

A history of pierre elliott trudeau



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Canada has seen its fair share of prime ministers with different views on making the best decisions for Canada, in making it a united and protected country. One of the greatest prime ministers in defining the Canadian identity was Pierre Elliott Trudeau. He united Canada with official bilingualism through the Official Languages Act, he kept Canada together as one by defeating Québec separatism, he created Canada to have complete authority over its own constitution through the new Canadian controlled Constitution of 1982, and he also protected every man women and child of Canada with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau was born on October 18, 1919 in Montreal; his father was a successful Francophone businessmen and his mother was of Scottish descent. He studied at Jesuit Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, Université de Montréal, Harvard University and London School of Economics. He was also a traveller, and travelled frequently in his earlier years, thus giving him the multicultural views he needed for politics. He arrived in Canada a changed man with his rich knowledge that he learned from school and travel. Later he became an advisor at the Privy Council in Ottawa and supported the union in the Asbestos Strike of 1949. Trudeau then returned to Montréal and concentrated on opposing the Union Nationale government of Maurice Duplessis and fought for social and political change. He founded Cité Libre with a group of intellectuals, so that he could state his complaints and anti-nationalist opinions on print. In 1965, Trudeau along with his colleagues were invited to run in federal elections as Liberal candidates. They all won places in government. He later became parliamentary secretary, then justice minister in Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson's government. With introduction

of divorce law reform and Criminal Code amendments, he gained national attention. A famous quote of his on the issue was that, "The state has no place in the bedrooms of the nations". "Trudeaumania" swept the nation, his charisma knew no bounds and when he ran in the 1968 election he became Canada's 15th prime minister, shortly after winning a majority government in a general election. Pierre Trudeau put in place the Official Languages Act granting bilingualism to Canada. As prime minister, he faced many challenges including the "October Crisis". In the year 1970 the FLQ ("The Front de Libération du Quebec"), a terrorist group fought for separatism, by kidnapping British politician James Cross and Quebec cabinet minister Pierre Laporte. On October 16, 1970, Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act. This Act granted the government permission suspend the Canadian Bill of Rights for a time making as many arrests as necessary. For this the FLQ murdered Laporte, and this sparked a controversy over Pierre Trudeau's actions in invoking the Act. In 1979, once he was elected to a minority government he proclaimed his resignation from political means, but several weeks after this announcement by Trudeau, Joe Clark of the Progressive Conservative party was defeated in a vote of confidence, and Pierre Trudeau re-entered politics winning yet again another majority government. As Pierre Trudeau returned in the 1980s, René Lévesque held a referendum on the separation of Quebec from Canada. Pierre Trudeau swayed the public vote to go against such an action and sixty per cent of Canadians voted against separation. Pierre Trudeau's victories were not over yet, in fact an even greater victory was still ahead. Trudeau accomplished his dream, this being the "patriation" of the BNA Act, and creating a new Constitution controlled by Canada. He also included a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Queen Elizabeth II granted Royal Assent to the amended and new Constitution on April 17, 1982. Trudeau resigned from politics on February of 1984. In his final years he focused on law at a Montreal law firm and wrote memoirs. Pierre Elliott Trudeau felt weak when his son died in 1998, and Trudeau shortly passed away from prostate cancer on September 28th 2000. His death sparked a storm of grief and no matter how Canada felt of Trudeau, Canada never grew tired of watching him.

One of the many accomplishments of Trudeau's leadership was the promotion of bilingualism, creating the Official Languages Act. This was one of the first steps in gaining the Canadian authority, he believed in "two official languages and pluralist society". This Act declared French and English to be the official languages of Canada, and under which all federal institutions must provide their services according to the customer's choice, whether it be in English or in French. Pierre Trudeau emphasized federalism, and that French Canada has to reach to grab the aspect of Canadian life. Many Prime Minister's struggled to retaining the English and French Canadians united, but Trudeau apparently saw the problem and enforced a rule that would support both sides. This is one of the many reasons Trudeau represents the Canadian identity so well, similar to Laurier, Trudeau had the French side, he was able to understand what both English and French Canadians needed so one wouldn't get all the credit, but rather both sides would accept the act, and no one would be left out. This failure to compromise is what previous prime minister's failed to do when they invoked Acts, thus showing that Pierre Trudeau was truly unique and

different from other prime ministers, he approached the situation at hand, like a true Canadian representing both ends of Canada.

Another very important contribution of Trudeau's in representing the Canadian identity, was the ability to keep the country together during the re-entry into politics while René Lévesque under the Parti Québécois was hosting a referendum on sovereignty-association on May 1980, urging Quebecers to vote on separation. This was truly a defining moment for Pierre Trudeau the whole country was watching, wondering how Trudeau would react to such an issue. Trudeau spoke passionately in his speeches, and in the end he played his cards right, swaying the majority of the public to reject the separation, sixty per-cent of Canadians rejected separation. What Trudeau said to the public was very clear in changing their minds; he stated that rejection of separation would lead to negotiations for a new Canadian federalism. This is yet another example of Trudeau in the spotlight, acting as a role model, showing how a true Canadian leader should act when issues like this arise. Trudeau could have easily allowed Quebec to separate, but what good would that be to Canada, or to Quebec. Trudeau needed Canada together and he gave it his all to helping Canada stay united, whether it is promoting bilingualism or even patriating the Constitution.

Prime Minister Trudeau was not finished yet; his heroic victory at the 1980 referendum was just tip of the iceberg, and something greater was on its way. His long awaited goal, and both one of the most important and essential Act`s in the history of Canada was very real. Prime Minister Trudeau dreamed of patriation, the bringing home of the BNA Act, and creating a Constitution controlled by Canada. He wanted to add a Charter of

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Rights and Freedoms in the Constitution, ensuring the protection of individual rights within a large, government-ruled country, and that every man, women, and child would be protected. This drastic jump by Pierre Trudeau showed how this man was not going to stop in making Canada the best it should be, he was going to give one hundred and ten percent. The Constitution received the signing or the Royal Assent by Queen Elizabeth II on April 17, 1982, this being the crowning moment for Trudeau. This is yet another remarkable accomplishment by Trudeau, showing the true Canadian identity yet again. Trudeau ended his career with this patriation, ending with a bang rather than a whimper.

In conclusion, Pierre Trudeau was a remarkable Canadian prime minister, he did everything his predecessors failed to do or see. He defined the Canadian identity, and gave his heart and mind into uniting and protecting Canada; his Canada. Everything Trudeau did for Canada was meant for Canadians, when Quebec tried to break from Canada, Trudeau fought his hardest for this not to happen, because he understood that Canada is not Canada without Quebec. No matter how young Trudeau was for being a prime minister, he was the best of them, not only did he give Canada the finest Canadian leadership of all prime minister, but rather he gave the Canadian identity; his Canadian identity, he showed the party leaders what it is to be Canadian.