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Fireworks, Folk-dancing, and Fostering a National Identity: The Politics of Canada Day



Abstract: Since 1958, the Canadian government has used the celebration of 1 July to promote particular models of national identity and to foster national unity. Commemorating the anniversary of Confederation, these Dominion Day and Canada Day (as renamed in 1982) observances changed over the decades to reflect changing government public policy objectives and new conceptions of the nation. From a celebration rooted in military pageantry stressing Canada's British heritage, these events were modified to promote a vision of a multicultural, bilingual country with a strong Aboriginal component. Moreover, Canada Day messages increasingly stressed the themes of individual achievement and respect for diversity. Although politicians played roles in determining the form and content of these events, and public response influenced which components were maintained, bureaucrats working in the Secretary of State department exercised a particularly strong influence on these celebrations, providing institutional continuity and expertise to planning efforts. These celebrations provide a key window into understanding the Canadian government's evolving cultural and national identity policies in the post-Second World War era.

Keywords: Canada Day, Dominion Day, nationalism, commemoration, public policy

Résumé : Le gouvernement canadien utilise depuis 1958 les célébrations du 1^{er} juillet pour promouvoir l'identité nationale, avec des modèles particuliers. La commémoration de l'anniversaire de la Confédération, ces célébrations de la fête du Dominion, renommée fête du Canada en 1982, a changé au cours des décennies afin de refléter la politique publique gouvernementale en mouvement et les nouvelles conceptions de la nation. D'une célébration enracinée dans un spectacle militaire insistant sur l'héritage britannique du Canada, on a modifié ces événements afin de promouvoir une vision d'un pays bilingue et multiculturel, doté d'une composante fortement autochtone. En outre, les messages de la fête du Canada portaient de plus en plus sur les thèmes des réalisations individuelles et le respect de la diversité. Bien que les hommes et les femmes politiques aient joué un rôle dans la détermination de la forme et du contenu de ces événements, et que l'accueil de la population ait eu une influence sur les éléments conservés, les

bureaucrates travaillant au Secrétariat d'État ont exercé une influence particulièrement forte sur ces célébrations, en offrant une continuité institutionnelle et leur expertise en planification. Ces célébrations permettent de mieux comprendre les politiques en pleine évolution de l'identité nationale et culturelle du gouvernement canadien après la Seconde Guerre mondiale.

Mots clés : fête du Canada, fête du Dominion, nationalisme, commémoration, politique publique

On 1 July 1958, viewers of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) witnessed the first nationally simulcast television broadcast in Canadian history. Governor General Vincent Massey's Dominion Day address emphasized the 'two great streams' that had influenced Canadian history – the English and the French. He observed that through confusion and compromise, a great country had arisen, developing free and great institutions around the central pillar of the Crown, a symbol of both heritage and duty. Seven years later, viewers of CBC Television and Radio-Canada observed Dominion Day festivities taking place on Parliament Hill. Bilingual hosts Alex Trebek and Henri Bergeron welcomed them to Canada's ninety-eighth birthday celebrations, featuring a succession of performers who had come from across the land 'bearing gifts.' The opening act from British Columbia was the Cariboo Indian Girls Pipe Band, a dozen tartan-clad teenaged girls from the Shuswap First Nation who performed traditional bagpipe music. Twenty-six years later, Canadians who tuned in to the Canada Day special saw a very different face of Aboriginal Canada in Kashtin, who opened and closed the 1991 festivities with their Montagnais-language rock music.

All three events were arranged by the federal government in honour of the anniversary of Confederation. The contrasts among them are striking, even on the sole basis of the role played by Aboriginal people in the televised celebration. Massey's speech ignored Canada's First Nations. The 1965 celebration presented an image of Aboriginal girls assimilating to white Canadian culture, whereas the Aboriginal Canadians of 1991 were maintaining the language of their ancestors and fusing Western rock music with First Nations themes and language. Massey was the Queen's representative to Canada, the teenagers from 1965 were amateur performers, the rockers from 1991 were Juno Award-nominated professional singers. Massey and the Cariboo Girls were part of Dominion Day celebrations; Kashtin was part of a Canada Day event. Much had changed in the federal government's celebration of a landmark anniversary of Canada's political evolution.

For Canadians, 1 July marks the anniversary of the creation of the Dominion of Canada with its four original provinces in 1867. Of the six provinces that joined later, only Prince Edward Island did so on 1 July. In Newfoundland, it is a day of mourning for soldiers killed in the First World War Battle of Beaumont-Hamel. The first of July is thus not necessarily an obvious rallying point for all Canadians – but then, so few things are in a country marked more by slow evolution and compromise than violent change or revolution. By the mid-1950s, both Empire Day (23 May) and Victoria Day (24 May) had declined in importance to Canadians, as had the empire and monarch they honoured. Parades for St-Jean-Baptiste Day (24 June), honouring French Canada's patron saint, drew huge crowds in Montreal and Ottawa in the early 1950s, but held little appeal for English speakers. Thus, in 1958 federal officials selected the holiday of Dominion Day as a component of its public policy agenda to foster certain conceptions of Canadian identity. In subsequent years, politicians considered and tested a succession of other possible names (Canada's Birthday, Canada Week) before renaming the holiday 'Canada Day' in 1982. Tracing changes in the content and form of the day's celebrations and examining the political considerations that drove these experiments helps us to understand the development of federal national identity policies in post-Second World War Canada.

The tradition of observing Dominion Day was slow to become established. In 1868, Governor General Viscount Monck called on Canadians to celebrate the anniversary of Confederation.¹ In 1879, Dominion Day became a national holiday. For the next fifty years, Dominion Day events, including picnics and firework displays, were organized by community groups and municipalities, and the federal government was not involved. Plans for a big fiftieth anniversary celebration were scuttled by the First World War. Thus the Diamond Jubilee of 1927 was the first federally organized observance of the anniversary of Confederation, featuring a massive event in the nation's capital, culminating in a coast-to-coast simultaneous radio broadcast.² It would not be until over a decade after the Second World War that the federal government became interested in deliberately using Dominion Day as a tool for nation-building and identity construction.

1 *Canada Gazette*, 20 June 1868, 504.

2 Robert Cupido, 'The Medium, the Message and the Modern: The Jubilee Broadcast of 1927,' *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 26 (Fall 2002): 101–23. Mary Vipond, 'The Mass Media in Canadian History: The Empire Day Broadcast of 1939,' *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 14 (2003): 1–22.

This holiday provided the opportunity for the federal government to experiment with a wide variety of different approaches to commemoration, nation-building, and identity formation, as 1 July came to occupy an important role in Ottawa's symbolic construction of Canadian identity.³

For the past thirty years, historians, political scientists, and other scholars have devoted considerable attention to the study of nationalism and its intersection with cultural practices, examining the manner in which the socially constructed 'imagined communities'⁴ we refer to as nations often rely on invented traditions to foster national solidarity and pride.⁵ Social psychologist Michael Billig argues that the reinforcement of national identities is an ongoing process. Elements of 'banal nationalism' such as languages, displayed flags, and the media's use of a rhetorical 'us' continually naturalize and reinforce feelings of nationalism.⁶

A growing public history literature demonstrates the powerful ways in which commemoration shapes the collective popular understanding of the past while also reinforcing power structures and ideologies in the present. Recent scholarship has argued that these processes of shaping collective memory are interactive. 'Official' versions of the past, promoted by governments and elites, are often contested by mass audiences or individual actors in commemorative ceremonies. H.V. Nelles's study of Quebec's tercentenary shows how this commemoration was intimately tied to elite nation-building projects, but that there was also an extensive degree of participant agency in shaping these commemorations, contesting their intended aims, and interpreting their significance.⁷ Anthropologist Eva Mackey, studying participant responses to the 'Canada 125' celebrations of 1992, argues that official discourses of tolerance and multiculturalism were often fiercely resisted and contested by the white, unmarked 'Canadian-Canadians' who attended these events.⁸

3 Matthew Hayday, 'Variety Show as National Identity: CBC Television and Dominion Day Celebrations, 1958–1980,' in *Communicating in Canada's Past: Essays in Media History*, ed. Gene Allen and Daniel Robinson, 168–93 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

4 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

5 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

6 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

7 H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageant and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

8 Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 144–7.

