. This classic sporting event, which has been played continuously in Canada since Lord Grey donated the Grey Cup in 1910, involves the winners of the eastern and western divisions of the Canadian Football League (CFL). It is a traditional Canadian favourite, marking the end of fall and the beginning of winter.

By this time, many Canadians are engaged in their favourite winter recreational and leisure activity. It is watching hockey on television, or playing it on the street or in one of the thousands of rinks across the country.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of hockey for Canada and Canadians. It is a well known fact that Canadians have made seminal contributions to the development of men’s and women’s hockey throughout the world, as is well documented in the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto. This contribution dates back to the first recorded hockey game in North America on Christmas day of 1855, the establishment of the Stanley Cup playoffs in 1893, and the creation of the National Hockey League in 1917.

Since that time, hockey has become Canada’s “number one sport” and “principal passion.” While baseball, basketball and soccer are becoming very popular in Canada and are well organized at the community level, it is hockey that grips the Canadian imagination and grips it like nothing else. Canadians love hockey and are very good at it, winning the men’s and women’s hockey championships at the Olympics in 2002 and the World Cup in 2004. However, Canadians have won prestigious international awards in many other winter sports, most notably curling, cross-country and downhill skiing, snowboarding, and particularly figure skating and speed skating where skaters like Barbara Ann Scott, Donald Jackson, Kurt Browning, Elvis Stojko, Jamie Salé, David Pelletier, Gaétan Boucher, Catriona Le May Doan, and others have won Olympic and/or world championships over the years.
It is impossible to conclude this portrait of leisure and recreation in Canada without commenting on the role that municipal governments, community colleges, and universities are playing in providing the resources that are necessary for recreational and leisure-time enjoyment and development in Canada. Many universities and community colleges provide degree and training programs for administrators and specialists in recreational and leisure studies, as well as adult education courses which have a fundamental bearing on this. In addition, most municipal governments now have departments of parks, recreation and culture which provide countless courses related to recreation and leisure time activities.

These courses run the whole gamut of possibilities, from drawing, painting, dancing, physical fitness, gardening, tai chi, yoga and wine-making to needlepoint, weaving, sculpting, rock climbing, cooking, cake decorating, and virtually everything else. As a result, Canadians are much better equipped to enjoy their leisure hours today than they have ever been in the past. This is making it possible to link together education, travel, tourism and culture in a way that was never possible in earlier periods of history. Many Canadians prepare well in advance for their leisure time endeavours, and enjoy a variety of activities that include lectures, study groups, tours, and in-depth experiences in “cultural tourism.”

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Web site: http://www.travelcanada.ca


FESTIVALS, FAIRS AND HOLIDAYS

Like people in other parts of the world, Canadians enjoy numerous festivals, fairs, and holidays throughout the year. These festivals, fairs, and holidays are designed to celebrate many different occasions - natural, religious, artistic, scientific, agricultural, political, recreational, social, and the like - as well as provide richness and variety to Canada’s cultural life.

This is particularly true for festivals. Each year, thousands of festivals are held across the country. The large majority of these festivals are designed to celebrate the seasons of the year in general and the changes that take place from one season to the next in particular. This is especially the case for spring, when many festivals celebrate the end of winter and the beginning of spring. There are maple syrup festivals in Ontario and Quebec, apple blossom festivals in Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia, and an internationally famous tulip festival in Ottawa every year. It attracts countless visitors from around the world because Ottawa is adorned with thousands of tulips that were donated by Queen Juliana of the Netherlands in appreciation of the role Canada and Canadians played in the liberation of Holland during the Second World War.

Like the spring festivals, summer festivals are closely related to nature and the seasons. Food and foodstuffs are the focus of many of these festivals, especially such foods and foodstuffs as strawberries, potatoes, salmon, shrimp, blueberries, oysters, and trout. Most of these festivals are held outdoors and involve a variety of culinary, recreational and artistic activities. Many are organized by churches and social groups, and include the best - and the worst! - of local cooking. Especially popular at this time of year are the festivals of the aboriginal peoples. Known internationally for their colourful customs, exquisite dances and dancing, powwows, drumming, and the like, these festivals are a Canadian favourite and are appearing with increased frequency whenever Canada is represented abroad.

