

## Introduction

*Just as bilingualism should not lead to a blend of two languages so Canada's cultural duality cannot be taken to mean a mixture of the two cultures; each has its own existence...culture is to the group what personality is to the individual: it is rare for a person to have two personalities or two styles of living at the same time.<sup>1</sup>*

Canada, since its formation, has always had identity problems, and most specifically, a lack of a common national identity. Before the European colonization, what came to be known as Canada was an almost uninhabited territory, formed by communities of native groups. After the first contact, the relation with Europe was mainly based on trading of fur and a slow French immigration to the eastern part of the country.

Numerous attempts to build a colony in North America were unsuccessful, beginning in 1000 A.D. with Leif Ericson as the first European to land in America, Jacques Cartier's journeys in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Troilus de Mesgouez Marquis de La Roche and Pierre Chauvin in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Finally on July 3, 1608, Samuel de Champlain found Quebec, this being the first permanent European settlement in what would become the French capital in North America, New France. The feudal system of landholding practiced in France was adopted as well as the French political system with governors and intendants.<sup>2</sup>

Struggles between Britain and France to control the fur trade in the region were common. The conflict ended in 1763 after the Seven years war with the Treaty of Paris. France lost its possessions to Britain, and therefore British institutions were imposed on

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism quoted in Jack Jedwab, *Arts of Bilingualism in Canada*, Office of the Commissioner of the French Language, [http://www.ocolo.gc.ca/symposium/documents/jedwab/jedwab1\\_e.html](http://www.ocolo.gc.ca/symposium/documents/jedwab/jedwab1_e.html)

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Belton (comp.), *Important Moments in Canadian History*, Department of Fine Arts, Okanagan University College, [http://www.ouc.bc.ca/finearts/his\\_1800.html](http://www.ouc.bc.ca/finearts/his_1800.html)

Quebec.<sup>3</sup> Now, there were more than 60,000 French speakers under the British Crown.<sup>4</sup> France kept the islands of Guadeloupe in exchange for the land it controlled along the St. Lawrence River, today Quebec.

The British, worried that the French Canadians would support the Revolutionary American war, passed the Quebec Act of 1774. It preserved a French administration for French Quebecers in the Quebec area, entrenched French language rights, the French civil law, and officially recognized the Roman Catholic Church's right to collect taxes; however, criminal laws remained based on the British common law. Also, the Act extended Quebec's border to the Ohio River.<sup>5</sup>

Approximately 40,000 Loyalists, or Tories, arrived into western Quebec and Nova Scotia, being this the first large-scale immigration of Anglophones to Canada.<sup>6</sup> Loyalist is a term used to refer to those American colonists from Britain, Ireland, Scotland, etc., who remained loyal to the British Crown after the American Revolution. English speaking population increased, bringing along demands for more privileges and rights. To calm down the population, the Constitutional Act of 1791 replaced the Quebec Act of 1774 and divided the colony into two provinces: Upper and Lower Canada, today Ontario and Quebec. Each would have its own Governor General, legislative council, and legislative assembly elected by the people.<sup>7</sup>

Upper Canada, maintained British laws and Lower Canada, was ruled by French civil laws, the seigniorial land system and the Catholic Church. With this law the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The History of Canada, *Early British Rule*, <http://www.linksnorth.com/canada-history/early.html>

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia, *Quebec Act*, [http://www.fact-index.com/q/qu/quebec\\_act.html](http://www.fact-index.com/q/qu/quebec_act.html)

<sup>6</sup> The History of Canada, *The United Empire Loyalists*, <http://www.linksnorth.com/canada-history/theunitedempire.html>

<sup>7</sup> National Library of Canada, *The Constitutional Act, 1791*, <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/2/18/h18-2088-e.html>

nationalist conflict between French and English –speakers began since French Canadians felt that English settlers would obtain growing influence and rights for Protestants. The Anglophones, on the other hand, felt the French Canadians still had too much power.<sup>8</sup>

According to Claude Bellenger, it was the Union Act of 1841, proposed by Lord Durham in his 1839 Durham Report,<sup>9</sup> which led the federalist and separatist movements to appear in Canada.<sup>10</sup> It was intended to unite Upper and Lower for economic reasons, reduce French’s influence and eventually assimilate them. This “was perceived in Quebec as ‘an act of oppression’ or, in the words of historian Maurice Séguin, as ‘a New Conquest’”<sup>11</sup> threatening French Canadians’ survival.