Unlike other forms of commemoration, holidays repeat annually and thus permit analysis of how they have changed over time. Labour historians have observed how the 'worker's holiday' of Labour/Labor Day fits within efforts to foster working-class consciousness. Organizers also tried to fend off the 'less-respectable' connotations of the radically oriented May Day, which communist activists in the United States attempted to use to foster alternative American identities.⁹ As military historian Jonathan Vance observes, the observance of Remembrance Day was hotly contested by veterans, pacifists, and other groups attempting to reinforce particular interpretations of the First World War.¹⁰ Len Travers has demonstrated how early Independence Day celebrations in the United States were highly politicized events seeking to either reinforce federalist or Democratic-Republican visions of the country, while Lyn Spillman has shown how both Australian and American centennial and bicentennial celebrations either emphasized or downplayed aspects of each country's history and culture, depending on political circumstances.¹¹ Spillman's work on recent commemorations in other 'settler' societies with large immigrant populations, Aboriginal communities, and concerns about their international status provides a useful point of departure for my study of Canadian nationalism in the same period.

Most of the literature on holidays and commemorations has approached this subject from social or cultural history perspectives. These authors have focused largely on targeted populations' experiences of these events, competition between these groups to shape public memory, and the reception of commemorative events by the large audiences. John Bodnar suggests that these commemorations could be analyzed through the lens of a disconnect between official and vernacular cultures.¹² Subsequent scholars have argued this

9 Donna T. Haverty-Stacke, *America's Forgotten Holiday: May Day and Nationalism, 1867–1960* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Craig Heron and Steve Penfold, *The Workers' Festival: A History of Labour Day in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

10 Jonathan Vance, *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

11 Lyn Spillman, *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).

12 John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

might be better expressed as the commingling of these cultures, or the appropriation of one by the other.¹³

Less has been written with the aim of understanding commemoration as part of a public policy agenda. Graeme Turner contends that the 1988 Australian Bicentenary should be examined as a cultural policy initiative by the Australian government to 'teach' its people how to celebrate their national identity, even if the promoted hybrid identity failed to receive full acceptance.¹⁴ To what extent was this the case in Canada? Canadian politicians and bureaucrats viewed Canada Day as a tool to reinforce government policies related to national identity and unity. Politicians and bureaucrats worked with their partners in the media and civil society to attempt to craft holiday celebrations that supported their conceptions about what Canadian identity *should* be, in the hopes that this vision would be accepted by Canadians.

How were these policies crafted? Pluralist models of public policy formation posit that governments act as brokers between interest groups competing to influence policy. Conversely, elite-driven models emphasize the ideological viewpoints of politicians. While citizen groups were sometimes consulted by the government, and politicians had specific visions of Canada they sought to advance, the following analysis will demonstrate that interest groups were rarely central to the considerations of Canada Day organizers. Moreover, transitions between ideologically opposed governments did not always lead to radical policy shifts regarding Canadian national identity. For this reason, the historical institutionalist approach to policy-making must be considered. This approach focuses on the autonomous roles and power of the state and bureaucratic actors, and the ongoing impact of previously enacted public policies.¹⁵ While political leaders sometimes intervened in the overall messages and format of Canada Day, the bureaucrats who worked for the Secretary of State Department (now Canadian Heritage) provided the institutional memory and backbone of these celebrations. They normally took the initiative to develop new programming ideas, or attempted to maintain certain elements in the face of apathetic or even antagonistic political climates. While public response to these events, gauged through evaluations, polling,

13 Alon Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,' *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (Dec. 1997): 1402.

14 Graeme Turner, *Making It National: Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1994), 68–9.

15 On public policy models, see Miriam Smith, *A Civil Society? Collective Actors in Canadian Political Life* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2005).

and newspaper coverage can be found, the internal documentation of the Secretary of State Department suggests that officials often maintained policies despite lukewarm or critical public and media reactions. Understanding this interplay of politics, bureaucracy, and the public provides a fuller picture of the history of public policy development.

What was this Canadian identity that was being fostered? José Igartua argues that in the 1960s, English-Canadians turned away from their previous British-centric identity models and adopted one rooted in bilingualism and multiculturalism.¹⁶ Bryan Palmer agrees with Igartua that the British-centric identity was abandoned in the 1960s but argues that no new model of identity emerged to replace it.¹⁷ Conversely, Eva Mackey contends that a multicultural, tolerant, heterogeneous identity has been fostered by the Canadian government since the 1970s. This process ironically reasserted the central role of white, undifferentiated Canadians as the arbiters of national identity, while also making them feel left out of an identity politics centred on difference. Moreover, Mackey contends that the Canadian state has fostered a discourse of the 'crisis' of Canadian identity to allow it to play a central role in regulating the politics of identity.¹⁸ In response to Mackey, the history of Canada Day policy suggests that prior to the 1970s, crises did not affect the government's celebration policies. While political and constitutional crises did play a role after 1976, these were hardly 'invented' by the federal government; rather, they were major challenges to circumvent, particularly since Canadians trusted their governments less in these decades. Dominion Day and Canada Day celebrations were considered an element in a broader strategy of national unity and identity formation, although successive governments struggled to come up with a structure for the holiday that would be both popular with Canadians and lead to more spontaneous community-based celebrations. As the following analysis will demonstrate, while ambivalent attitudes about Canadian identity persisted in the 1990s, new identity models were definitely being promoted by the government and gaining greater popular acceptance (at least in English-speaking Canada) by the 1980s. Igartua thus is perhaps premature in contending that this new identity had gelled by the 1960s, but Palmer overstates his case about the complete drift

16 José Igartua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945–71* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).

17 Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

18 Mackey, *House of Difference*, 5–13.

of Canadian identity after this decade. By 1992 – Canada’s 125th anniversary – a tradition and public policy of celebrating Canada Day had solidified. It stressed a Canadian identity that was centred on diversity, individual rights, and achievement, and it was attracting significant public support.