But food, foodstuffs and aboriginal accomplishments are not the only things celebrated during the summer months. Many other aspects of Canada and the country’s historical development are celebrated at this time of year. For example, in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec, lumberjack festivals are held which celebrate the country’s lumber and timber traditions. These festivals include competitions to see how quickly trees can be climbed and stripped of their bark, as well as log-rolling contests on rivers and lakes. In Atlantic Canada, and especially Nova Scotia, highland festivals are popular. These festivals involve hammer and pole throwing contests, as well as a great deal of highland music and
dances like the Scottish fling. This is because many of the residents of this region trace their ancestral roots back to Scotland and the Scottish Highlands.

Summer also provides the time - and the setting - for two of the country’s largest, oldest, and best-known festive events. The first is the Calgary Stampede. Billed as “The Greatest Outdoor Show in the World,” the Stampede is held in early July and is one of the biggest rodeos and agricultural exhibitions in the world. Commencing with a huge parade down Calgary’s main street and concluding at its fair grounds, the Stampede includes bronco and bull riding, team rodeos, chuck wagon races, and a variety of culinary delicacies.

Like the Calgary Stampede, the Canadian National Exhibition takes place in the summer of the year, although it is at the end of August and beginning of September rather than July. The Exhibition, the largest annual exhibition of its kind in the world, can be traced back to 1878, and especially 1912 when it was officially named the Canadian National Exhibition. In the years to follow, one of the finest amusement parks in North America was created along the Midway, numerous side shows were presented, grandstand shows with famous performers from all over the world were organized, marathon swims were held like Marilyn Bell’s famous swim across Lake Ontario, and exhibitions were mounted, such as the Dionne Quintuplets, the first known quintuplets born in the world. In recent years, more attention has been focused on displays of the latest automobiles, electrical appliances and computers, as well as art and craft work from around the world. Held for ten days each year, the CNE attracts millions of visitors from all over the world and many different parts of Canada.

And how is this for a festive occasion? Every second year, a Sound Symposium is held in Saint John’s, Newfoundland involving numerous composers, musicians, visual artists, and technicians. The objective is to celebrate sounds of all kinds, as well as turn the city and environs into a virtual “audio-visual lab.” One of the major events is a “fog horn symphony.” It is composed by a different composer each time, performed in Saint John’s harbour, and scored for the horns and bells of all the ships moored in the harbour. Artists and audiences from Canada and other parts of the world love it.

Although there are few festivals in the fall of the year, fairs are commonplace in most communities across the country. The majority of these fairs have strong agricultural roots and agrarian traditions, and involve displays of livestock and farm equipment, horse races, cattle pulling contests, and much more. In recent years, many other activities have been added to these fairs, such as displays of arts and crafts, cooking competitions, and presentations by different community groups. These fairs are increasingly being complemented by
“Octoberfests,” especially in communities like Kitchener-Waterloo in Ontario with large German populations.

While winter is not generally an important time for festive activities, there are a number of well-known festive activities held at this time of year. Three of the largest are the Winter Carnival in Quebec City, the Winterlude Festival in Ottawa, and the Sourdough Rendezvous in Whitehorse in the Yukon. Quebec’s Winter Carnival is a pre-Lenten celebration, which ran initially from 1894 to 1900. Revived in the 1950s, it has become bigger - and better - than ever. Bonhomme Carnival, a talking snowman, is the Carnival’s principal symbol. He resides in an ice palace near the Chateau Frontenac, and presides over a variety of events like ice sculptures and competitions, boat races on the ice across the Saint Lawrence River, toboggan rides and slides, and other attractions. Winterlude, in Ottawa, also includes a variety of winter events, such as skating and racing on the Rideau Canal, the longest skating rink in the world at 7.8 kilometers. And the Sourdough Rendezvous in Whitehorse includes dogsled, snowmobile and snowshoe races, as well as contests for flour packing and pancake making.

Over the last fifty years, many other types of festivals and fairs have sprung up in different parts of the country to complement these traditional festivals and fairs. Some of the most popular are artistic and multicultural in nature.

Canada is the home of two of the largest festivals devoted to the works of Shakespeare and Shaw. The Shakespearean Festival in Stratford, Ontario, has grown rapidly since its inception in a tent in 1953 to become one of the largest theatrical festivals in the world. It runs over a period of five months and attracts millions of visitors from Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world. The Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, performs a similar function for devotees of the works of George Bernard Shaw. Like the Stratford Festival, it has been extremely successful since its inception in 1962, and now includes performances of works by Shaw and many other famous playwrights and literary figures. These internationally known festivals are complemented by other major arts festivals in Ontario, including the Guelph Spring Festival, the Elora Festival, the Festival of the Sound in Parry Sound, the Boris Brott Summer Music Festival, and others.

