Chapter 14 Canadian Identity

How have symbols and myths been used to promote a national identity? The coat of arms symbol represented how your understandings of nation shape and are shaped by your identity. In similar ways, people and governments often use symbols to portray what they think is important about their country’s history, nationhood, and role in the world.

The beaver, for example, is Canada’s national animal. As a symbol, it appears on the five-cent piece to represent Canada’s history, as well as qualities people have come to associate with Canada and Canadians. And the loonie is the Canada’s $1 coin.

Using national symbols to promote Canadian identity

- Maple Leaf
- Rocky Mountains
- Hockey
- Canada Goose

National Myths can also represent a nation’s identity. Many cultures are founded on a creation myth.

Two of nationalisms primary myths are connected with beliefs in:

- community’s permanence (the myth of the eternal nation), based on its national character, territory and institutions and on its continuity across many generations,
  
- community’s common ancestry (myth of the common ancestry).

Ways that National Myths promote Canadian identity:
Canadian government told a story how mostly European pioneers triumphed over nature and built new lives in Canada.

**Cultural institutions** - is an organization within a culture/subculture that works for the preservation or promotion of culture.

They honour parts of Canada’s heritage and history as a foundation of national identity.

**Council of Canadians**

The Council of Canadians is a non-profit environmental activist group with left-leaning principles that advocates for clean water, fair trade, green energy, public health care, and a vibrant democracy.

- Canada’s largest citizen’s group, founded in 1985.
- Working with network of volunteers to publish research reports and other materials to tell business people and governments about “the kind of Canada” that Canadians want.

**Aboriginal Organizations**

Examples are First Nations, Metis National Council.
They work with Aboriginal people to start campaigns to improve access to clean water or support traditional lifestyles.

How can government programs and initiatives be used to promote a national identity?

Federal Government programs are often used to promote national unity and a sense of Canadian identity.

Programs that promote peace, order, and good government

- The phrase “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” defines American values and national identity.

Economic Programs that promote Canadian identity

- The Bank of Canada
- The Royal Mint
How can individuals promote national identity?

- Musicians (Canadian songwriters helped define Canadian identity. Ex. Gordon Lightfoot sang his song “Alberta Bound” for the opening ceremony of the Calgary Winter Olympics. He also created a national myth.

- Painters (Aboriginal artists like Kent Monkman, used art to promote his people’s identity.

- Professional Athlete (Wayne Gretzky urged the Canadian Government to stop the trade of him going to Los Angeles, he was too much of a Canadian icon. Riis called Gretzky “the Canadian national symbol, like the beaver”.)