ARE NATIONAL HOLIDAYS CONSISTENT WITH BRITISH TRADITION?
DIEFENBAKER’S DOMINION DAY CONUNDRUM

Federal government involvement in the organization of 1 July celebrations was instigated by the Progressive Conservative government of John Diefenbaker, first elected in 1957, mere days before the ninetieth anniversary of Confederation. Firm believers in the virtues of Canada’s British heritage, while they were in opposition the Conservatives had frequently criticized the Liberal government’s gradual phase-out of the term *Dominion* from national institutions.¹⁹ The *Ottawa Journal* observed that restoring this term was one of Diefenbaker’s pet causes, and that Canadians could expect *Dominion* to return to prominence under his watch.²⁰ The following May, his Cabinet authorized Secretary of State Ellen Fairclough’s proposal for a formal Dominion Day event on Parliament Hill.²¹

Fairclough’s staff had been discussing a Dominion Day celebration, and many reasons had been advanced against one. William Measures, director of Special Division, noted that 1 July was normally a day of exodus from Ottawa. He did not consider Canada to be a retrospective country, but rather a forward-looking one that was confident in its future. Symbolic elements would be problematic, because both the flag and anthem questions were unresolved. Perhaps more damning, he argued that government ceremonies to celebrate a national day were ‘unusual in British countries. Some people regard them as an evidence of national immaturity . . . Annual government ceremonies are contrary to Canadian and Commonwealth tradition.’ He also cautioned that if the event was begun, it must continue every year without interruption, because starting and stopping the event due to weather

- 19 This made it unlikely that Liberals would use ‘Dominion’ Day for nationalist purposes in the 1950s.
- 20 Richard Jackson, ‘Diefenbaker to Stop “Tinkering,” Word “Dominion” on the Way Back,’ *Ottawa Journal*, 29 June 1957.
- 21 Cabinet conclusions, 20 May 1958, vol. 1898, series A-5-a, RG2 Privy Council Office, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).

or fatigue or lack of public interest 'would create uncertainty, perhaps derision.'²²

Why, then, did Fairclough press forward? Duty was certainly a consideration. Measures observed that the governor general had called for these celebrations back in 1868, even if successive governments had ignored him. There was also the centennial of 1967 to consider; Dominion Day celebrations could build excitement and enthusiasm. More important was the consideration of two key target groups: children and immigrants. Measures observed that 'perhaps the organization of an annual public festival on July 1 would establish in the memories of present day children the happy memories which their parents and grandparents have of May 24.' He further noted that 'new Canadians ... should be made aware of the heritage of their adopted country, and should join in the celebration of the chief Canadian anniversary.'²³

Fairclough requested \$14,000 from Cabinet, including \$10,000 for fireworks. Most other costs were minimized by using military and government personnel for key features of the ceremony – a twenty-one-gun salute, trooping of the colour, and a carillon concert. Although Fairclough envisioned the governor general's presence for the Trooping of the Colour, she explicitly did not request the presence of the prime minister or Cabinet. Measures had cautioned against beginning a tradition that required that the prime minister be in Ottawa every 1 July. She did suggest that the customary sittings of the House of Commons be cancelled in order to allow parliamentarians to attend.²⁴ Cabinet authorized her request on 20 May 1958.

The early celebrations of Dominion Day were formal and militaristic. Each year featured the governor general's address, which was broadcast on CBC Television and Radio-Canada in 1958 and 1960. There was no official celebration in 1959, but it is probably safe to say that most Canadians did not notice, in light of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II, which coincided with the day. The events also included concerts by the Peace Tower's carillonneur, a trooping of the colour ceremony, and, in 1960, the naval sunset ceremonies. Fireworks were cancelled in 1960 because of noise complaints from the Ottawa

22 W.H. Measures to Undersecretary of State, 11 Mar. 1958, file 7215-1 pt 1, box 24, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6 Secretary of State, LAC.

23 Ibid.

24 Memorandum to Cabinet, 9 May 1958, file 7215-1 pt 1, box 24, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

General Hospital.²⁵ (In most subsequent years, fireworks were both the most popular and most expensive element of the festivities.) On the whole, these early attempts to institute a tradition of Dominion Day observance stressed the formal, tradition-oriented aspects of the day that linked Canada to its British past and were very much reflective of the Diefenbaker government's attempts to shore up Canada's relations with Britain and the commonwealth.

‘A COLOURFUL FOLK ELEMENT’

Television had been a significant, although limited, aspect of the first Dominion Day events of the Diefenbaker years, which had featured addresses to the nation by the governor general and the Queen. In 1960, the CBC broadcast ‘Dominion Day: A Day to Remember,’ a program that profiled six new Canadians taking the oath of citizenship on Parliament Hill. By February 1961, federal government officials were thinking of ways to broaden the appeal of Dominion Day ceremonies both within and beyond Ottawa. Ellen Fairclough, then minister of citizenship and immigration, wrote to Secretary of State Noël Dorion, suggesting ways to modify the festivities, such as adding more popular features to the program that would draw on Ottawa's folk festivals.

Historian Ian McKay has argued that the mid-twentieth-century folk revival was closely connected to national (or regional) identity politics. An essentialized, unchanging ‘folk’ provided a cultural core for an imagined community, centred on a carefully constructed canon of traditions. This revival, he contends, was originally a romantic, anti-modern, anti-urban movement, rooted in a bourgeois nationalist yearning for culture and a reassertion of traditions. Moreover, it could be used by the state to craft tourist products and shape regional cultures.²⁶ Folk performances were extremely popular with mid-century audiences, a fact exploited by Nova Scotian tourist promoters.

Ellen Fairclough noted that a variety of well-trained groups performing musical interludes would be ‘quite colourful and worthy of the location and occasion. The dances should be particularly good television material.’ Although the television audience was the priority, Fairclough stressed that ‘the professional quality should not be so

25 Noël Dorion to Ellen Fairclough, 24 Jan. 1961, file 7215-1 pt 1, box 24, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

26 Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

dominant that, when seen by the television audience across the country, the performance would discourage rather than encourage emulation.²⁷ This challenge of providing televised entertainment without discouraging local attendance and organization of community celebrations would prove to be a constant conundrum for federal organizers.

The program for Ottawa's Dominion Day celebrations was thus expanded to include high-calibre folk music and dance performances, starting with the Feux-Follets dance troupe from Montreal in 1961, and then broadening to include more acts in subsequent years. Segments from the folk performances aired on the CBC and Radio-Canada from 1961 to 1963, as did the naval sunset ceremony.²⁸ They proved to be a popular draw for the local audience, with estimates ranging from ten thousand to thirty-five thousand spectators in attendance.²⁹ These folk performances demonstrate a shift in the government's portrayal of Canada. With an eye to the citizenship function of Dominion Days, folk groups were encouraged to perform material from a variety of national, Indigenous, and ethnic traditions, including French-Canadian, Ukrainian, Israeli, Italian, and Abenaki. However, Fairclough's vision was clear in 1961: 'The program should be so composed as to enable Canadians generally to identify themselves with it. It should have strong appeal to them as an expression of the historical evolution of our country. This principle should govern the extent to which the program would include New Canadian participants.'³⁰ British-Canadian and French-Canadian songs and dances were to occupy the central place. Nonetheless, the scope of the activities and their audience was expanded in the early 1960s. In this respect, McKay's argument that folk performances represented an anti-modern, romantic ideology in the Nova Scotia context does not appear to hold true for the federal government's use of them in the 1960s. On the contrary, folk elements supported a modernizing, multicultural vision of Canada, rather than an idealized British past. Moreover, multi-ethnic folk dances reflected an *urban* diversity, which was less evident in rural Canada.

27 Ellen Fairclough to Noël Dorion, 8 Feb. 1961, file 7215-1 pt 1, box 24, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

28 Doug Nixon to H.G. Walker, 27 June 1961; M. Sadlier to H.G. Walker, 29 May 1962, file PG 18-21, vol. 917, series A-V-2, RG41 CBC, LAC.