While Ontario takes the lead in arts festivals, many well-known arts festivals take place in other parts of the country. For example, the Charlottetown Festival in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, the arts festival in Banff, Alberta, the Big Valley Jamboree in Cranmore, Alberta, the Festival Internationale de Lanaudière in Joliette, Quebec, the Scotia Music Festival in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and the Vancouver Chamber Music Festival in British Columbia are all major festivals which include outstanding performers and presentations from different
parts of the world. While most of these festivals provide a variety of classical, popular, folk, choral, and other musical activities, a number of major jazz festivals also take place in the country. Three of the largest are the International Jazz Festival - Jazz City - in Edmonton, the Vancouver Jazz Festival, and especially the Festival Internationale de Jazz de Montréal. It includes more than 400 concerts by some 2,000 artists for the enjoyment of more than a million festival goers from all parts of the world.

In recent years, these festivals have been complemented by others types of festivals. Film and television festivals have become increasingly popular. In fact, after Cannes, Canada hosts two of the largest film festivals in the world - the Toronto Film Festival and the Montreal Film Festival, or the International Festival of New Cinema and New Media. They take place in the fall of the year and attract millions of film goers, movie-buffs, movie stars from Hollywood and other film capitals, screen writers, directors, and countless buyers and sellers of films and film properties from around the world. Canada is also home to the largest television festival in the world - the Banff Television Festival. Commenced in 1979, it is generally recognized as “the place for the world’s top television talents,” with more than forty countries and nine hundred television programs entered in the Rockie Awards.

A very different kind of festival is the Molson Indy in Toronto. It is held every year, involves racing cars, and includes some of the fastest racing car drivers in the world travelling around a specially designed track close to Lake Ontario. Toronto is also the home for a number of major multicultural festivals. The impetus for this was provided when Caravan was commenced in the nineteen-seventies, shortly after Canada was officially declared a bilingual, multicultural country. For a modest price, people purchased a passport that entitled them to visit a variety of cultural pavillons in different parts of the city. These pavillons were organized by different ethnic communities and exposed people to the various cultures, customs and cuisines of the world. Similar multicultural festivals now exist in other parts of the country, most notably Vancouver and Manitoba where the Folklorama Festival is extremely popular.

In recent years, Caribana has become one of the country’s largest and most popular festivals. It is a Caribbean-style festival involving numerous floats and costumes made of beads, satin, peacock feathers, sequined chiffon fabric rolls, purple taffeta, assorted fiberglass telescopic rods, and other glittery devices. It involves performances by many outstanding steel bands and other musical ensembles. Taking place in Toronto each year in early August, it attracts millions of visitors from all parts of the world, especially since the festivities spill over onto the islands in Lake Ontario after the parade in downtown Toronto is completed.
Like most people in the world, Canadians also enjoy and celebrate a number of religious, national, regional, and civic holidays. As a country strongly influenced by Christian traditions during a particular phase in its development, Christmas, New Years, and Easter are important holidays for many people. So are national, regional and political holidays like Canada Day, which is held on July 1st, and celebrates the union of the various provinces of the time under the Government of Canada in 1867, Remembrance Day, which is held on November 11th, and commemorates the loss of thousands of lives during the First and Second World wars, Victoria Day, which is held on the last Monday in May and commemorates Queen Victoria’s Birthday, Civic Day, which is celebrated at the beginning of August and celebrates civic activities in Canada, and Labour Day, which is celebrated on the first Monday in September and recognizes the valuable contributions made by labour and labour unions to Canadian development. In Quebec, people celebrate Fête St. Jean Baptiste - the patron saint of French-Canadians - on June 24th. It commemorates the arrival and persistence of the first French colonists in Canada, and involves a spectacular parade and many other types of activities in Quebec City and other towns and cities across the province.

Also popular in Canada are several other special days based on particular events or specific occasions. Valentine’s Day is celebrated on February 14th and features exchanges of gifts, cards and chocolates among friends and lovers, April Fool’s Day is celebrated on the morning of April 1st and involves a practical joke, trick or prank played on another person, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day are celebrated in May and June respectively and involve - as the names suggest - commemorations to mothers and fathers, and Groundhog Day is celebrated on February 2nd, and is designed to determine how long the winter will last depending on whether or not the groundhog sees its shadow.

