

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE / CONGRESS OF THE FRENCH ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN STUDIES

Paris, Canadian Cultural Center, 14-16 June 2017

Defining Canada, 1867-2017: values, practices and representations

On July 1st 2017, Canada will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. On this historic occasion, the French Association of Canadian Studies (AFEC), in conjunction with the Research Center on Anglophone Cultures (LARCA) of Université Paris Diderot and the Canadian Embassy in Paris, will hold a conference to explore the evolution of Canada and what defines it. This conference intends to favor the historical perspective of the *longue durée*, by examining not only what defines Canada in 2017, but by comparing this with the way it was defined in 1867, at the time of Confederation, as well as in 1967, at the time of the centennial. To do so, the conference will be organized around three guiding lines that correspond to the values, the practices and the representations through which Canada is defined.

1) Canadian values and principles

The 2015 federal election was marked by a fierce debate over Canadian values, with two opposed views of Canada. The Conservative view of Canada promoted by Stephen Harper was based on a defense of moral certainty and martial values and the desire to make uncompromising choices. The Liberal view of Canada, defended by Justin Trudeau, emphasized the values of kindness and respect for diversity, and the desire to promote inclusiveness through collaboration and compromise. Both views were inspired, to a certain extent, by Canada's past: the Conservative vision was associated with a return to the monarchist and British atmosphere of Sir John A. Macdonald's Canada, while the Liberal view recalled the golden age of Lester Pearson's and Pierre Trudeau's Canada. The conference will therefore invite exploration of the values of contemporary Canada, but also of past Canada, so as to assess their permanence and evolution. To this reflection on values, which often possess an emotional dimension, could be added a study of the theoretical principles that serve and have served as foundations of the Canadian identity. The conference will welcome proposals for papers that address one of these topics, among others:

- What is the current state of research on the values and principles that presided to the invention of the Canadian nation, its difficult beginnings, its links with the British Empire?
- What is the place of conservatism in Canada today, and how did conservatism in Canada evolve since the foundation of the nation in 1867, and its centennial in 1967?
- What are the liberal values of Canada? How far did they shape the Canadian identity in the 20th century? Is Justin Trudeau's victory a sign that they form the permanent core of Canada?

- In the past, were Canadian values and principles a crucial element to differentiate Canada from the United States, and is it still true today? Is the trend today towards a great resemblance or a greater divergence of Canadian and American values?
- To what extent have new values that were disregarded in the past become central in the early 21st century (such as concern from the environment, equal representation of men and women...)
- How are Canadian values (re)defined, (re)presented or challenged by various artistic or literary forms?
- Could it be said that the indigenous question is at the heart of Canadian values today? To what extent does the evolution of Canadian values lead to the construction of an inclusive identity (First Nations, founding peoples, immigrants)

2) Canadian practices

Canadian values are expressed and translated into reality through political, institutional, social, economic and cultural practices which have greatly evolved since 1867 or even 1967. The conference invites proposals that explore the evolution of Canadian practices in all fields, among others:

- Politics, institutions, national unity: the evolution of Canada federalism (decentralization, asymmetrical federalism); the place of Quebec in the post-referendum era; the Charter of Rights, the Supreme Court and the judicialization of politics between 1967 and 2017; the evolution of the Canadian democracy, from British-style parliamentary system to participative democracy; reform of the electoral system...
- International relations: does multilateralism remain the cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy? From Pearson to Axworthy, does Canada remain a key agent for peace in the world?
- Economy: evolution of the trade practices of Canada, from the National Policy to NAFTA; permanence of staple model, from the fur trade to the mining sector...
- Environment and the economy: from the Hudson's Bay Company to the XL Pipeline, have Canadian priorities changed?
- Indigenous peoples and society: a key challenge of contemporary Canada is to enable the integration of the First Nations on an equal basis, as well as their reconciliation with non-indigenous peoples. We will encourage presentations of the practices that make this evolution possible, such as the judicial use of land claims; the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; the creation of the territory of Nunavut; the legal obligation to consult indigenous peoples on development projects; the national inquiry into the murder or disappearance of indigenous women...
- Languages and Society: evolution of language policies and language practices. While Article 133 of the Constitution of 1867 did not official establish bilingualism in Canada, it represented an almost revolutionary progress at a time when the institutional coexistence of two languages was at odds with received ideas of the link between language and the national identity. How has the relationship between the two official languages evolved since 1867? Do the language practices of speakers reflect this evolution? Is bilingualism a still valid concept in a society defined by multiculturalism?
- Religions and society: evolution of religious practices in Canada. Since 1867, the country has moved from religious practices that reproduced the European tradition of Catholicism, Anglicanism, Protestantism and Judaism to an impressive pluralism that matched that of the United States. This was due to immigration but also to the specific workings of religion in Canada.
- Literature and the Arts: as early as the 1880s, the "Poets of Confederation" started to build a Canadian poetic tradition and to contribute to the definition of the national identity. However, it is only since the 1960s that Canadian literature has moved apart from British and American literature. Where does it stand today? What relationship between literary practices in French and in English? Do you they reflect similar evolutions?

3) Canadian representations

Canada is also defined by the way it is represented, especially in the current era when branding has become such an important concept. The conference will particularly encourage reflection on the representation of diversities in contemporary Canada, in comparison with the past. At the time of Confederation, Canada was often perceived and described as a binational state made up of two founding peoples, the French Canadians and English Canadians. At the time of the centennial, the concept of a bicultural state was being replaced by the representation of Canada as a multicultural nation. Fifty years later, the representations of Canada seem to reflect a desire to encompass an ever-widening range of types of diversities, such as gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical handicap... Among these, the process of indigenization of Canadian identity that is barely beginning today may prove to be one of the most important changes in the future representation of Canada. The conference encourages proposals on the following topics, among others:

- Does multiculturalism remain a central element in the representation of Canada today?
- Is gender a key element of the representation of Canada today, in the fields of politics (gender equality in the Trudeau government), institutions (call to introduce gender-neutral lyrics in the national anthem), arts (gender and sexual orientation as central themes in Xavier Nolan's movies), literature...
- How the indigenous heritage of Canada is slowly being included in the national representation through various processes of indigenization: greater visibility and consideration for indigenous languages; enhancement of indigenous artistic production; nomination of indigenous peoples at key Cabinet positions; showcasing the indigenous heritage as the official theme of the Vancouver Olympic Games; introduction of mandatory courses on indigenous cultures in Canadian universities...

Abstracts can be submitted individually or as a panel (group of 4 proposals around the same topic), in French or in English.

EXTENDED deadline to submit abstracts (400 words) along with a short bio (100 words), preferably in Word format: **1st August 2016**

Notification of acceptance: **30 September 2016**

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Selected papers from this conference will be published in the journal *Études Canadiennes / Canadian Studies*, first as a paper issue, followed one year later by a free-access electronic issue on <http://eccs.revues.org/>