29 '16,000 Defy Heat to Watch Hill Celebrations,' *Ottawa Journal*, 2 July 1963. (This article estimates 10,000 at the main festivities.) Eric Bender, '35,000 Thrill to Glorious 95th Birthday Party Show,' *Ottawa Journal*, 3 July 1962.

30 Ellen Fairclough to Noël Dorion, 8 Feb. 1961, file 7215-1 pt 1, box 24, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

The 1963 election of Lester Pearson's Liberals did not substantially alter Dominion Day festivities, which built upon the foundations already laid by Secretary of State officials. Continuity was evident in the selection of performers for the centrepiece variety show. C.M. Isbister, deputy minister of citizenship and immigration, observed that 'the three ethnic groups which shared the early history of our nation, namely the Indians, French and the Anglo-Saxons, could be featured annually, while the remaining numbers would be presented by as many different ethnic groups as the program can accommodate.' Sensitive to the televised format, he noted that the Ottawa event must be well attended, as the crowds would be visible on television.³¹ The Department of Citizenship and Immigration and the CBC expanded the variety show component, phasing out military pageantry in favour of the more popular folk performances. These were extended in length to fill a sixty- to ninety-minute broadcast, and in the range of performers, who were flown in to represent each province.³² The massed armed forces bands performed for the live audience but were dropped from television coverage.

The Pearson government also introduced significant new themes for the Dominion Day ceremonies, starting with a bilingual and bicultural focus. Bilingual masters of ceremonies hosted the 1965 and 1966 televised specials. This change was important as the events were simulcast on the CBC television network and Radio-Canada. Program organizers were always careful to include francophone performers not only from Quebec but also from other French-Canadian or Acadian communities. The focus on this theme is not surprising. Pearson had launched the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963; its reports began appearing in the mid-1960s. Multiple ethnic groups were featured in these shows on a rotating basis from year to year, allowing for the inclusion of a variety of displays of traditional ethnic dances, songs, and martial arts. The selection of 'Indian' performers reflected the assimilationist discourse of the Department of Indian Affairs up to the 1960s. Aboriginal performers tended to be presented in Euro-Canadian guise, whether as tartan-clad Shuswap girls from BC playing the bagpipes, or a Cree baton-twirling champion from Manitoba. While these performers had a variety of reasons for participating, the incorporation of the pipe

31 C.M. Isbister to minister, 14 Aug. 1964, file 7215-67 pt 1, box 26, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

32 Memo from W. Martin, 19 May 1965, file PG 18-21, vol. 917, series A-V-2, RG41, LAC.

band, which formed in 1958 at the St. Joseph's Mission residential school run by the Oblates of William Lake, BC (who also performed at Expo '67) explicitly reflects political motives. Father H. O'Connor, principal of the school,³³ wrote to the Secretary of State Department, 'We would like the people of Canada to see the better side of our Indian people and we feel sure that there is no better means of educating our Canadian people to see this better side than to have such a fine group of Ambassadors representing the Indian people.'³⁴ The cost of transporting the band to Ottawa for the Dominion Day event was prohibitive, so the extra costs were defrayed by special funding from the Centennial Commission and the Department of Indian Affairs.

REINVENTION BREEDS CONTEMPT

The centennial celebrations of 1967 were, by all accounts, a great success. In addition to the eye-popping summer-long spectacle of Montreal's Expo '67, a full slate of events took place on Parliament Hill. Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh hosted the birthday 'Hullabaloo,' which included a massive birthday cake and a variety show with performers from all regions of Canada. After so much effort had been placed into building up 1 July as a day of celebration, federal bureaucrats believed that these centennial celebrations would naturally lead to continued strong enthusiasm for Dominion Day. In this, they were mistaken. The decade that followed was marked by efforts to overhaul the nature of 1 July celebrations, with deleterious effects.

Planning for 1968 began with an ambitious agenda for an even larger Ottawa event, including an interdenominational religious service and a Rideau Canal flotilla.³⁵ But organizers ran into massive roadblocks from Cabinet, which refused to approve funds, and the CBC, which cited financial concerns and decided not to broadcast the

33 Elizabeth Furniss, *Victims of Benevolence: The Dark Legacy of the Williams Lake Residential School* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1992), 110–11; Irene Stangoe, 'Scottish-Indian Pipers from the Cariboo,' in *Looking Back at Cariboo-Chilcotin with Irene Stangoe* (Surrey: Heritage House, 1997), 136–8.

34 H. O'Connor to Miquelon, 8 Mar. 1965, file 1-7-4/1-1 pt 1965, box 15, Acc. 1986-87/419, RG6, LAC.

35 G.G.E. Steele to Secretary of State, 31 May 1968, file 7215-68-2 pt 1, box 26, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC. On public religion in the 1960s, see Gary Miedema, *For Canada's Sake: Public Religion, Centennial Celebrations and the Re-making of Canada in the 1960s* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005).

show.³⁶ Organizers scrambled to pull together \$35,000 – far less than the \$57,000 allocated for 1966 or the \$150,000 for 1967. Canadians outside of Ottawa were not able to watch the 140 performers who had been brought in from across the country.

The resulting event was a disaster. J. André Ouellette, executive assistant to Secretary of State Gérard Pelletier, sent a blistering memo to Undersecretary of State G.G.E. Steele criticizing the complete lack of Indian or Eskimo performers, the failure to play the national anthem, the weak French in the religious service, and the Show on the Hill, which he characterized as being ‘une de très mauvaise goût.’³⁷ C.J. Lochnan, one of Steele’s staff, admitted that there had been major problems with the 1968 events, including the program’s professional director and the budgetary constraints.³⁸ Far more impressive that year as a symbol of Canadian identity was the image, captured a week before Dominion Day, of Prime Minister Trudeau facing down separatist demonstrators at Montreal’s St-Jean-Baptiste Day parade.³⁹

The federal government was willing to try again. Ouellette noted that planning for future events needed to start earlier and involve more people. He called for a ‘Canadianization’ of the event, which would entail a smaller role for the governor general, a larger role for the prime minister, and a more central place for Canadian symbols such as the omitted anthem.⁴⁰ In this, one detects a reframing of what the Trudeau government thought of as ‘Canadian,’ since the Diefenbaker government certainly thought it was putting on a Canadian event!

The next seven years featured a hodge-podge of largely unsuccessful attempts to rework Dominion Day. The variety show was moved indoors to the National Arts Centre from 1969 to 1971. Although the new setting was less vulnerable to being rained out, the new ‘Bonjour Canada’ programming suffered numerous flaws. Envisioned as Canada’s version of ‘Royal Command’ performances in Britain, the event largely

36 G.G.E. Steele to George Davidson, 14 June 1968; C.J. Lochnan to G.G.E. Steele, 24 June 1968, file 7215-68-4 pt 1, box 27, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

37 J. André Ouellette to G.G.E. Steele, 18 July 1968, file 7215-68 pt 1, box 26, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

38 C.J. Lochnan to G.G.E. Steele, 31 July 1968, file 7215-68 pt 1, box 26, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

