

CHC2P Unit 2: 1920s-1930s: Growth and Sacrifice

Activity 4: Canadian Identity in the 1920s and 1930s

Overview

In this activity, you will explore some of the important social and political conditions that influenced Canada's identity in the 1920s and 1930s.

Lesson

Canadian Identity

As human beings, each of us attempts to develop a unique personality or identity. This development is especially crucial in our teenage years. During the 1920s, Canada can be viewed as a teenage country that was attempting to establish its own identity apart from its parent country of Great Britain.

England was viewed as the "mother country" of Canada:

- The Canadian Parliament, judicial system, and many street and place names are copied from British models;
- The May 24 holiday is a celebration of Queen Victoria's birthday. The British Monarchy has been a part of Canada for much of its history;
- Symbols of the Monarchy are often found on Canadian money. It has been represented in the Royal Union flag, and it is in the royal anthem, "God Save the Queen";
- Often the adjective "royal" (describing monarchy) was used in Canada. Until the 1960s, Canadians were - and still are - familiar with the Royal Canadian Mail, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Royal Canadian Armed Forces, and the Royal Canadian Mint.

William Lyon Mackenzie King



"Now whatever you do, don't confuse me with my rebel grandfather - the leader of the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada." Don't start prying into my private life. Yes, I was a bachelor, but so were R. B. Bennett and Maurice Duplessis."

"People today say that I was obsessed with my mother and my dog Pat, and that I continued to speak to them after they died. It is rumoured that I consulted fortune tellers for advice. I say, "Let sleeping dogs lie," and stop reading my diaries!"

"Instead, take a look at what I did for Canada. For one thing, I was Prime Minister of this country for more than 21 years. Yes, 21 years!"

"In 1922, I refused to jump when England said jump! The Brits wanted Canada to rush troops to Chanak for a possible war against Turkey. I said 'no'. A year later, I again said "no" when England wanted to sign

our Halibut treaty with the United States. For the first time, we signed a treaty by ourselves. In 1931, England recognized the independence of Canada in the Statute of Westminster."

"During the 1930s, Canada developed its own foreign policy apart from Britain. We did not enter World War II until one week after England did."

Canada as an Independent Country

As we heard from William Lyon Mackenzie King's speech, he and his Liberal government worked to make Canada more independent of Britain. During the 1920s and 1930s, Canada can be viewed as a teenager moving away from the influence of the mother country.

The teenager found a new friend in the next-door neighbour, the United States. By the mid-1920s, the United States replaced Britain as Canada's number one trading partner. In this time period, the Canadian people became very interested in American products, such as movies, radio programs, and music. They also purchased American cars and radios.



Canadians also made world-wide headlines in the 1930s. The Dionne quintuplets were born in 1934 and became Canada's largest tourist attraction during that decade.

Joseph Armand Bombardier



In 1935, Joseph-Armand Bombardier assembled a vehicle that ran on rubber caterpillar tracks and could hold two or three passengers.

In 1937, Bombardier was granted exclusive patent rights for the commercial use of his snowmobile. The first buyers were country doctors, ambulance drivers, and priests in remote areas.

The Bombardier company he founded in his garage in Valcourt, Québec, eventually achieved world-wide success, especially with the sales of the Ski-Doo and Sea-Doo.

Assignment

1. In a brief paragraph, describe some of the unique characteristics of your personality or identity.
2. What do you consider to be some of the unique characteristics of the Canadian identity today?
3. Joseph Armand Bombardier is described as a Canadian inventor and entrepreneur. What does it mean to be an entrepreneur?
4. Research and describe another famous Canadian entrepreneur that is alive today.