

Canadian mosaic

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



When I arrived in Canada last year, I saw different people of different skin colors. There were white, yellow, black and brown. I got surprised cause I never thought about Canada like this. I never thought of Europeans, Americans, Latinos, Africans and Asians will ever settle in one place. But it is happening, right here where I immigrated to. It is a fact that Canada is racially diverse. The 250, 000 to 300, 000 residents of Canada are composing of about 50 societies belonging to twelve linguistic groups. Aside from the two prevailing groups co-existing inside Canada (Anglophones and Francophones), the presence of the minorities contributes in its culture, language and values (Burnet 66 and Bibby 158, 162-169). This gives out to a mosaic idea of Canada (Bibby 158, Burnet 71). The mosaic means putting together distinctive characteristics among the people leaving in Canada. This means every ethnicity, including English and French, must preserve their own culture and language in particular. For me, this impression is not a hindrance in developing distinctive Canadian identity. In fact speakers and writers never get tired of praising the condition in which ethnic groups can preserve their uniqueness and yet live as a Canadian (Burnett 66). This mosaic idea will be distinctively Canadian as long as its two components, bilingualism and multiculturalism, will be accepted and appreciated by most Canadians. Every move must start on the huge part of the mosaic- the Anglophones and Francophones. The conflict between them must be resolved first before anything else. According to Wardhaugh, the English-French conflict is an enduring trademark of Canadian history (Wardhaugh 13). Apart from their language difference, each group is tied up with different culture and values (Richer and Laporte 75). This may affect the relationship

between the two groups. These two countrywide mindful individuals have to gain knowledge of co-existence inside a federal system which can provide that opportunity (Wardhaugh 16). Just what the late Prime Minister Trudeau visualized about Canada before he became the Prime Minister: " The die is cast in Canada: there are two main ethnic and linguistic groups; each is too strong and too deeply rooted in the past, too firmly bound to a mother-culture, to be able to engulf the other. But if the two will collaborate at the hub of a truly pluralistic state, Canada could become the envied seat of a form of federalism that belongs to tomorrow's world..." (Wardhaugh 18) As the original immigrant-groups, as they claim themselves, these cultural differences is only a minor problem but it seems like language difference is still a big deal. Indeed the government wants to end this divergence and to fill in a puzzle piece on the mosaic. The government passed The Official Languages Act of 1969 which reserves bilingualism as an official government rule (Wardhaugh 15, Breton 51 and Dasko). French and English becomes the official language of Canada. The new act did not bring peace between the majorities instead it remains disrupted because of the Bill 101 of 1977 under the said languages act which forced a diminution of English language in Quebec. The bill infuriated most of the English (Wardhaugh 14-15). It even gets worst as French Canadians began to identify themselves as Québécois. The incident was marked by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism as the greatest crisis in Canadian history (Burnett 67). There are also records of low approval of the law among the Canadians almost twenty years after passing the Official Languages Act. Outside Quebec a little less than 50 percent Canadians agree with the policy. The statistics range at

about 50 percent in Ontario and the Atlantic Region, through 41 percent in British Columbia to a low of 36 percent on the Prairies. Certainly, most of western Ontarians consistently favour English as the only language they want (Bibby 159). However, more and more Quebecers has supported bilingualism (Bibby 161). As Bibby concludes, bilingualism will continue to have a dawdling but consistent growing level of recognition (161). But Bibby's hypothesis is wrong. After two decades, the inclination towards bilingualism is still the same. It is even declining. According to Dugas' and Cheadle's article, the significance of bilingualism to Canadian identity declines dramatically past childhood. From 75 percent of 12- 15 years old agreed that bilingualism was vital to them as being Canadian, the popularity declines to 49 percent among ages 22 to 30 (Dugas and Cheadle). In the same article, Jack Jebwab, executive director of the Montreal-based Association for Canadian Studies is frustrated about the results because they put so much effort on getting the country back on bilingual trail. This situation is a hindrance in progress of any type of unified Canadian identity and even consistency in creating a strong and distinguishing policy (Wardhaugh 17). However, according to another study conducted by Dasko, the approval rating is increasing towards the end of decade. The results are contradictory to each other but as what Dasko states, opinions vary from person to person and varying events and phenomena. Though there is still a gap between the English and French when it comes to bilingualism law, the smaller part of the mosaic, the immigrants and different people of different culture and race collectively known as the ethnic minorities, is not taking the same difficulty. Hypothetically, this must be more difficult because it deals