39 Violence led to the parade’s cancellation for the early 1970s.

40 J. André Ouellette to G.G.E. Steele, 18 July 1968, file 7215-68 pt 1, box 26, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

failed to inspire.⁴¹ Attempting to downplay the 'ethnic' components of the past, in an effort to 'focus on Canadians'⁴² such as singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot and classical pianist André Gagnon, the performances received a lukewarm reception, attracting press coverage mostly for the poor quality of the hosts' bilingualism.⁴³ It did not help that the focus was diverted from Ottawa in 1970 and 1971 to focus on Manitoba and British Columbia's centennial events. Public relations consultant Paul Break had felt this would create a greater focus on Canadian people, and less on Ottawa, while CBC producers Wilfred Fielding and Thom Benson argued that a standard program every year, featuring stars, lacked enough public appeal to compete with other programming.⁴⁴ The prime minister and Cabinet were thus flown off to Winnipeg and Victoria after their brief attendance at morning festivities in Ottawa, despite warnings from Secretary of State officials against shifting the focus from the national capital.⁴⁵

The centrepiece events returned to Parliament Hill in 1972 in a celebration marred by the unilingual French hosting of pianist André Gagnon (English dubbing was provided for the television audience).⁴⁶ In subsequent years, the headline performers failed to attract excitement, other than fiddler Ti-Jean Carignan. Eugene Forsey complained to Secretary of State Hugh Faulkner that there was 'nothing to remind people of the breadth and diversity of the country' and that there were few songs and dances from ethnic groups of the country.⁴⁷ Forsey's observation draws our attention to the fact that although bilingualism was heavily promoted in the Trudeau-era Dominion Day events, multiculturalism was largely sidelined. The CBC again declined to cover the 1974 show, and although the 1975 slate of performers included ethnic folk performances and was viewed by 60,000 spectators on Parliament Hill, it failed to generate enthusiasm among politicians.⁴⁸

41 Memo from C.J. Lochnan, 28 Mar. 1969, file 7215-69-8, box 27, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC; P.M. Tellier to Michael Pitfield, 29 Dec. 1970, file 7215-70, box 28, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

42 Minutes, 20 May 1969, file 7215-69-2, box 27, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

43 Blaik Kirby, 'CBC's Holiday Concert Marred by Its Clumsy Bi-bi Flaws,' *Globe and Mail*, 2 July 1970.

44 Minutes, 11 Feb. 1969, file 7215-69, box 27, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

45 Michael Pitfield to Jules Léger, 12 Aug. 1969; file 7215-70, box 28, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

46 'A Hurt to a Good Cause,' *Ottawa Journal*, 5 July 1972.

47 Eugene Forsey to Hugh Faulkner, 3 July 1973, file 7215-73, box 28, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

48 Graham Glockling to Pierre Forget, 21 Apr. 1975, file 7215-75, box 28, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

The Ottawa media reported favourably on the concerts, which attracted between twenty-five to 70,000 spectators,⁴⁹ but other Canadian papers only gave cursory attention to the events. After the hoopla surrounding the centennial, the festivities of subsequent years paled by comparison.

Given the uncertainty and ever-changing forms of the 1 July events on Parliament Hill, and the fiscal pressures facing the government, it was not a shock when the federal government eliminated funding for Dominion Day events for 1976, despite objections from the Secretary of State Department. The only federally sponsored event in 1976 was the presentation of citizenship certificates to forty new Canadians by the prime minister. It would take the national-unity-shattering election of the Parti Québécois in November to lead to a revival – and yet another reconception – of the government's approach to celebrating 1 July.

THE 'NATIONAL LOVE-FEAST'

The election of the PQ created a crisis in Ottawa that extended through the Secretary of State Department.⁵⁰ Senior civil servant Bernard Ostry was seconded to oversee a large ad hoc staff running a \$4 million Canada Day program. The 'Great Canadian Birthday Party' had two major components. The first was a coast-to-coast gala televised variety show, linking stages in every region of the country, featuring the biggest name Canadian stars willing to perform (most high-profile Québécois artists declined and were instead part of the \$6 million Fête Nationale celebrations in Quebec on 24 June). The show ran live for over three hours on all but two (both in Quebec) of Canada's radio and television stations. Planning for 1978 envisioned a repeat performance, with festivities 'coordinated as a national love-feast, giving the people of each Province, or Territory, the feeling that on their particular day their fellow Canadians were thinking of them and wishing them well.'⁵¹ In 1979, the central event was scaled back to the Ottawa stage, but with top-level professional performers.

49 Audience estimates varied widely. Sheila Copps, 'Free Family Fun Fiery,' *Ottawa Citizen*, 2 July 1974; Maureen Peterson, 'Thank You, Canada for a Great Party,' *Ottawa Journal*, 2 July 1975.

50 Matthew Hayday, 'La francophonie canadienne, le bilinguisme et l'identité canadienne dans les célébrations de la fête du Canada,' in *Entre lieux et mémoire L'inscription de la francophonie canadienne dans la durée*, ed. Anne Gilbert, Michel Bock, and Joseph Yvon Thériault (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2009): 103–4.

51 Festival Canada 1978, 5th revision, 24 Oct. 1977, file PG18-21-3, vol. 917, series A-V-2, RG41, LAC.

These shows featured a spectrum of big-name Canadian stars, including Ginette Reno, Bruce Cockburn, Anne Murray, and Buffy Ste-Marie, francophone artists from diverse regions of the country, and Indian, Inuit, and Metis performers. Less evident was the multi-ethnic face of Canada, although Ukrainian Shumka dancers and soul singer Salome Bey were both featured twice. Half of all Canadians watched the 1977 show.⁵² Radio-Canada's French Services Division suggested that the show was not well received in Quebec,⁵³ but an evaluation by Complan Research Associates showed that Quebecers watched the program in numbers comparable to those in English Canada. Fifty-four per cent believed that the celebrations would make it more likely that Canada would stay united, versus 18 per cent who thought it made separation more likely.⁵⁴ In subsequent years, the audience for the television show shrank but still pulled in numbers comparable to the Grey Cup.

Starting in 1977, the federal government also began direct seed funding for community-based celebrations. The Canadian Folk Arts Council and the Council on Canadian Unity were authorized to allocate \$2 million as start-up grants to community-based groups who wanted to organize picnics, fireworks, festivals, or other activities in honour of Canada's birthday. The program's goal was 'to remind people of their history, to provide a perspective of the current difficulties and to encourage a re-commitment to the country.'⁵⁵ Thirty per cent of the funding was earmarked for Quebec events. Evaluations concluded that these events were well attended, but that more could be done to link them with other events across the country, in order to foster a greater sense of national unity.⁵⁶

External evaluations carried out by Byward Consultants also suggested that themes be developed that de-emphasized regional and linguistic differences and were grounded in emotional appeal, that

52 'Canada Day 1977: A Report and Recommendations, 8 Sept. 1977, Ottawa,' file 32, vol. 32, MG31 D230 G. Hamilton Southam, LAC.

53 Memo, 21 May 1978; memo from Peter Meggs, 24 Aug. 1977, file PG18-21-3, vol. 917, series A-V-2, RG41, LAC.

54 1270 interviews were conducted, including 290 in Quebec: file 7215-77 pt 4, box 29, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

55 National Museums of Canada submission to Treasury Board, 11 May 1977, file 7215-77, vol. 1, box 29, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

56 André Fortier to Secretary of State, 4 Aug. 1977, file 7215-77 pt 4, box 29, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

'strive[d] to respect and reflect the regional and cultural diversity of Canada but which ... transcend[ed] provincialism.'⁵⁷ Although there was intense debate over whether the Canada's Birthday programming was accomplishing its implicit goal of combating separatism, this crisis of national unity had prompted the federal government to change its approach to the national holiday, creating a new focus on sponsorship of local activities in addition to its activities in Ottawa. By the late-1970s it was clear that the audience being targeted was no longer limited to new Canadians and children, but the entire population of Canada, particularly francophone Quebec.