It imposed measures such as obligating Lower Canada to pay an equal amount of money to that owed by Upper Canada, even if their debt was smaller, raised economic requisites to vote or to be elected and the new legislature would decide what laws would be used, jeopardizing the French legal system. The British included a clause that would allow French to be used in the debates of the House but only for a period of 15 years.<sup>12</sup>

The Union Act triggered group solidarity among Francophones in Quebec. Now, they worked together to ensure their survival, putting the groups interests before individual ones. Control of the province was left in the Catholic Church’s hands against Protestantism. Catholicism became the “first pillar of survival” defending values of conservatism, ruralism, anti-statism, and xenophobic attitudes against foreigners.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, *Constitutional Act of 1791*, [http://www.fact-index.com/c/co/constitutional\\_act\\_of\\_1791.html](http://www.fact-index.com/c/co/constitutional_act_of_1791.html)

<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 1 *Lord Durham’s Report*, available at <http://library.educationworld.net/txt28/>

<sup>10</sup> Claude Bélanger, *The Durham Report, The Union Act and the Birth of the Separatist/Federalist Attitudes*, Marianopolis College, <http://www2.marianopolis.edu/quebechistory/readings/durham.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Louis-Joseph Papineau, like William Lyon Mackenzie, believed that the best way to ensure the survival of French Canada was to destroy the Union. He wanted to create an independent state controlled by Quebecers where the existence of French culture would be free from Anglophone's threat. Cooperation would lead to oppression and eventually, assimilation.<sup>14</sup> "(...) he had finally come to the conclusion that no lasting reform could be achieved unless the bonds with Britain were severed."<sup>15</sup> Riots, led by Papineau and Mackenzie, took place in the 1830's in Montreal, Toronto and the Niagara River, all put down by the British troops since they had no real organization. With these ideas, Papineau can be considered as one of the first and most important leaders of Quebec's national movement.<sup>16</sup>

On the other side, Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, leader of the French Canadian Bloc and former follower of Papineau's ideas, believed that by focusing on the goals English and French had in common and cooperating with them, Francophones would gain their support, benefiting French Canadians, specially in the language issue. This attitude would be shared by important leaders such as Lafontaine, Macdonald, and Cartier and characterized the federalist attitude that leaders like Laurier, Lapointe, St. Laurent, and Trudeau would later follow.<sup>17</sup>

Sir John A. Macdonald, who would become Canada's first Prime Minister, George Brown and Cartier met in Charlottetown to discuss the benefits, mostly economic, of uniting the new provinces into one Dominion<sup>18</sup> Finally in 1866, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Upper and Lower Canada, during the London Conference,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> National Library of Canada, *Louis- Joseph Papineau*, <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/2/18/h18-2089-e.html>

<sup>17</sup> Bélanger, *The Durham*, <http://www2.marianopolis.edu/quebechistory/readings/durham.htm>

<sup>18</sup> National Library of Canada, *Sir John A. Macdonald*, <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/2/18/h18-2360-e.html>

agreed to the British North America Act. It united Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, into a new dominion, the Dominion of Canada. Each would have its own government, legislative body and representative to the Crown, the lieutenant governor. It appointed a federal government placed in Ottawa, composed by a House of Commons and a Senate, and a governor-general to represent the Confederation before the British government.<sup>19</sup> With this Act, Canada became a self-governing dominion, yet maintaining its ties with Britain. The Dominion was later joined by the rest of the provinces and territories.<sup>20</sup>



<sup>19</sup> The History of Canada, *The Confederation Idea*, <http://www.linksnorth.com/canada-history/theconfederation.html>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

**Figure No. 1.1** Political Division of Canada.<sup>21</sup>

From the Francophone's point of view, these laws oppressed and threatened them. According to Ernest Gellner, national identity is derived from different kinds of solidarity, especially language, in the formation of this bond.<sup>22</sup> Separatist movements believe that "the existing political order is illegitimate and that their group has been assigned to a lower status than it deserves."<sup>23</sup> It was this common goal of defending their status within the country what legitimized the separatism that would appear in the 1960's.