with more different culture and more misunderstanding because of different languages. Two years after approving Official Language Act, the Multiculturalism Policy of 1971 is presented to the people (Dasko and Wardhaugh 199). This is in accordance to the government's "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (Wardhaugh 199). Included in this policy are the English and French so therefore all the residents have their minority group for all of us to remain equal though bilingualism is at work. This policy aims to do four things according to the government's compliance to the fourth volume of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. First, it would provide support on cultures, provided the resources are available, that want to continue to develop and participate in development of Canada. Second, it would provide assistance for every cultural group to trounce cultural barricades to participate properly in Canadian society. Third, it would encourage creative activities to unite all Canadian cultural groups. Finally, it would provide ways and facilities for the immigrants to know any of Canada's official languages (Wardhaugh 199). As a member of the minorities, I am greatly convinced that our government is doing everything they can to meet the goals of the policy. One concrete example is the Folklorama Festival which enables every ethnic group in Winnipeg to showcase their own cultures and literature. This is also a way to unite all ethnic groups. Also recently, a cultural building for Filipinos (Philippine Cultural Center of Manitoba) was recently opened. I believe there are also cultural centers for other ethnic groups of still being planned. Public acceptance on this policy is not a major problem for it increases its supporters as the years pass by. According to a statistics conducted by the

Environics, they asked Canadians about their awareness of the multicultural policy (Dasko). It is growing until the 1990's when it fell and started to increase again at the last part of the 90's, and in 2002, 79 percent of Canadians are aware of the policy (Dasko). Then another survey is conducted if the Canadians approve or disapprove the multicultural policy. In the year 1989, the first time it was carried out, it is approved by 63 percent of people they asked. It then goes down during the early 1990's and going up again from mid 90's to 2002 (Dasko). It said on 2002, 74 percent of Canadians say they back up the policy of multiculturalism. These statistics shows that Canadians becomes more and more favourable of multiculturalism during the 1989- 2002 time frame (Dasko). The next questions asked concerns about the effects of the multiculturalism policy. The first one is " Will the multicultural policy cause degradation on Canadian identity?" 59 percent say it does not lead to deprivation of Canadian identity (Dasko). The second is " Will the multicultural policy bring out more conflict involving racial and ethnic groups in Canada?" 59 percent of the people asked say it will not bring out conflict among the racial and ethnic groups compared to 47 percent in 1997 and 41 percent in 1989. Only a third of Canadians say it will direct more conflict between groups (Dasko). The third one is not significant to this paper so I will jump into the fourth question which is " Will the multicultural policy lead to greater national unity?" (Dasko). The percentage increased from 46 percent to 65 percent from 1997 to 2002. The next significant question is " Will multicultural policy contribute to a greater understanding between different groups in Canada?" (Dasko). Again, the majority (77 percent) of Canadians say it does contribute to a