While all these holidays and special days are enormously popular in Canada, the day that is fast becoming most popular with many Canadians - particularly children but also adults - is Halloween. It is celebrated on October 31st, and is a devilish type of day that involves decorating homes with witches, goblins, jack-o-lanterns (hollowed out pumpkins carved with spooky faces and lighted with candles), and other scary devices. Children go door to door dressed in colourful costumes and cry “trick or treat” or “shell out, shell out, or I’ll break your windows inside out.” Residents respond by filling the children’s bags with candies, suckers, and other goodies, which explains why this particular day is more popular with many children than Christmas, when they get more than their fair share of “useless presents” as Dylan Thomas, the Welsh author, called them.

With more and more Asians, Africans, Latin Americans, Caribbeans and people from the Middle East living in Canada, it is possible to encounter many more parades and festive activities on city streets across the country which
celebrate Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism, Chinese New Year, the beginning of Ramadan, and many other religious and social events. These activities are adding a great deal of richness, colour, and variety to the festival and holiday scene in Canada today.

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RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

As is true for all other areas of life in Canada, religious life has been strongly influenced by developments in other parts of the world, most notably Europe.

While the aboriginal peoples did not have religions and specialized religious institutions in the formal, organizational sense, they were - and are - extremely spiritual in nature. As is well recognized throughout Canada and other parts of the world, the aboriginal peoples have strong beliefs and convictions about the role of spiritual values in life, as well as many myths and legends which deal with the relationship between human beings, nature, and the Creator, living in harmony with each other and the natural environment, and conserving resources at every opportunity. These values, myths and legends are extremely important today, as humanity searches for modes of living which do far less damage to the natural environment and protect the earth’s precious resource legacy.

Since most of the first Europeans who came to Canada were from France and France was primarily a catholic country, Catholicism was the first religion to take hold in Canada. And since most of these settlers and their descendants settled in Quebec, Quebec quickly became known as “a catholic province.”

This was strengthened considerably when Catholicism was legallyinstated under the Crown through the Quebec Act of 1774 and the Constitutional Act of 1791. This did a great deal to ensure the existence of Catholicism in Quebec - especially as more and more settlers from Europe came from protestant rather than catholic countries - as well as open the doors for the Roman Catholic Church to play a powerful role in Quebec throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. There was not a single aspect of life and living in Quebec - from social affairs and family life to government, education, and community development - that was not influenced by the Roman Catholic Church. This is confirmed by travelling in Quebec. In virtually every town and city, there is a large Catholic church or cathedral at the very centre towering over everything else.

During the last fifty years, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church has waned significantly in Quebec. While industrialization, urbanization and modernization have all played a role in this, the greatest role was played by “the Quiet Revolution” which took place in the nineteen sixties. This resulted in a major reduction in the power, influence and authority of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as a liberalization in values and attitudes and decline in church attendance. The statistics confirm this. In the 1960s, 90% of Quebec Catholics claimed to attend church on a regular basis. By the early 2000s, this had dropped
to between 25 and 30% and was accompanied by a major decline in the birth rate, despite the fact that 86% still identified themselves as Catholics.

Despite the considerable drop in attendance at church in Quebec, Roman Catholics constitute the largest religious group in Canada. They make up 45% of the Canadian population. This is not only due to the fact that there are many Roman Catholics living in Quebec. It is also due to the fact that many Europeans who came to Canada in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries came from countries and parts of Europe like Ireland, Italy, Portugal and southern Germany which were predominately Catholic.

While Catholics constitute 45% of the Canadian population, Protestants are not far behind. They account for roughly 30% of the country’s population. Of this number, most are affiliated with the Anglican Church of Canada or the United Church of Canada. Anglicans constitute approximately 8% of the Canadian population, and members of the United Church constitute approximately 12%. This results from strong immigration from Protestant parts of Europe like England, Scotland, Wales, northern Germany, the Scandinavian countries, and Iceland.

Like the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the United Church are struggling with declining attendance. While many people still claim to be affiliated with these churches, regular attendance has fallen off dramatically. Roughly 14% are active, regular participants in the Anglican Church, and approximately 16% are active, regular participants in the United Church. This has brought with it a host of problems, including the closing and selling of some churches, the use of other churches as day care centres and food banks, and the sharing of churches with other religious groups and congregations.