LOCAL CELEBRATIONS, NATIONAL SYMBOLS, AND
CANADIAN ACHIEVEMENT

The 1979 election of Joe Clark's Conservatives had consequences for Dominion Day. Clark's government opted to dramatically scale down the scope of the 1980 events, cancelling the large-scale evening variety show.⁵⁸ External evaluators suggested a low-key, local, and participatory approach, observing that 'no other approach would work, in part because there is now a great deal of cynicism towards Canada Day.'⁵⁹ In keeping with Clark's 'Community of Communities' approach to Canada, \$1.2 million was maintained to sponsor community-based events.⁶⁰

Clark's government did not survive to implement this policy shift, falling on a budget vote in December 1979. Trudeau's returning government thus had to decide whether to reinstate the slashed funding and organize a celebratory bash that would take place six weeks after Quebec's sovereignty-association referendum. Secretary of State Francis Fox urged caution, noting that a huge nationalistic party might be 'psychologically harmful if it's not perfectly in tune with the post-

57 Byward Consultants, *Recommendations for a Federal Government July 1st Program 1978 – Summary*, 14 Oct. 1977, file 7215-78 pt 1, box 29, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

58 Ann Chudleigh, 'Proposals for a Medium-Profile Celebration of Canada's Birthday in 1980,' 24 Sept. 1979, file 7215-80 pt 1, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

59 Canada Day Report, 30 Oct. 1979, file 7215-1 pt 4, box 25, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

60 Secretary of State memorandum to Cabinet, 22 Jan. 1980, file 7215-80 pt 1, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

referendum atmosphere.’⁶¹ A mix of party politics and public policy considerations carried a decision not to reinstate the funding. Any criticism related to cutting the Parliament Hill show could be blamed on the Clark administration, whereas reintroducing the funding would open the Trudeau government to criticism of its extravagance – a particular worry, given the size of the federal deficit. Policy considerations also played a role. Organizers defended shifting from an ‘overly structured, professional entertainment-type’ event to one featuring ‘more informal, popular participatory activities providing scope and opportunity for spontaneous manifestations by Canadians . . . of their pride of nationhood and of the significance they attach to Canada’s birthday.’⁶²

A National Committee for Canada’s Birthday was established to coordinate the local celebrations for 1 July 1980. Committee chair Yvon Des Rochers stressed that ‘Canada’s birthday should belong to Canadians, not to governments.’ He observed that the government was moving away from direct involvement in festivities, wanting Canadians to participate in these events, rather than ‘sit[ting] back and be[ing] entertained by professionals.’⁶³ Although most government funding was distributed to communities, a sizeable grant was allocated to the National Capital Region (NCR) for a substantial event on Parliament Hill and in surrounding parks.⁶⁴ One common element linked these otherwise decentralized activities: in 1980, ‘O Canada’ officially became the national anthem. Groups across the country were strongly encouraged to organize noonday singings of the anthem, with the Ottawa group led by Prime Minister Trudeau – linking Canadians coast to coast as an imagined community singing together. The National Committee felt that events went well and that the day should continue to be ‘apolitical, non-partisan and decentralized.’⁶⁵ *Ottawa Citizen* journalists Tim Harper and Andrew Cohen

61 Secretary of State memorandum to Cabinet, 9 Apr. 1980, file 7215-80 pt 1, vol. 1, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

62 Secretary of State submission to Treasury Board, 17 Apr. 1980, file 7215-80 pt 2, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

63 Yvon Des Rochers to community newspapers, 9 June 1980, file 7215-80 pt 2, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

64 Citizens’ Committee, National Capital Region, Report to the National Committee – Canada’s Birthday, file 7215-80 pt 2, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

65 National Committee Report to the Secretary of State on Canada’s Birthday Celebrations 1980, 15 Aug. 1980, file 7215-80 pt 3, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

agreed, noting the 'homegrown' nature of the festivities on the Hill.⁶⁶ The NCR committee was less sure of this direction, calling for the revival of the CBC-produced *Show on the Hill*.⁶⁷

The federal government maintained the same approach to 1 July for the next seven years. The anniversary of Confederation fell under a new social policy directive, adopted in the fall of 1980, which sought the 'development of a cultural thrust related to the understanding and enhancement of national identity and symbols.'⁶⁸ The name 'Dominion Day' itself had been something that the Liberals sought to change. Although colloquial use of the term *Canada Day* had been prevalent since the 1960s, a long succession of Cabinet-sponsored and private member's bills to make this official had failed to pass since the 1940s, and it took a private member's bill sponsored by Vaudreuil MP Hal Herbert to officially change the name to Canada Day. The bill passed a virtually deserted House of Commons on 9 July 1982 and cleared the Senate on 25 October. The celebrations of 1983 were centred on the 'Canada Day' name, and the National Canada Day Committee was restructured as a body federating the Canada Day Committees for each province and territory and the NCR, replacing the Council for Canadian Unity and Canadian Folk Arts Council as granting bodies.⁶⁹

The celebrations of the early 1980s sought to solidify Canadian recognition of major new symbols such as the anthem, flag, and the renamed 'Canada Day.' The new constitution and Charter of Rights of 1982, however, were not emphasized that year, perhaps because of the controversy surrounding their adoption. In the mid-1980s, organizers developed additional themes. The first, 'Explorers of Canada,' was tied to the major anniversary celebrations taking place in 1984, including the 450th anniversary of Jacques Cartier's arrival in Canada. Secretary of State Serge Joyal hoped that the events would unite the country in a national celebration of the 'sense of adventure' that led to Canada's exploration.⁷⁰ This theme was incorporated into

66 Tim Harper and Andrew Cohen, 'Flag Waving on the Hill,' *Ottawa Citizen*, 2 July 1980.

67 Citizens' Committee, National Capital Region, Report to the National Committee – Canada's Birthday, file 7215-80 pt 2, box 30, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

68 Secretary of State memorandum to Cabinet, 15 Jan. 1981, file 7215-81 pt 1, box 31, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

69 Celebration of Canada Day 1983, file 7215-83 pt 2, box 37, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

70 Serge Joyal to MPs and senators, 28 Feb. 1984, file 7215-84 pt 2, box 41, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

key events and speeches related to Canada Day, including the formal midday celebrations on Parliament Hill, which were carried on CBC and the Radio-Canada network.⁷¹ A number of theme-based activities were developed by the Canada Day committees in conjunction with the Secretary of State to foster shared experiences among Canadians, including national poster contests and activity books for children.⁷² Clearly, organizers sought to create common experiences for Canadians on their national day, even while continuing to stress the local celebrations.

Several Canada Day committee members and civil servants were uncertain about having a theme beyond simply 'Canada.'⁷³ Nevertheless, themes were maintained in Canada Day events organized under Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservative government, which was concerned that even the modified format of Canada Day was too centralized and there was 'now a need to return it to the grass roots.'⁷⁴ But the approach of federally co-ordinated local celebrations with common themes and symbols had proven popular. A 1984 Gallup Poll indicated that 73.2 per cent of Canadians approved of federal financial support for Canada Day celebrations.⁷⁵ Thus, Secretary of State Walter McLean's staff continued to develop new themes, which included 'A Salute to Canada's Youth' in 1985, a tie-in to the International Youth Year, 'Canada: In Motion, in Touch' in 1986, which was linked to the 'Transportation and Communications' theme of Vancouver's Expo, and 'Citizenship' in 1987, the fortieth anniversary of the Citizenship Act. Attendance at the Ottawa-based events continued to grow, from 170,000 in 1984 to 325,000 by 1985, and passing 400,000 in 1988.⁷⁶ The live crowd for the Parliament Hill evening variety show alone was estimated at 50,000–70,000 in the late-1980s.