better understanding between each groups. This is a giant leap for the Canadians who are still in search of their true identity because they show unity over approval of multiculturalism and sooner totally accept it as a part of their whole being. When the bilingualism and multiculturalism are put on together to form a mosaic, a true identity is formed. But for the past few decades, the French Canadians and English Canadians seem not aware of ethnic features they share together and assessment between their arguments and of those of other racial groups (Burnet 74). They do not know that they contribute on the cultural fortification of Canada (Burnet 67). The people must become aware of this and take this into safe keeping before it is too late (Burnet 67). However, there is a progress on this issue. In a survey conducted by Dasko's party shows that most Canadians think bilingualism and multiculturalism collectively is significant for the Canadian identity. It is maybe due to improving relationships amongst the residents of Canada. The uneasiness towards the Indo-Pakistanis, Canadian Indians, Jews, Blacks and Orientals are declining according to a survey conducted during 1980's and also supported by the surveys about multiculturalism conducted recently as shown on previous paragraphs. It is also due to the increasing number of inter-racial marriage which results into sharing of cultures. Therefore, its outcome is a better understanding and appreciation of different cultures (Bibby 162- 169). When it comes to English- French relations as a huge and serious problem, in 1980's survey, it declined from 16 percent to 13 percent in Quebec and 12 percent outside Quebec (Bibby 162). The question now is why the result is not parallel to the popularity of bilingualism among the Canadians. Well, different people have different perspectives so we will not

be able to know as long as we ask each Canadian. In conclusion, there is still a slight complexity about bilingualism in contrast to multiculturalism which has an increasing support among the Canadians. So Canada is still in process of making the mosaic. But the picture is becoming clear now as the government is trying its best to make the mosaic identity a reality with the help of the policies they are conducting. Thru these policies, each component is increasingly developing throughout the time. The only thing missing is the total support of all Canadians. Also, having different cultures and languages is not a hindrance on building a true identity. Instead, developing and preserving individual traits and cultures will serve as one of building blocks of Canadian identity. Here is a great passage concerning this by Sir Wilfrid Laurier: " I want the marble to remain the marble; the granite to remain granite; the oak to remain the oak; and out of all these elements I would build a nation great among the nations of the world." (Burnet 71) This will not happen without the Canadians' cooperation. Though the bilingualism issues slows down the process of making the mosaic, still the optimism among the Canadians on finding their true identity is on the mosaic idea. Let me state what Bibby says about Canada: " One Canada, two languages and many cultures, complete with acceptance and respect of differences, comprise the national ideals" (Bibby 159). This is already at hand; it only waits for the people to acquire. Works Cited Bibby, Reginald W. "

Bilingualism and Multiculturalism: A National Reading". Ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities. Ed Leo Driedger. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, c1987. 158- 169. Breton, Raymond. " Symbolic Dimensions of Linguistic and Ethnological Realities". Ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities. Ed Leo

Driedger. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, c1987. 44- 63. Burnet, Jean. " Multiculturalism in Canada". Ethnic Canada: Identities and Inequalities. Ed Leo Driedger. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, c1987. 65- 79. Cheadle, Bruce and Dan Dugas. " Ideal of a Bilingual Canada Becoming Frayed by Ambivalence, Indifference". Canadian Press NewsWire Dec. 2004. Multiple Databases. ProQuest. University of Winnipeg Library, MB. 23 November 2005 < <http://cybrary.uwinnipeg.ca/proxy.cfm?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=770580441&Fmt=3&clientId=38831&RQT=309&VName=PQD>> Dasko, Donna. " Public Attitude Towards Multiculturalism in Canada". Canadian Issues Summer 2004: 30. Multiple Databases. ProQuest. University of Winnipeg Library, MB. 23 November 2005 Elliott, J. L. " Introduction Canada: Two Nations, Many Cultures?". Two Nations, Many Cultures: Ethnic Groups in Canada. Ed Jean Leonard Elliott. Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall of Canada, c1979. 1- 6. Laporte, Pierre E. and Stephen Richer. " Culture, Cognition, and English-French Competition". Two Nations, Many Cultures: Ethnic Groups in Canada. Ed Jean Leonard Elliott. Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall of Canada, c1979. 75- 83. Wardhaugh, Ronald. Language and Nationhood: The Canadian Experience. Vancouver: New Star Books Ltd, 1983.