These are not the only problems churches in Canada are confronted with at present. While the Catholic Church struggles with the complex problems of abortion, women's control over their bodies and the ordination of women, the Protestant churches struggle with the difficult problems of gay and lesbian ordination and same-sex marriages. This has been particularly pronounced in the United Church. Created in 1925 through an amalgamation of many Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist sects, the United Church is seen as a bell weather for religious reform and change in Canada, as well as one of the most democratic religious institutions in the country. In 1996, it was shaken to its foundations over a very nasty public debate about the propriety of ordaining professed homosexuals to the ministry. Not only was the congregation split down the middle over this contentious issue, but also it lost many of its members to other congregations and religious groups.
While the majority of Canadians are Catholics, Anglicans, or members of the United Church, there are many other religious denominations in Canada as well. Lutherans, Baptists, Jews, Mennonites, Evangelicals, Scientologists, Rastafarians and Hare Krishnas all add richness and variety to Canada’s religious mosaic. So do Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and Sikhs. In fact, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism are the fastest growing religions in Canada, constituting approximately 3% of the Canadian population. This rapid growth is not surprising, given the large number of people who have come to Canada over the last half-century from India, Pakistan, China, the Middle East, and other parts of the world where these religions predominate. As a result of developments such as these, it is more commonplace to see temples and mosques in Canadian cities today – temples and mosques that are often filled to capacity with enthusiastic members of these faiths.

Developments like these are not devoid of problems, however, especially when they conflict with long-established social mores and conventions in Canada. For example, several years ago a major dispute erupted over whether a Sikh should be allowed to wear his turban – one of the most important religious symbols of Sikhism – as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police where a different form of headdress was required. The dispute was finally resolved in favour of permitting the Sikh to wear his turban, although it caused a great deal of stress, anxiety and consternation in the country at the time because of the conflict between religious values and established social practices and policies in Canada.

It is impossible to complete this portrait of religion and religious practices in Canada without commenting on another factor in the religious life in the country. It is the relationship between Church and State.

By and large, there is a clear separation of Church and State in Canada. This is consistent with the practice of making a strong distinction between “the secular” and “the sacred” in most parts of the western world. However, there are some peculiarities and exceptions in the Canadian case – peculiarities and exceptions that have to do largely with the historical development of the country in general and its educational system in particular.

At the elementary and secondary school level, for instance, there is a separate Catholic school system in addition to the country’s regular public school system. This results from the fact that the Catholic Church was given authority to develop its own educational system following the signing of the Quebec Act of 1774, despite the fact that other religious groups have always resented this because they have felt they should also be able to develop their own separate educational systems for followers of their faiths. At the post-secondary school level, many universities were forced to give up their religious affiliations in order to receive
public funds, despite the fact that they were established by religious institutions. However, several universities continue to have colleges that have strong religious affiliations, such as Victoria College, Saint Michael’s College and Trinity College at the University of Toronto.

This is the exception rather than the rule. Generally speaking, religion is a private matter in Canada. Not only have the influence of religious institutions and the church declined considerably over the last half century, but also there is no real “fundamentalist fringe” in Canada and religious groups exercise little or no control over politics, social affairs, and educational development throughout the country. There is a strong feeling that Canadians should be free to join whatever religious institution they like and participate in whatever religious activities they prefer, but this should be a private-sector matter rather than a public-sector matter and all individuals and institutions in the country should endeavour to ensure this.

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Like people in other parts of the world, Canadians are wrestling with a whole set of complex gender, family, courtship, marriage, and social problems.

Of these problems, the problem of gender equality heads the list. As is true for women everywhere in the world, Canadian women are engaged in the difficult struggle to achieve equality with men. Fortunately, there are a number of remarkable historical precedents to assist them in the task. Foremost among these precedents are: the founding of the Women’s Institute of Canada by Adelaide Hoodless in 1897 which grew into the Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada and one of the largest women’s organizations in the world; and the pioneering achievements of “the famous five” - a group of five trailblazing Canadian women who did a great deal to advance women’s rights and the cause of women in the early part of the twentieth century. These five women - Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung and Henrietta Muir Edwards - were all from western Canada and are regarded as real pioneers in the women’s movement in Canada and other parts of the world. For example, Emily Murphy was Canada’s first female judge, and the first woman in the British Empire to be appointed to the bench. Louise McKinney was the first woman to be appointed to the Alberta legislature, and was the first elected female official in the British Empire. And Henrietta Muir Edwards was instrumental in establishing the National Council of Women, as far back as 1893.

