Canadian Symbols

Canada has many important symbols — objects, events, and people that have special meaning. Together they help explain what it means to be Canadian and express our national identity. Important Canadian symbols appear throughout this booklet.

(From Left to Right)
Mace of the House of Commons, Ottawa
Canadian flag of 1965
The Royal Arms of Canada
Parliament at dusk

The Snowbirds (431 Air Demonstration Squadron) are a Canadian icon

The Canadian Red Ensign served as the national flag for 100 years, and has been carried officially by veterans since 2005

THE CANADIAN CROWN

The Crown has been a symbol of the state in Canada for 400 years. Canada has been a constitutional monarchy in its own right since Confederation in 1867 during Queen Victoria's reign. Queen Elizabeth II, who has been Queen of Canada since 1952, marked her Golden Jubilee in 2002, and celebrates her Diamond Jubilee (60 years as Sovereign) in 2012. The Crown is a symbol of government, including Parliament, the legislatures, the courts, police services and the Canadian Forces.

FLAGS IN CANADA

A new Canadian flag was raised for the first time in 1965. The red-white-red pattern comes from the flag of the Royal Military College, Kingston, founded in 1876. Red and white had been colours of France and England since the Middle Ages and the national colours of Canada since 1921. The Union Jack is our official Royal Flag. The Canadian Red Ensign served as the Canadian flag for about 100 years. The provinces and territories also have flags that embody their distinct traditions.

THE MAPLE LEAF

The maple leaf is Canada's best-known symbol. Maple leaves were adopted as a symbol by French Canadians in the 1700s, have appeared on Canadian uniforms and insignia since the 1850s, and are carved into the headstones of our fallen soldiers buried overseas and in Canada.

THE FLEUR-DE-LYS

It is said that the lily flower ("fleur-de-lys") was adopted by the French king in the year 496. It became the symbol of French royalty for more than 1,000 years, including the colony of New France. Revived at Confederation, the fleur-de-lys was included in the Canadian Red Ensign. In 1948 Quebec adopted its own flag, based on the Cross and the fleur-de-lys (see p. 47).

COAT OF ARMS AND MOTTO

As an expression of national pride after the First World War, Canada adopted an official coat of arms and a national motto, *A mari usque ad mare,* which in Latin means "from sea to sea." The arms contain symbols of England, France, Scotland and Ireland as well as red maple leaves. Today the arms can be seen on dollar bills, government documents and public buildings.

PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

The towers, arches, sculptures and stained glass of the Parliament Buildings embody the French, English and Aboriginal traditions and the Gothic Revival architecture popular in the time of Queen

(Left)

Montreal Canadiens Stanley Cup champions, 1978

Victoria. The buildings were completed in the 1860s. The Centre Block was destroyed by an accidental fire in 1916 and rebuilt in 1922. The Library is the only part of the original building remaining. The Peace Tower was completed in 1927 in memory of the First World War. The Memorial Chamber within the Tower contains the Books of Remembrance in which are written the names of soldiers, sailors and airmen who died serving Canada in wars or while on duty.

The provincial legislatures are architectural treasures. The Quebec National Assembly is built in the French Second Empire style, while the legislatures of the other provinces are Baroque, Romanesque and neoclassical, reflecting the Greco-Roman heritage of Western civilization in which democracy originated.

POPULAR SPORTS

Hockey is Canada's most popular spectator sport and is considered to be the national winter sport. Ice hockey was developed in Canada in the 1800s. The National Hockey League plays for the championship Stanley Cup, donated by Lord Stanley, the Governor General, in 1892. The Clarkson Cup, established in 2005 by Adrienne Clarkson, the 26th Governor General (and the first of Asian origin), is awarded for women's hockey. Many young Canadians play hockey at school, in a hockey league or on quiet streets—road hockey or street hockey—and are taken to the hockey rink by their parents. Canadian children have collected hockey cards for generations.

Canadian football is the second most popular sport (see page 26). Curling, an ice game introduced by Scottish pioneers, is popular. Lacrosse, an ancient sport first played by Aboriginals, is the official summer sport. Soccer has the most registered players of any game in Canada.

THE BEAVER

The beaver was adopted centuries ago as a symbol of the Hudson's Bay Company. It became an emblem of the St. Jean Baptiste Society, a French-Canadian patriotic association, in 1834, and was also adopted by other groups. This industrious rodent can be seen on the five-cent coin, on the coats of arms of Saskatchewan and Alberta, and of cities such as Montreal and Toronto.