71 Notes for remarks by the secretary of state of Canada, July 1 1984; prime minister's 1984 Canada Day address; speech to mark Canada Day by Jeanne Sauvé, file 7215-84 pt 6, box 41, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC.

72 *Great Canadian Adventures Colouring and Activity Book* (1984), file 7215-88-6 pt 1, box 23, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

73 Minutes of Canada Day meeting, 3 Dec. 1986, file 7215-87-11 pt 1, box 20, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

74 Walter McLean to Brian Mulroney, 21 Dec. 1984, file 7215-85-1 pt 1, box 13, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

75 Ministerial briefing for Canada Day 1985, file 7215-85-1 pt 2, box 13, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

76 Dec. 1 1988 agenda, 'Notes for Your Consideration, Canada Day 1989,' file 7215-88-11 pt 1, box 23, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

RETURNING TO THE CENTRE WHILE MAINTAINING THE GRASSROOTS

Although community celebrations of Canada Day were considered successful by many government organizers, by 1986 both the Nielsen Task Force on Culture and Communications and the National Capital Region Canada Day Committee were arguing in favour of a return to a higher national profile for Ottawa-based events.⁷⁷ Early in 1987, Secretary of State officials proposed moving the formal ceremony on Parliament Hill to the early evening, hoping the CBC would cover both this ceremony and the more festive variety show that followed.⁷⁸ In 1988, the CBC aired the professionally produced variety show on Parliament Hill. The broadcast also featured clips from events earlier in the day in Ottawa, St John's, Vancouver, and Canada's Expo Pavilion in Brisbane, Australia. Canadian achievement was a dominant theme. Three Olympic-medal-winning figure skaters (Elizabeth Manley, Tracy Wilson, and Rob McCall) and Paralympic medallist Rick Hansen, Canada's 'Man in Motion' and ambassador to the Canadian pavilion in Australia, were featured prominently.⁷⁹

After what they considered a successful broadcast in 1988, CBC executives agreed to a longer-term commitment to a national Canada Day variety show with content from both Ottawa and other sites. Secretary of State officials decided to hold two separate events each Canada Day. The first was a more formal official affair, controlled directly by the Department of the Secretary of State, featuring speeches by the governor general and the prime minister, which were interspersed with musical performances. The evening variety show was coordinated largely by the National Capital Commission, but with input from CBC, the Secretary of State, and other involved parties. Corporate sponsors were also sought out for the variety show and for other events such as the poster contest, starting in the mid-1980s.⁸⁰ Most years also featured attempts to link the theme of Canada Day to historic anniversaries – 1989 being the 125th anniversary of the

77 Thérèse St-Onge and Guy Tanguay, 1986 Canada Day Celebrations Final Report, file 7215-86-5 pt 5, box 31, BAN 2002-01308-X, RG6, LAC; minutes of Canada Day meeting, 3 Dec. 1986, file 7215-87-11 pt 1, box 20, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

78 Harris Boyd to Bonnie Clingen, 7 Jan. 1987, file 7215-87-1 pt 2, box 18, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC,

79 Harris Boyd to Undersecretary of State, 23 Dec. 1988, file 7215-88-8-1 pt 1, box 23, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

80 Canada Day Program – Backgrounder for Meeting, file 7215-88-11 pt 1, box 23, BAN 2002-01223-7, RG6, LAC.

Charlottetown Constitutional Conference – or to internationally sponsored years⁸¹ such as 1993's International Year of Indigenous Peoples. Audiences for these broadcasts grew steadily, with a viewership of 700,000 in 1990 doubling to 1.5 million in 1991.⁸²

Organizers were attempting to broaden the scope of how Canada was conceptualized, moving beyond the limitations of the variety show format. Building on the anthem, the flag, and 'Canada Day,' a Symbols kit was developed in the mid-1980s for schoolchildren, and anniversaries of the adoption of these symbols were highlighted in festivities. Organizers also attempted to develop new Canada Day songs, including 'This Is My Home,' which they hoped would repeat the success of Bobby Gimby's 1967 anthem 'Ca-Na-Da.'⁸³ Activity books of the 1980s launched a new focus on Canadian 'achievers' beyond the performing arts. The young achievers book of 1985, for example, profiled Canadians under thirty who were accomplished in athletics, the arts, and the military. In later years, a 'Canadian Achievers' segment was added to the official ceremonies.⁸⁴ Whenever possible, organizers highlighted international accomplishments, such as those of astronaut Roberta Bondar in 1992. Throughout the late-1990s, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien routinely trumpeted Canada's United Nations ranking as the best country in the world in which to live.

One can detect both continuity and substantial change in these presentations of Canadian identity in the Canada Day events of the late-1980s and early 1990s. As organizers of Canada 125 began to prepare for the 1992 spectacle, they identified the need for messages that would target youth, Natives, and multicultural organizations. Such messages would focus on citizenship, official languages, the environment, and symbols of Canada.⁸⁵ In the fervour surrounding the Meech Lake and Charlottetown constitutional negotiations, Quebec nationalism and separatism certainly had not dissipated as a concern;

81 Sometimes the 'International Year' theme was deliberately avoided. In 1986, the International Year of Peace theme was explicitly downplayed by the Department of External Affairs because of its involvement with the Star Wars project and United States-USSR summitry.

82 21 Jan. 1992 Inter-departmental Meeting, Canada Day 1992 minutes, file 07215-92-2 pt 2, box 1, BAN 2003-02126-4, RG6, LAC.

83 Theme Show Guidelines, file 07215-90-8-2 pt 2, box 10, BAN 2003-00093-3, RG6, LAC.

84 Floralove Katz to Bruce Devine, 7 Feb. 1990, file 07215-90-8-2 pt 1, box 10, BAN 2003-00093-3, RG6, LAC.

85 Inter-departmental Steering Committee minutes, 4 Feb. 1992, file 07215-92-2 pt 2, box 1, BAN 2003-02126-4, RG6, LAC.

the organizing committee for Canada Day 1992 included a representative of the Federal–Provincial Relations Office to oversee these issues. Politicians' speeches often focused on unity and Canada's capacity for flexibility. A strong contingent of Québécois performers, including Michel Pagliaro, Diane Tell, Marie-Denise Pelletier, and Nanette Workman, was incorporated into the variety shows leading up to this anniversary. The presence of the performers implicitly suggested unity,⁸⁶ but Céline Dion went even further in her participation in the Canada 125 celebrations. Dion delivered a short speech expressing her hope that politicians of all stripes would help Canada through the difficult times of the constitutional crisis. Although she was criticized for her efforts by Quebec media such as *Le Journal de Montréal*, Dion's message was precisely what organizers hoped for. Moreover, organizers always ensured that non-Québécois francophones were included in the variety shows, in order to present a pan-Canadian image of the Canadian *francophonie*.

