

Building a Better Canada

Rejection is one of the most dreaded word in our society, it implies a failure to be accepted. The basic human need to be accepted combined with the world becoming more interconnected creates a convoluted sense of identity. Today's society amplifies the need to fit without celebrating our differences. In order to build a better Canada, there needs to be a greater push to not only embrace our cultural differences but, more importantly, to find a common ground in order to share it with others.

The first known interaction Canada had with the rest of the world was about 1000 years ago when the Vikings who colonized Greenland also reached Newfoundland. Around the 1550s, after European exploration Canada began appearing on maps.¹ The European settlers worked with the aboriginal people in order to build a booming fur trade economy. By 1867 representatives from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario worked to create a new country and Canada was officially born July 1 1887.² Historically, Canada had been built due to amalgamation of different cultures. That is not to say that Canada has never sought to suppress diversity. Canadian history is filled with equal parts of discrimination. For example, the establishment of residential schools where children were ripped away from their families to isolate native American children from their traditions and assimilate them into the dominant Roman Catholic culture.³ To this day it is considered one of the biggest stains on Canadian

¹ "Discover Canada-Canada's History," *Government of Canada*, last modified October 26, 2015. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada/read-online/canadas-history.html>

² "Discover Canada-Canada's History," *Government of Canada*, last modified October 26, 2015. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada/read-online/canadas-history.html>

³ "Aboriginal History in Canada," *Government of Canada*, last modified November 5, 2014. <http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013778/1100100013779>

reputation. Canada's history is rooted in our cultural differences. However, it is the acceptance or denial of them that define crucial moments in history.

Diversity today comes in many forms; the LGBTQ plus community, the francophone community or the differences between rural and urban Canada. Perhaps one of the most obvious form of diversity within Canada are immigrants who come from different countries to make Canada their home. Even more important is the identity crisis most immigrant children experience. In 2016, close to 2.2 million children living under the age of 15 were foreign born or had at least one foreign born parent.⁴ These children often find themselves straddled between two cultures. Everything from what to eat, wear, say, study, act etc. is heavily influenced by an internal turmoil. On one hand there is a need to fit in with the Canadian culture but on the other hand, there is a desire to honour one's heritage and tradition. Whether or not a child is able to find a balance between these two aspects of their culture is important in their ability to adapt to different social settings. Statistics Canada projected that in 2036 the children born to two foreign born parents will reach 2 million.⁵ With the number of children born from immigrant families rising, the path of social mobility is constantly changing. The confusion immigrant children experience usually falls through the gaps of society.

The solution to creating a better Canada is to address this issue in a sustainable method. Immigrant children may experience a variety of different emotions, life experiences and reactions to their culture. Therefore, creating a one solution fits all, is unlikely. However, what

⁴ "Statistics Canada," *Government of Canada*, last modified October 26, 2017.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016015/98-200-x2016015-eng.cfm>

⁵ "Statistics Canada," *Government of Canada*, last modified October 26, 2017.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016015/98-200-x2016015-eng.cfm>

can be done is to foster a society that not only celebrates cultural differences but also creates an exchange to learn about different cultures. This does not mean simply learning about the geography, it means learning about the features of life that make it worth living like food, music, history, clothing, language, current news etc. Immigrant children often come to terms with their identity once they are older, however, during their younger years they are often confused. In order to tackle that issue, there should be multicultural education starting at a young age. Multicultural education can increase global awareness, critical thinking and strengthen cultural consciousness.⁶ It could take the form of education on historical events from differing perspectives. Not only does it broaden children's education, but it also encourages children to think critically by realizing that every issue is multi-faceted. By creating this society for children, it creates an environment where immigrant children are valued for their different experiences. It encourages students to understand and get in touch with their own heritage as well as the heritage of others. Creating a society where differing cultures are taught and shared allows immigrant children to start learning how to navigate the complexity of their identity.

To create a better Canada, the identity confusion experienced by many immigrant children needs to be addressed by starting multicultural education at a young age. Canada is a country built on multiculturalism, it is in our history. With the number of immigrant children rising, the identity of many individuals becomes a complex and confusing process. In order to address this problem, there needs to be a greater push to create multicultural education at a

⁶ E.K Gracia, "Multicultural Education in Your Classroom," *Teach Hub.com*.
<http://www.teachhub.com/multicultural-education-your-classroom>

young age as immigrant children learn to get in touch with their heritage. Rejection holds no power, when one learns to accept their own differences within themselves and celebrate it with society.

(901 words)