With pioneering achievements like this, it is not surprising that there are many women in Canada today who are doing a great deal to advance women’s rights and social causes and concerns. Included among these women, in addition to others, are: June Callwood, founder of numerous women’s and social organizations such as Casey House in Toronto, a hospice for people suffering with HIV/AIDS; Doris Anderson, who was for years the dynamic editor of the women’s magazine Chatelaine and is presently President of Vote Canada, an organization seeking to create a fairer electoral system; Michelle Landsberg, long-time journalist on women’s issues for The Toronto Star; Bertha Wilson, the first woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada and a major player in the development of social and gender legislation; and Maude Barlow, chairperson of the Council of Canadians and a strong advocate of women’s rights and social causes in Canada. Interestingly, Canadian women are also playing an important role in the promotion of women’s rights and social causes at the international level. Included here are Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Louise Arbour, recently appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
It is contributions like these that help to explain why Canada has some of the most advanced social legislation in the world. The impetus for this has come not only from many well-known and courageous Canadian women, but also from Canadians like John Humphrey who was responsible for drafting *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* when he was Director of the Human Rights Division at the United Nations in 1947. As a result of such initiatives, and others, Canada passed its historic Bill of Rights in 1960. It spelled out in detail the right of all citizens not to be discriminated against for reasons of race, national origin, skin colour, religious belief, or gender. This Bill, which has had a profound effect on the social situation and legal system in Canada, was incorporated into the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the Constitution Act of 1982. This Act was passed by the government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, one of Canada’s most respected and beloved Prime Ministers and a well-known political leader throughout the world for his commitment to peace, social justice, multiculturalism, and the “just society.”

While gender equality and human rights top the list of social concerns in Canada today, issues related to the legal definition of marriage and the family are not far behind. There are fundamental changes going on in this area that are having a profound effect on marital and family life in Canada.

As a country with strong multicultural traditions and an exceedingly diverse population, Canada is home to many different types of family situations and courtship and marital relations. Not only is it possible to find every conceivable type of family in the country - “extended,” “blended,” “one-parent,” “two-parent,” and the like - but also it is possible to find every conceivable type of marital and courtship situation, from short and long courtships and freedom of choice to pre-arranged marriages and chaperones. This merely mirrors the diverse nature of the Canadian population, the many different cultures that exist in the country, and courtship, family, and marital practices in vogue in other parts of the world.

While Canadians have a strong commitment to family, family values, and family life, statistics reveal that there are fundamental changes going on in this area at the present time. According to recent Census figures, families are getting smaller, down from 3.9 members in 1961 to 3.0 members in 1999. Moreover, more Canadians are living alone, up from 9% of all households in 1961 to 24% of all households in 1996. Furthermore, there are more than one million lone- or single-parent families in Canada, up 33% since 1986.

At the same time, the country’s marriage rate is declining and the divorce rate is rising. Not only are more and more young people opting for common-law relationships rather than formal marriages, but also an increasing number of married couples are dissolving their marriages before their thirtieth wedding
anniversary. This is due primarily to changes in the Divorce Act, which have made it much easier to obtain a divorce. In 1968, legally recognized grounds for divorce were extended to include “no-fault divorce” based on separation for three years. In 1986, this was changed to one year, which likely accounts for the high rate of divorce among Canadians. It is relatively easy to obtain a divorce in Canada today provided children are not involved.

While many countries are struggling with these types of problems, Canada appears to have gone farther than most countries in accommodating and legalizing new types of gender, marital, family and social relationships.

While churches and the courts are wrestling with the legal, moral and religious implications and consequences of this, there is much more recognition and acceptance of gays and lesbians in Canadian society today. Gay and lesbian organizations are appearing with increased frequency throughout the country, as are “gay parades” and “pride celebrations” on city streets. In the last few years, a number of provincial governments - most notably in Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Quebec - have granted rights to gay and lesbian couples that are virtually synonymous with those enjoyed by heterosexual and common-law couples.