Many Quebecers felt resented and humiliated, believing that the decisions taken by the Anglophones were not valid since the decision making process did not respect their needs and rights. Resentment is one of the main bases for nationalism. Liah Greenfeld defines resentment as "a psychological state resulting from suppressed feelings of envy and hatred (existential envy) and the impossibility of satisfying these feelings."<sup>24</sup>

These feelings persisted through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in a more submissive way. There were no real demonstrations of the strength the separatist movement was acquiring. But then, in the second half of the 20th century, Canada experienced a growing variety of cultural and linguistic identities with the arrival of large groups of immigrants from Asia, Europe, and less developed countries.<sup>25</sup> Tensions between these new cultures and the already existing ones, especially French Canadian, arose and separatists began to

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<sup>21</sup> Listings Canada, *Canada Map*, <http://listingsca.com/maps.asp>

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1983), Ch. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Metta Spencer, *When States Divide*, <http://www.metta.spencer.name/papers/separatism-ch1.html>

<sup>24</sup> Liah Greenfeld, quoted in Metta Spencer, *When States Divide*, <http://www.metta.spencer.name/papers/separatism-ch1.html>

<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada, *Canada's Immigration Patterns, 1955 to Present*, <http://www.statcan.ca/english/kits/immig1.htm> (accessed March 29, 2004).

manifest. The federal government tried to accommodate them in a mosaic, rather than assimilating them. But due to economic factors, the immigrants integrated more into the English –speaking group.

Motivated by French President Charles de Gaulle’s declaration to “live in a free Quebec”<sup>26</sup> modern separatism clearly appeared in the province. Since then, Quebec has experienced a series of changes in the ruling parties. Quebecers have supported conservatism, with the Union Nationale, liberalism, with the Liberal Party currently running the Province, and even radical administrations with the Parti Quebecois. Even though they all have different methods, their goal is the same, to affirm Francophones’ existence in a country where English –speakers dominate.

Despite Quebec’s crisis was once called the "world's most boring debate"<sup>27</sup> this is a very serious issue, that could end up in the destruction of the country. Two Referendums on this issue have already been held, one of them almost won by the secessionists, so we can not think that this statement is just an exaggeration. This is Canada’s most serious problem and it must be solved as quickly as possible.

The separatist movement in Quebec is in a latent posture, just waiting for the right moment to rise again. It is a movement that has tried for many decades now to achieve its final goal: to form a new, independent State. But at the end, it is very unlikely that Quebec will consummate its independence. The negative aspects of this independence would be more than the positive consequences it could bring to Quebec’s society. Modern Quebecers’ way of thinking has become less radical and more open; it is in the

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<sup>26</sup> Charles de Gaulle, quoted in History Channel, *Charles de Gaulle, President of France Speaks Out In Support of Quebec Independence*, [http://www.historychannel.com/speeches/archive/speech\\_458.html](http://www.historychannel.com/speeches/archive/speech_458.html)

<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey Simpson, quoted in Unity, Diversity, Respect, *Get in Touch with French Canada’s Perspective*, <http://www.uni.ca/history.html> (accessed March 29, 2004).

authorities' hands to prevent Quebec from leaving the country. Both federal and provincial governments seem to be working in finding a way to satisfy Francophones and Anglophones demands without privileging any of them. Their most important task today is to create one single nationalism among them, a sense of community that will allow Canada to survive and Canadians to coexist in a pacific, fraternal environment.



**Figure 1.2.** Quebec: Area Map.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> World of Education, *Quebec: Area Map*, [http://library.educationworld.net/canadafacts/qc\\_map.html](http://library.educationworld.net/canadafacts/qc_map.html)