The Aboriginal peoples' component of Canada Day had also changed dramatically. In striking contrast to the 1960s assimilationist presentations, First Nations performers were central to the 1990s variety shows, and their contributions to Canada were routinely mentioned in the official speeches. First Nations performances often incorporated Indigenous languages, including Kashtin's 1991 performance in Montagnais, and Susan Aglukark's 1992 performance in Inuktitut. The year 1993 was proclaimed the International Year of Indigenous People and featured high-profile celebrities from Canada's Aboriginal communities, including composer John Kim Bell, a Mohawk, as master of ceremonies, and numerous performers, including Graham Greene, Tom Jackson, and Susan Aglukark.

Multiculturalism had been a central element of the 'new Canadian'-targeted Dominion Days of the 1960s. However, with the decision to move away from ethnic folk performances, multicultural diversity was less overtly showcased in the variety shows. The theme remained present in planning documents for these spectacles, but the more visible manifestations of Canadian diversity were the 'achievers' in sports, sciences, and other fields featured in the non-performance aspects of Canada Day in the 1980s and 1990s.

By 1992, the organization of Canada Day had become institutionalized, coordinated by an experienced staff who worked in a per-

86 Canada Day Draft Program, file 07215-92-2 pt 3, box 1, BAN 2003-02126-4, RG6, 1AC. This rationale for performer selection is explicit in the planning documents.

manent directorate with ongoing stable funding. Yet even after a successful celebration of the 125th anniversary of Confederation, debriefing meetings featured recurrent concerns about how to make participation more active, whether to invoke additional themes beyond pride in Canada, and whether the current format should be completely revamped.⁸⁷ These doubts about a successful event lead one to contemplate the broader significance of the Canadian government's policy of commemoration and its relationship with national identity.

CONCLUSION

Certain elements of the Canada Day festivities of the early 1990s would have pleased John Diefenbaker. The formal, militaristic elements of the 1958 commemoration were echoed in the twenty-one-gun salute and inspection of the guard rituals of the midday formal ceremonies. Canada's British ties continued to be embodied in the governor general, the central political figure at the midday events. Although the intended audience had broadened to include all Canadians, the priority audiences of the Diefenbaker-era organizers – new immigrants and youth – continued to be major target groups for planners.

However, political and bureaucratic considerations had led to significant changes in the 1 July events. A new symbolic order was crafted and deliberately reinforced around a central idea of a 'Canadian' celebration of a renamed 'Canada Day' – a term that had greater resonance among francophones and new Canadians. A new anthem and maple leaf flag served as distinctively Canadian symbols featured in promotional materials.

One can also trace the development of a more populist approach to the ceremonies. Highly formal, structured events gave way first to the inclusion of folk performances, then to a massive variety show with popular entertainers and a deliberately crafted party atmosphere in the nation's capital, echoed by federally sponsored picnics and other events coast-to-coast. As federal organizers discovered which celebratory elements were popular with Canadians, they incorporated them into their official plans for Canada Day – and into the vision of Canadian identity they were promoting.

87 Minutes of Inter-departmental Committee Meeting, Canada Day 1993, 7 Dec. 1992, file 07215-92-2-1 pt 3, box 1, BAN 2003-02126-4, RG6, LAC.

The government's image of Canadian identity underwent key – although sometimes subtle – transformations. In the 1960s, a more bilingual, ethnically diverse image of the country that explicitly recognized Aboriginal peoples and regional allegiances became part of the events. Pan-Canadian linguistic duality was a constant thread in the festivities from the 1960s onward. Over the decades, depictions of Aboriginal people shifted from their assimilation to Euro-Canadian values to ones in which First Nations maintained Indigenous languages and traditions, or created a new fusion of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian practices. Ethnic diversity passed from an explicit and foregrounded 'folk'-oriented portrayal of the performers' cultures of origin to one where Canadians from many different backgrounds were presented as 'achievers' in a culture that valued scientific and athletic accomplishment. Canada Day ceremonies thus served as a vehicle for promoting the government's liberal, civic conception of a Canada rooted in individual achievement and diversity. The entire thrust of these celebrations also shifted from a performance and entertainment-based event to one that increasingly attempted to deliver messages about Canadian achievement on an international scale in science, athletics, and international peacekeeping. Attendance at these events and program evaluations demonstrated the increased awareness and popularity of 1 July as Canada's national holiday.

From a policy perspective, the structure of Canada Day celebrations was an ongoing source for debate. Canada Day implied a nationwide celebration in its name; as employees of the federal government, Secretary of State organizers wanted the day to be celebrated nationally in a way that would foster a sense of national community. It was not easy to promote a common celebration with thousands of kilometres separating Canadians from each other. Television showed Canadians celebrating in many communities, linking these events in a single broadcast. It could also focus attention on a central celebration in Ottawa and show Canadians (both performers and audience members) who had come from many provinces to celebrate together on Parliament Hill. But as organizers and politicians alike lamented, television spectatorship alone did not constitute the active, dynamic celebration they had hoped to foster.

Despite these concerns, the combination of funding local and Ottawa-centred celebrations, coupled with common symbols, activities, and themes in local events, advanced a popular tradition of celebrating Canada Day. Even if some Canadians opted for the passive option of the television special, they were still being exposed to the messages presented by Canada Day. One may debate whether

Canadians accepted the organizers' conception of Canada, but strong attendance and audience figures suggest that these messages were reaching Canadians. Now hundreds of thousands of people flood Ottawa's streets every 1 July, while in communities across Canada families attend local picnics and flock to firework displays. The CBC continues to cover the formal midday ceremonies from Parliament Hill and in most years covers at least part of Ottawa's evening festivities. Despite format changes and near-cancellations, the tradition of celebrating the anniversary of Confederation took root in decades following the first such events on Parliament Hill, and the federal government continues to be an active sponsor of these events.

Political and bureaucratic considerations shaped the vision of the nation that is celebrated and the format of these events. The continuities between these events testify to the importance of bureaucratic organizers, while changes reflect political considerations and broader changes in Canadian culture and identity politics. The constant re-examination and re-evaluation of this highly symbolic national anniversary reflect a national identity that remained in flux and a succession of governments that grappled with celebrating a country that lacked a revolutionary history and was divided among prominent regional, linguistic, and ethnic cleavages.

In a country that has recently been referred to as the first post-modern nation,⁸⁸ organizers constantly questioned the success of their efforts to foster a unifying national celebration. Some posited that it would be better to have the day serve as 'an open-ended vehicle to allow "typically reserved Canadians to find their own rationale/vehicle for expressing certain emotions about their country."' ⁸⁹ However, after decades of supporting the observance of Canada Day, the federal government managed to reinforce certain conceptions of Canada. A discourse of Canada as a land of ethno-linguistic diversity, with two official languages and many cultures, was repeatedly stressed. It also fostered the theme of Canada as a land of individual rights, tolerance, and opportunities for achievement. In these respects, the new symbolic order and commemorative policies encouraged by the Canadian government reinforced policies of bilingualism, multicul-

88 For an thoughtful discussion of this concept, see Gérard Bouchard, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World*, trans. Michelle Wienroth and Paul Leduc Browne (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 272, 329–31.

89 Minutes of Inter-departmental Committee Meeting, Canada Day 1993, 7 Dec. 1992, file 07215-92-2-1 pt 3, box 1, BAN 2003-02126-4, RG6, LAC.

turalism, liberal individualism, and the Charter of Rights. Although this national identity did not fit easily into models of ethnic nationalism, and was often resisted, particularly in Quebec, it did match the broader policies of national identity that the government had been developing since the 1960s and provided a flexible identity that was adaptable to the changing demographics of the country.

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