

CHC2P Unit 4: 1960s-1980s: A Nation's Challenges

Activity 8: Canadian Identity: The Monarchy

Overview

In this activity, you will examine an important symbol of Canadian identity - the Monarchy.

Lesson



So far, the development of a distinct Canadian identity and the movement of Canada toward independence from Great Britain have been examined.

During the decades studied, Canada received its own national anthem and its own flag, brought its constitution home from Britain and created the Canada Act 1982 - complete with its own Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Today, Canada is still connected to Great Britain in one significant way: the official head of the Canadian government is the Monarch of Great Britain. The Monarch, who was Queen Elizabeth II in 2005, is represented in Canada by the Governor General. Although the Monarch has almost no political power in Canadian life, he or she, nonetheless, plays a ceremonial and symbolic role.

Arguments in Favour of the Monarchy in Canada

- Constitutional monarchy is a form of government in which one has both a Queen and an elected parliament. The Dutch, Belgians, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, Japanese and Spanish all use it.
- The Queen, represented by the Governor General, is our Head of State.
- New Canadians swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen. Her image appears on coins and stamps. The Crown is on the coat of arms. Public lands are Crown lands.
- Government companies are Crown corporations. In court, the Crown prosecutes those accused of crimes. At the opening of Parliament, it is the Queen, and not the politicians, who is saluted and honoured.
- In many ways, Canadians do their everyday business in the name of the Queen, who is the representative of all of them. She is a constant reminder of the many things Britain has done for Canada over the centuries.
- The Queen is an international superstar and we should be proud to have her as our head of state.
- The Queen represents a powerful institution that is a thousand years old—it is a real privilege for Canadians to be a part of it.

Arguments against the Monarchy in Canada

- Canada is a grown-up country, and at some point in the 21st century, its citizens must make the decision to cut the last ties to Great Britain. Canada has developed its own foreign policy, its own flag, and its own national anthem.
- It has stopped its connections with Britain in the areas of judicial appeals and constitutional amendments. Throwing away the monarchy [Queen or King] will be the next and last step on the path to independence.
- Having the oldest son inherit the responsibility of being head of the country is not a good rule to have in modern times, especially when the oldest son does not even live in the country.
- A republic is a democratic country in which the head of state is selected by the people. The United States, France, Germany, and Ireland are examples of republics and they function very well without a hereditary monarch.
- Canada is able to become a republic by changing the role of the Governor General. We no longer need the Governor General to be the representative of the Queen in Canada. The Governor General could be changed to the title of President representing the Canadian public. In this case, the President would have the same duties and powers as our present Governor General, and continue to be appointed by the Prime Minister or be elected by the people.

Assignment

A republic is a democratic country in which the head of state is selected by the people. The United States, France, Germany, and Ireland are examples of republics and they function very well without a hereditary monarch.

Canada could become a republic by changing the role of the Governor General. Some people believe that we no longer need the Governor General to be the representative of the Queen in Canada. The Governor General could then be changed to a President representing the Canadian public.

Write a 200 - 400 word opinion piece on whether Canada should or should not become a republic. Use facts from the unit to support your opinion (minimum 5 facts).