

## What is Multiculturalism in Canada?

We often hear terms like “multicultural”, “diverse” and “inclusive” when describing **Canada**. While these terms hold positive connotations, they can be confusing especially when explaining the demographic makeup of Canada. Far from being purely theoretical, **Canada** is a uniquely “post-national” state in the sense that we are based on objective ideals rather than one specific race, ethnicity, religion or walk of life. From citizenship exams to school essays and in the workforce, we use different words to convey our essence, which is our identity as a people connected through human rights and a love for the vast domestic landscape.



### How Did We Get Here?

The First groups were comprised of indigenous tribes, whether Inuit in the extreme north to the Anishnabe in the Great Lakes Regions, the Micmacs in the Maritimes and more. With the advent of European colonialization, a new conflict was introduced and all parties fought for power and cultural dominance. While the Europeans were successful in establishing a state in their image, this created tension that manifested in the Residential School program. Starting off from purely British and French stock, immigration started to come from China, Eastern Europe and Jewish communities. This was a radical break from the status quo but it allowed for Canada to develop economically, building important infrastructure like railroads, hospitals and other hubs of service and trade. Under the mandate of Peirre Trudeau, the father of current prime minister Justin Trudeau, the immigration system was liberalised and replaced ethnic quotas with a point system. This allowed for qualified applicants from all backgrounds, putting merit ahead of cultural priorities and the like.



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## What Does Multicultural Look Like?

One way to start is describing the different neighbourhoods of Toronto, where many countries have a set area that acts as a hub for their diaspora community. Consider the vibrant Italian community, which is focused in Woodbridge, while the neighbouring areas of Thornhill and Markham which serve the Jewish and Chinese communities respectively. Of course they are not homogeneous, with many other groups taking up minority positions. This allows for the continuation of culture, language, religion and identity, years after the first generation migrated to North America. While other countries expect immigrants to completely assimilate, our country makes no such demands. One could say that this is different from the American version where everyone is expected to make a clean break with their country of origin, or at least some voices demand so, especially in populist media and other forms of rhetoric.

## What is Canadian Culture?

Rather than denying our history, both good and bad, Canadians embrace the past and pledge to make the future a better place for everyone. This means respecting the sad legacy of our treatment of First Nations groups while also recognizing that we were the final terminal for the Underground Railroad, which brought thousands of African American slaves to freedom. While this does not mean that racism didn't (or doesn't) exist, it means that **Canada** did not respect slave laws and saw everyone as free. In the modern era, everyone is free to be who they are, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics. These rights are enshrined in our binding documents, which were adapted in the 1980s and continue to evolve, reflecting the changing makeup and values of our country. It is not an easy feat but things have gone smoother than can be anticipated, especially when confronting people who feel that this arrangement is detrimental to national unity. While it may not work down in the states, due to a huge host of different factors, it works well in the Great White North. Perhaps it is our common love for the people, land, animals and deeply shared values.

## What about Inspiration?

**Inspiration Learning Center** has been recognized as a leader in diversity and inclusion, both by industry and by the government. We care deeply about our community members and encourage them to both respect their heritage while embracing their new homes and identity as our neighbours. Our stakeholders are blessed to be able to learn from one another, which enriches our own point of reference. We are proud of what **Canada** has become and we are excited to see what is in the store. Are you in?

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