What is true for gay and lesbian developments is also becoming true for “same-sex marriages.” In 2003, the Ontario Court of Appeal broadened the definition of marriage significantly and ruled unanimously that same-sex couples can obtain marriage licenses and register their marriages legally. Similar initiatives were taken in British Columbia later in the same year, and in the Yukon a year later. The Government of Canada has also taken a stand on this. In 2004, it submitted draft legislation to the Supreme Court of Canada that would redefine marriage to include same-sex couples. The Court is expected to rule on the constitutionality of this proposal in late 2004 or early 2005. As a result of developments such as these, there are more and more same-sex marriages being performed in Canada’s civic institutions today. A number of churches are wrestling with this complex issue, despite strong objections from parishioners, congregations and the Pope who are actively opposed to it.

Canada has also legalized the growing and use of small amounts of marijuana for medicinal purposes in recent years. In conjunction with the changes taking place in marital relations and same-sex marriages, this is increasingly differentiating Canada from the United States, where there is much more resistance to change in these matters. Nevertheless, when all the developments taking place in Canada in gender and courtship relations, families, marriages, and the growing and use of marijuana are juxtaposed and added up, they indicate that a new social order is taking shape in Canada. It is an order that reflects the high
degree of diversity found in Canadian society today - in politics, education, religion, the population, human relations, and virtually everything else.

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SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND LIFESTYLES

If there is one place where all the diverse parts of Canadian culture converge and come to rest, it is in the social customs and lifestyles of Canadians. Not only are Canadians products of their culture as a whole, but also this has a profound effect on how they see the world, act in the world, and position themselves in the world.

Canadians are a very determined lot. Their determination derives from the fact that they have survived in a cold climate and created a sovereign and independent country in the northern half of the North American continent against virtually insurmountable odds.

While this sense of determination manifests itself in the lives of all Canadians, it is most conspicuous in the lives of some of the country’s most celebrated inventors, social activists, and athletes. Examples come quickly to mind. Frederick Banting, Charles Best, and others were compelled to overcome numerous obstacles in their quest to find a cure for diabetes. In the process, they discovered insulin, which has saved millions of lives. Abraham Gesner was forced to subdue countless challenges in his search for a better source of light. This eventually led to the discovery of kerosene that changed the world. And Terry Fox and Rick Hansen were forced to endure unbelievable physical pain and hardship in their desire to raise millions of dollars for cancer research and other worthwhile causes. Terry Fox ran his famous Marathon of Hope on one leg after he lost his other leg to cancer, and Rick Hansen executed his well-known Man in Motion World Tours as a quadriplegic in a wheel chair.

But for many Canadians, the determination of Canadians is best revealed in the exploits of some of the country’s greatest athletes: Wayne Gretzky had a brilliant career as one of the smallest, lightest, and best hockey players in the world; Gordie Howe played professional hockey for so long he played his final season with his two sons Mark and Marty; Hayley Wickenheiser has been a tower of strength in women’s hockey for years; and Maurice “the Rocket” Richard was the first National Hockey League player to score fifty goals in fifty games - often with two or three players draped on his back - and simply “refused to quit.”

If Canadians are a determined people, they are also a practical people. It would not have been possible to survive in a cold climate and create “the true north strong and free” as is stated in the country’s national anthem without this.

This practical streak manifests itself in the social customs and lifestyles of Canadians in many ways. Canadians do not burn their bridges; they are too aware
that this could come back to haunt them one day. Moreover, they are not high risk-takers, preferring “a bird in the hand to two in the bush.” They are often contrasted with Americans in this regard, since Americans are much more willing to take risks and go out on limbs than Canadians. This is often used to explain major differences in the historical development of the two countries. Whereas Americans risked a great deal when they broke away from Great Britain through the American Revolution and relied heavily on rugged individualism, entrepreneurship, and private sector development, Canadians were content to work within the framework provided by Great Britain and France and relied much more heavily on collectivism, collaboration, and public sector development. They knew that creation and maintenance of a huge country in a cold climate was not feasible without compromise, concession, and especially a strong streak of practicality and pragmatism - character traits that Canadians are known for throughout the world.

But the basic differences between the two countries and the two peoples show up most clearly in their constitutions. Whereas the American Constitution is predicated on “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as noted earlier, the Canadian Constitution is predicated on “peace, order and good government.” This has produced a society in the northern part of the North American continent which is very orderly - a character trait that has probably been inherited from the British where “the queue” reigns supreme - as well as very peaceful. While Canadians are willing to fight for causes they believe in, as was amply demonstrated during the First and Second World wars, their natural inclination is towards peace and order. This is confirmed by the fact that Canada spends very little on national defence, has one of the smallest armies in the world, is strongly committed to the United Nations and multilateral relations, and plays a major role in peace-keeping and peace-making throughout the world.