CANADA'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

English and French are the two official languages and are important symbols of identity. English speakers (Anglophones) and French speakers (Francophones) have lived together in partnership and creative tension for more than 300 years. **You must have adequate knowledge of English or French to become a Canadian citizen.** Adult applicants 55 years of age or over are exempted from this requirement.

Parliament passed the *Official Languages Act* in 1969. It has three main objectives:

- Establish equality between French and English in Parliament, the Government of Canada and institutions subject to the Act;
- Maintain and develop official language minority communities in Canada; and
- Promote equality of French and English in Canadian society.

(From Top to Bottom)

RCMP Musical Ride, Ottawa, Ontario

The industrious beaver

NATIONAL ANTHEM

O Canada was proclaimed as the national anthem in 1980. It was first sung in Québec City in 1880. French and English Canadians sing different words to the national anthem.

O Canada

O Canada! Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command
With glowing hearts we see thee rise
The true North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada
We stand on guard for thee
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee

Ô Canada

Ô Canada! Terre de nos aïeux,
Ton front est ceint de fleurons glorieux!
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
Et ta valeur, de foi trempée,
Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.
Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.

ROYAL ANTHEM

The Royal Anthem of Canada, "God Save the Queen (or King)," can be played or sung on any occasion when Canadians wish to honour the Sovereign.

God Save the Queen

God save our gracious Queen!
Long live our noble Queen!
God save the Queen!
Send her victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the Queen!

Dieu protège la Reine

Dieu protège la Reine!
De sa main souveraine!
Vive la Reine!
Qu'un règne glorieux,
Long et victorieux,
Rende son peuple heureux,
Vive la Reine!

Jazz pianist Oscar Peterson (left) receives the Order of Canada from Roland Michener (right), the 20th Governor General, in 1973. In the centre are Norah Michener and a portrait of Vincent Massey, the 18th Governor General

THE ORDER OF CANADA AND OTHER HONOURS

All countries have ways to recognize outstanding citizens. Official awards are called honours, consisting of *orders, decorations* and *medals*. After using British honours for many years, Canada started its own honours system with the Order of Canada in 1967, the centennial of Confederation.

If you know of fellow citizens who you think are worthy of recognition, you are welcome to nominate them. Information on nominations for many of these honours can be found at www.gg.ca/document.aspx?id=70?&lan=eng.

(From Left to Right)

Colonel Alexander Roberts Dunn, V.C.

Able Seaman William Hall, V.C.

Brigadier Paul Triquet, V.C.

Filip Konowal, V.C., was promoted Sergeant

THE VICTORIA CROSS

The Victoria Cross (V.C.) is the highest honour available to Canadians and is awarded for the most conspicuous bravery, a daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy. The V.C. has been awarded to 96 Canadians since 1854, including:

- Then Lieutenant Alexander Roberts Dunn, born in present-day Toronto, served in the British Army in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava (1854) in the Crimean War, and was the first Canadian to be awarded the Victoria Cross.
- Able Seaman William Hall of Horton, Nova Scotia, whose parents were American slaves, was the first black man to be awarded the V.C. for his role in the Siege of Lucknow during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.
- Corporal Filip Konowal, born in Ukraine, showed exceptional courage in the Battle of Hill 70 in 1917, and became the first member of the Canadian Corps not born in the British Empire to be awarded the V.C.
- Flying ace Captain Billy Bishop, born in Owen Sound, Ontario, earned the V.C. in the Royal Flying Corps during the First World War, and was later an honorary Air Marshal of the Royal Canadian Air Force.
- Captain Paul Triquet of Cabano, Quebec, earned the V.C. leading his men and a handful of tanks in the attack on Casa Berardi in Italy in 1943 during the Second World War, and was later a Brigadier.
- Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, a navy pilot born in Trail, B.C., was killed while bombing and sinking a Japanese warship in August 1945, a few days before the end of the Second World War, and was the last Canadian to receive the V.C. to date.

(From Top to Bottom)

Air Marshal William A. Bishop, better known as flying ace Billy Bishop, V.C.

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray, V.C.

NATIONAL PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND OTHER IMPORTANT DATES

New Year's Day	January 1
Sir John A. Macdonald Day	January 11
Good Friday	Friday immediately preceding Easter Sunday
Easter Monday	Monday immediately following Easter Sunday
Vimy Day	April 9
Victoria Day	Monday preceding May 25 (Sovereign's birthday)
Fête nationale (Quebec)	June 24 (Feast of St. John the Baptist)
Canada Day	July 1
Labour Day	First Monday of September
Thanksgiving Day	Second Monday of October
Remembrance Day	November 11
Sir Wilfrid Laurier Day	November 20
Christmas Day	December 25
Boxing Day	December 26