

MULTICULTURALISM

Canada is a nation of immigrants. Even the First Nations descended from travellers who migrated across the Bering Strait. During the time of European exploration, French newcomers dominated colonies in the northern New World. Later, American Loyalists, Scottish settlers, and Irish famine victims swelled the ranks of the English speaking population.

When people began to arrive from Asian countries, entry was restricted because of racial prejudice.

In 1966, Canadian government policy (defined in the White Paper) put an end to government discrimination based on colour, race, or religion. It stated that immigrants would be accepted if: 1) they had family members already in Canada; 2) they had skills for jobs available in Canada; or 3) they were refugees from war or danger. Thus, racial bias was not an allowable factor in the granting of Canadian citizenship.

The Official Languages Act, passed in 1969, stated that both French and English were authorized languages making Canada a *bilingual* country. In 1971 the government announced its policy to recognize ethnic groups and officially declare Canada a *multicultural* country. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau stated:

The government will support and encourage the various cultures and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. They will be encouraged to share their cultural expression and

values with other Canadians and so contribute to a richer life for us all.¹

What did this mean to Canadians? Immigrants were, and still are, encouraged to retain their cultural heritage, customs, and mother-tongue. Consequently, many Canadians describe their identity in terms such as Chinese-Canadian, Italian-Canadian, or African-Canadian.

The government gives financial grants to help groups celebrate and retain their language and heritage in order to prevent its loss with future generations. Cultural neighbourhoods, programs, and festivals keep alive racial distinctions.

There is a richness to understanding cultures from around the world.

Preserving one's roots brings a positive self-identity to people. On the other hand, some immigrants feel isolated within their cultural group, when their desire was to become completely Canadian.

Most Canadians enjoy learning the customs of other cultures and accept ethnic Canadians without discrimination. Revinder Tulsiani, an immigrant from India says this:

When I first enrolled in school I didn't make a lot of friends, because I couldn't speak the language. The big kids would steal my lunch and I was afraid to tell anyone because I was small and



Canada . . . is . . . a garden into which have been transplanted the hardiest and brightest of flowers from many lands, each retaining in its new environment the best of the qualities for which it was loved and prized in its native land.

Honourable John G. Diefenbaker when Prime Minister of Canada

¹ John W. Friesen, *When Cultures Clash, Case Studies in Multiculturalism* Calgary: Detschig Enterprises Ltd., 1985, p. 3

skinny. I was called names like "Paki" and "Ravioli" because I was different . . . However, over the years that I've been here I have seen discrimination almost disappear from my life and those around me.

Now I think that Canada is a perfect example of what Gandhi taught Indians throughout his life, that people of different cultures could live together in harmony. While maintaining their own heritage, they could learn to gain from other cultures around them.

Isn't that what Canadian sociologists call the "salad bowl theory"? The Canadian way of life. . . gives all its members the opportunity to preserve their heritage while taking in the new identity of a Canadian; a tolerant, hard-working, contributing member of a free society which cares.¹

Multi-cultural celebrations are popular around the province of Manitoba. The biggest is the summer event called Folkorama, where people can experience food and dance from around the world. The *Festival du Voyageur* is Canada's 2nd largest winter carnival next to the one in Quebec City.

Winnipeg is said to have the largest French-speaking community outside the province of Quebec.

The Peaceable Nation

Canada has been called "The Peaceable Kingdom." It was the first country, having been a colony of the Old World, to gain independence without violent revolution. Canada has never started a war. Canada has been a part of every major peacekeeping operation since the conception of the United Nations which was organized to facilitate world peace.



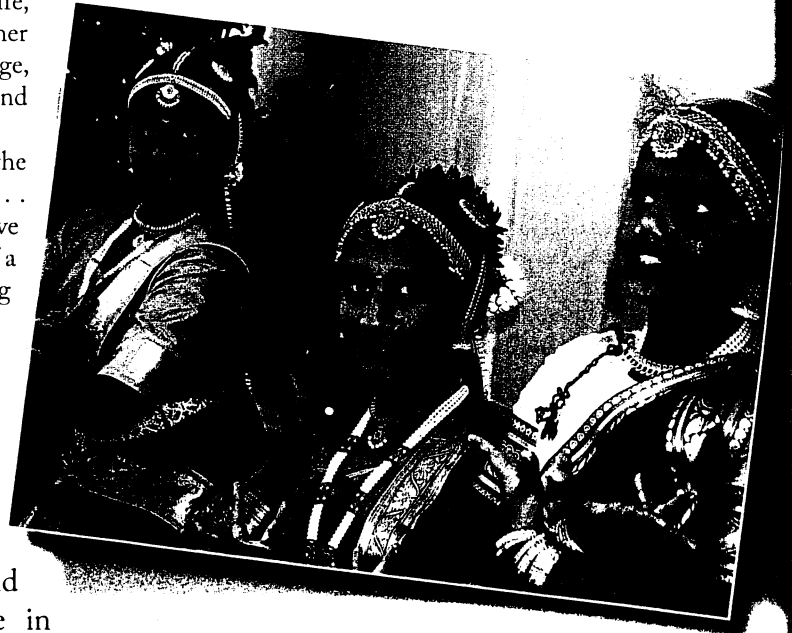
Churchill, popular as a place to view polar bears, is the only Manitoba town in the Hudson Bay Lowland.

The northern towns of **Thompson and Flin Flon** were both founded after the discovery of minerals in these areas of the Shield. Flin Flon has the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border running right through the town.

Mother-tongue: This term refers to a person's own language which is learned in childhood.

ESL- Acronym for "English as a Second Language."

ESL classes for immigrants are funded by the provinces.



Young dancers share their talent at a cultural event.

Who snowshoed 2,800 kilometers?

In the winter of 1816, Jean Baptist Lagimodiere walked and snowshoed 2,800 kilometers from Winnipeg to Montreal. He brought the news to Lord Selkirk that the Red River Colony had been attacked.

¹ Robert Livesey, *Coming to Canada*.
Oakville: Little Brick Schoolhouse Inc., 1994, pp. 120-122

MULTICULTURALISM QUIZ

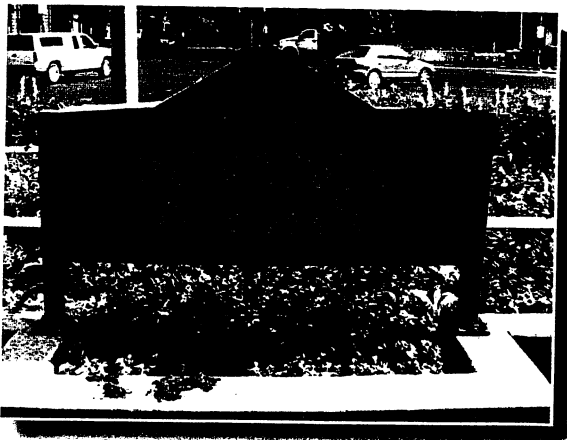
1. For what reason were people from Japan and China restricted from immigrating in Canada's early years?

2. Immigrants must qualify in one of three categories. What are the three categories that allow them to be accepted into Canada with immigrant status?

3. What changed in Canada with the Official Languages Act of 1969?

4. Name two things immigrants are encouraged to retain through multiculturalism?

5. Name both good results and negative results of multiculturalism.



Winnipeg, dubbed by some as Winterpeg, is famed for having the windiest corner in Canada, at the downtown intersection of Portage Avenue and Main Street.