But it is in the area of “good government” that the practical side of Canadians manifests itself most conspicuously. Canadians demand a great deal of their politicians and governments, and are very hard on them when things go wrong. As one of the most governed people in the world with fully-developed governments at the federal, provincial, regional and municipal levels, Canadians expect their governments and politicians to live up to the ideals set out in the country’s constitution and fight vigorously against political patronage and bureaucratic corruption whenever and wherever it is encountered.

It is the strong streak of practicality which Canadians manifest in their lives which helps to account for the fact that Canada enjoys one of the highest standards of living in the world. Without doubt, the munificent natural resources of the country and the high degree of creativity Canadians have exhibited over the centuries have contributed substantially to this. However, without a strong
practical streak and the ability to build a dynamic economy, excellent health care, educational and political system, and stimulating network of artistic and recreational activities, it is unlikely that Canada would have been selected by the United Nations as one of the best countries in which to live over much of the last decade.

Interestingly, Canadians have been able to achieve this while simultaneously developing a strong sense of humour and ability to laugh at themselves. Previous reference was made to this in the works of some of the country’s most outstanding humourists and satirists: Thomas Chandler Haliburton and his notorious Sam Slick; Stephen Leacock and his beloved *Sunshine Sketches*; W. O. Mitchell and his comical radio and television series *Jake and the Kid*; and Mordecai Richler and his memorable *Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. But this merely scratches the surface of Canadian humour. A more complete list would include John Wayne and Frank Schuster, Rich Little, Dave Broadfoot, Donald Harron (a.k.a. Charlie Farqueson), Mary Walsh, Will and Ian Ferguson, Tom Green, Yvon Deschamps, Rick Mercer, Second City Television (SCTV), the Royal Canadian Air Farce, This Hour Has 22 Minutes, the Canadian Rant, Yuks Yuks, and others.

But it is really in United States and other parts of the world that Canadian comedians and humourists have made their mark. Not only did John Wayne and Frank Schuster appear on the *Ed Sullivan Show* for years, but also some of Hollywood’s greatest comedians were born in Canada and got their start in Canada, such as Mike Myers, Dan Akroyd, Michael J. Fox, John Candy, Jim Carrey, Martin Short, and others. Canadian comedians are making it big in other parts of the world as well. One of the most successful is Mark Rowswell, or as he is known in China, Dashan or “Big Mountain.” He is captivating Chinese audiences with his incredible sense of humour and ability to convey this humour in fluent Chinese and the ancient art of xiangsheng or “comedic dialogue.” It is experiences like these that caused one person to observe, “Canadians…are very funny people. They have a wonderful sense of humour and love to laugh at themselves. And the world laughs along with them! Without Canada, the world would be a sadder place.”

It is impossible to conclude this portrait of social customs and lifestyles in Canada without commenting on another well-known Canadian character trait. It is the capacity for caring and sharing.

While Canadians have been able to achieve a high standard of living and decent quality of life, this has not been achieved without a great deal of concern for the elderly, the needy, the disabled, and the disadvantaged. There are many examples of this: development of a public health care system that is one of the
finest in the world; commitment to a social security net that provides pensions and old age assistance for seniors and welfare payments for low income families and single mothers; creation of a progressive tax capability that is designed to reduce income disparities between rich and poor and ensure a reasonable measure of income equality for all, and perhaps most importantly, a willingness to do a great deal of voluntary work and come to the aid of others in times of need. The capacity of Canadians to close ranks and respond to the needs of their fellow citizens when they are devastated by floods, ice storms, droughts, and other catastrophes is legendary.

It is capacities like these that will be needed more than ever if Canada is to play the role it is capable of playing in global development and human affairs in the future. For what this brief portrait of Canadian culture and customs reveals is a country that is rapidly coming to grips with its colonial past and powerful pressures from the United States, as well as developing many of the assets and capabilities that are needed to play a valuable role in the world of the future. As a microcosm of the global macrocosm with strong humanistic and social values and a diverse, dynamic and creative culture, Canada and Canadians have a great deal to contribute to the realization of a better, safer, and more secure and peaceful world.

References and Readings


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