

“MY LANGUAGE IS FRENCH AND MY COUNTRY IS QUEBEC”

A common misconception held by many English Canadians is that French Canadians are no different except that they speak French. In fact, Quebec remains a distinct society, detached in significant ways from the rest of Canada. The former premier of Quebec, René Lévesque, once observed:

We are Québécois. What that means first and foremost — and if need be, all that it means — is that we are attached to this one corner of the earth where we can be completely ourselves; this Quebec, the only place where we have the unmistakable feeling that “here we can be really at home.” Being ourselves is essentially a matter of keeping and developing a personality that has survived for three and a half centuries.

The distinctiveness of Québécois culture is reflected in the values and attitudes of Quebec teens. On topics ranging from sports to politics and entertainment, there is a significant difference between francophone Quebecers and their English-speaking counterparts inside Quebec and throughout the rest of Canada.

The distinctiveness of Quebec teens is clearly reflected in their support for sports teams and whom they consider heroes. Unlike the rest of Canada, Quebec teens tend to adopt Canadians, especially French Canadians, as their heroes. For sports franchises to be successful, point out authors Reginald Bibby and Donald Posterski: “The Québécois must be given the opportunity to create their own winners and superstars rather than have them parachuted in from English Canada or the United States. The Montreal Canadiens are widely supported in Quebec, not simply because they are a good hockey team but because historically they have been a team dominated by French Canadian talent.”

Even the widespread increase in mass media and travel has done little to diminish Quebec’s cultural isolation. Even though Quebec’s teens watch more television than those in any other region of Canada do, they have a surprisingly low familiarity with national and international events. This can be explained by Quebecers’ preference for French-language television over

Hockey Favourites of Teens and Baseball Favourites of Adults

Top three in %’s

Quebec	BC	Prairies	Ontario	Atlantic
Canadiens 78	Canucks 61	Oilers 28	Canadiens 30	Canadiens 47
Nordiques 12	Flames 9	Flames 24	Leafs 19	Bruins 12
Bruins 5	Canadiens 7	Kings 13	Kings 14	Oilers 11
Others 5	Others 23	Others 35	Others 37	Others 30
Expos 93	Jays 69	Jays 74	Jays 89	Jays 71
Tigers 1	Expos 10	Expos 8	Expos 5	Expos 24
Jays <7	Indians 7	Reds 4	Red Sox 1	Pirates 2
Others 6	Others 14	Others 14	Others 5	Others 3

Adult source: (Project Can90)

programming from the United States. Furthermore, a 1992 survey found that 21 percent of Quebecers aged 15 to 19 had never been outside of their province. This figure is far higher than that of any other province.

The next time you hear on the news or read in a newspaper that Quebec is struggling to preserve its distinct society, reflect on some of the cultural differences and remember that the differences between English and French Canada go much deeper than simply language.

Source: Adapted from Reginald W. Bibby and Donald C. Posterski, *Teen Trends: A Nation in Motion* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992), pp. 115-136.

Teen Travel Experiences

	In %'s		BC	PR	ON	ATL	ALL CDA
	Quebec Franco	Anglo					
To Other Provinces							
Several times year or more	12	30	18	31	21	27	21
Yearly or less	46	61	64	64	54	63	57
Never have	42	9	18	5	25	10	22
To The United States							
Several times year or more	11	35	38	14	35	12	25
Yearly or less	47	55	51	66	52	55	54
Never have	42	10	11	20	13	33	21
Outside of N. America							
Several times year or more	2	6	5	1	4	1	3
Yearly or less	24	37	53	26	44	19	35
Never have	74	57	42	73	52	80	62
Never Outside Own Province							
	21	2	2	3	4	8	7

The question for voters was: "Do you agree that the Constitution of Canada should be renewed on the basis of the agreement reached on Aug. 28, 1992?"

All three major political parties supported the "Yes" vote. But in the last weeks before the October referendum, there was a groundswell of popular feeling against the accord. The "No" vote was led by a new western political party called the **Reform Party**, as well as other special-interest groups, including the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) chiefs also refused to support the "Yes" campaign of AFN leader Ovide Mercredi. Mercredi had helped craft new constitutional guarantees concerning aboriginal self-government. But some Native leaders were suspicious of the guarantees and were unwilling to support them.

Other people stepped onto the "No" side because they felt that the Charlottetown proposals

gave too much to Quebec or too little to their own regions. Almost every section of the agreement came under attack by some group. Many other Canadians were simply overwhelmed by the sheer size of the agreement. How could they possibly understand it all or make a reasonable choice? Should they vote for the whole package even if they did not agree with parts of it?

On October 26, 1992, the Charlottetown Accord went down to resounding defeat. It was approved by only four of the ten provinces: Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario. Canadians were exhausted by the long constitutional battle. British Columbia Premier Michael Harcourt said, "We should put the Constitution on the back burner for a while and turn the burner off." He seems to have spoken for the whole nation. After the October referendum, most Canadians did not even want to hear the word