Visions of National Identity
National Identity

“... a collective or group identity based on language, ethnicity, culture, religion, geography, spirituality or politics...”

• Often, national identity is a combination of the above understandings of nation

• Example – JAPAN
  • Civic Nation – parliamentary government, civil law
  • Ethnic Nation - 98.5% Japanese
  • Religious Nation – 84.5% Shintoism & Buddhism
  • Linguistic Nation – Japanese
• Pluralism – a school of thought that believes that diversity is beneficial. Society should be inclusive.

• As the world gets ‘smaller’ (communication and travel), more people are migrating. They are exposed to different cultures and ideas. This affects their outlook on life – their individual identity, and their sense of national identity.

• Cosmopolitan – ‘borrowing, adopting and adapting values from many cultures
Diversity

Positives of Immigration...
• Bring unique point of view and perspective
• Promotes tolerance & understanding

Negatives of Immigration...
• Strain public services
• Change traditional national identity
• Remain separate from ‘mainstream’ culture
Possible Visions of Canada

• Canada has always embraced pluralism – it is the extent of pluralism that has evolved:
  • 1867 – Thomas D’Arcy McGee
    • Irish Nationalist, Catholic spokesman, journalist, and Father of Canadian Confederation. He fought for the development of Irish and Canadian national identities that would transcend their component groups. He is to date, the only Canadian victim of political assassination at the federal level.
  • 1896-1911 – Sir Wilfrid Laurier
    • Canada’s First Francophone PM
    • Tried to bridge the gap between English and French cultures to create a unique Canadian Identity.

• Today...

• Today, Canada is a civic nation – our national identity based on shared values and beliefs. Follow the order of the Law.
Important Factors When Choosing a Spouse...

- Attitudes towards family & children
- Moral Values
- Attitudes towards work and leisure
- Sense of Humour
- Educational Background
- Religion
- Class Background
- Political Views
- Ethnic Background
A Pluralistic Country

• Slightly less than 30% of the people surveyed said that Ethnic Background was an important consideration when choosing a spouse.

• Canada’s multicultural and pluralistic nature is a source of national pride

• A considerable number of Canadians (almost half in 2006) reported their ethnic background as ‘mixed’
A Nation of Many Nations

• “Confederations of Nations” – Six Nations of the Grand
  • Confederations of nations was not a new idea; FNMI’s League of Haudenosaunee (a social and political system that was originally made up of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca Nations, later on joined by the Tuscarora Nation)
  • Historian Olive Dickanson – some people in North America had agreed that it was in their collective interest to organize themselves into multinational alliances. Goal was protection from common enemies and to promote trade.

• The Aboriginal Nation
  • Said to be “one of three orders of Canada – Federal, provincial/territorial, and Aboriginal
  • Rights are confirmed in Canada’s Constitution, still leaders wish to remain a nation within Canada (slow progress in implementing recommendations of the Royal Commission).

• The Québécois Nation
  • Very strong and proud
  • Easily seen in how many times the sovereigntist PQ has been elected in Quebec, but in recent years separation fever has subsided and the PQ have dropped their idea of another referendum.
A Nation of Many Nations

• Québec and Reasonable Accommodation…
  
  Reasonable Accommodation: “a legal and constitutional concept that requires Canadian public institutions to adapt to the religious and cultural practices of minorities as long as these practices do not violate other rights and freedoms.

• Minority groups worry about a lack of willingness to allow accommodations

• Quebec town of Hérouxville adopted a code of conduct for immigrants.

• Difficulty – How can the Québécois promote their own language and culture AND accommodate the needs of immigrants?
A Nation of Many Nations

• Outside Québec, Canadians view Canada as one nation
• Within Québec, this is not the case
• Asymmetrical Federalism:
  • Canadian provinces and territories do not share power with the Federal Government in the same way
  • Different linguistic and cultural needs are accommodated
  • Already happens to some degree with Québec – they have more control over immigration
  • This is a very contentious issue as some believe that ideas such as this could undermine Canadian Unity because it threatens the principle of provincial equality.

If Canadians were to embrace asymmetrical federalism, how might this affect Canadian national identity? Explain your response.
North American Integration??

- Canada and America...
  - Same language (English)
  - Dress similarly
  - Same music
  - Same television programming
  - Same sports

- The same country???
  - The idea is not *really* that far-fetched
  - Longest undefended border in the world (6400 km to be exact!)

- 2002, creation of the Binational Planning Group:
  - Goal: increase co-operation regarding foreign policy, defence and security
Canada and Globalization

• Some believe the concept of national identity will become more important in the future, some believe it will become obsolete

• Migration is becoming relatively easy and we are moving around the world and within our country more and more.

• Canadians struggle to balance their respect and acceptance of diversity with their desire for national unity and identity
Canada and the World

- Canada is a middle power – some ability to influence world affairs – multiculturalism, peacekeeping and foreign aid

- Some concern that Canada is not playing a leadership role in these areas

- Should we be worried about what others (non-Canadians) think?
What is YOUR vision?

• A nation is “a group of people united by a mistaken view of the past and a hatred of their neighbours.”
  --Ernest Renan, French Philosopher

• True of the past when nation was a somewhat simpler concept

• Some still base their concept of nation on the past and a disdain for others

• Most base their concept of nation on a combination of many factors
To what extent should we embrace nationalism?

• “We are all on the same planet, drinking the same water, affected by the same type of forces. And these things have no respect for national borders. Regardless of diversity and difference, we all have things in common. We are united in that diversity.”

  --Andy Knight, Political Scientist

• Some embrace nationalism
• Some embrace internationalism
• Some try to strike a balance between the two

WHERE DO YOU FIT ON THIS SPECTRUM?