

Resources for Teaching Canada in U.S. Schools

Vol. II, 2009-2010

Variations in Diversity in the United States and Canada

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Published by the Canadian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 306 International Center, East Lansing, MI 48824. This publication was funded in part by a grant from the Government of Canada and by the Michigan State University Canadian Studies Center. This paper is intended for distribution at meetings of the National Council for the Social Studies, the Michigan Council for the Social Studies and at other meetings of educators.

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The United States and Canada are destinations of choice for immigrants from around the world. In 2006, Canada's foreign-born population numbered 6,186,950 out of a total population of 31,241,030 people. Immigrants represented approximately 19.8% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2006). In 2003, approximately 33.5 million foreign-born people lived in the United States representing 11.7 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). As a result of immigration, indigenous populations, and a broad range of historic ethnic and cultural groups, diversity is a prominent characteristic of both Canada and the United States. However, even though both nations share many similarities, their responses to diversity have varied.

This paper explores those variations by locating them within the political, legal, and historical contexts that surround the challenges and opportunities of diversity that Canada and the United States confronted. These three contexts can provide a template for identifying issues that teachers can use to frame further comparative analysis of diversity in Canada and the United States. Several examples of such issues are provided in this paper. The paper opens with a discussion on the political context. The political context can be used to help students better understand factors that influence and help shape decisions and perceptions about which language(s) is official, what makes a nation bilingual or multilingual, and the ways in which the status of a group is related to the status of its language. The legal context, which is explored next, focuses on the Japanese Internment in the U.S. and Canada and the Ukrainian Internment in Canada. The internment provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the ways in which ideals such as "blind justice" can be jeopardized when prejudice and discrimination are not

checked. The last context discussed in this paper is the historical context. This context provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the relationship between the United States and Canada during the Revolutionary War and the multiple ways in which the term “Quest for Freedom” can be used to characterize the war. Teachers can explore those multiple meanings using concepts such as change, cooperation, and conflict to frame discussions about why enslaved Africans fought with the British as Black Loyalists as well as joined Washington’s revolutionary army.

When carrying out a comparative analysis of diversity, it is important to note the specific terms and language used in different national contexts. For example, while “multicultural education” is used in Canada and the United States to describe efforts to address diversity, other terms are also used.¹ In Canada, the term “anti-racism” is used, in some ways in opposition to “multicultural education,” to convey a strong statement on culture as well as methods and perspectives for reducing racism and promoting tolerance. Anti-racism is a term that is rarely used in the United States where terms like “diversity” and “inclusion” are more often used as synonyms for multicultural education.

Political Context

The response to language diversity is influenced by the political context that surrounds it. Comparing and contrasting the response to language diversity in the United States and Canada highlights the ways in which the political context can influence and help shape decisions about things such as which language(s) is official, what makes a

nation is bilingual, and in what ways does the status of a group influence the status of the group that speaks the language.

Native American languages were spoken throughout North America prior to the arrival of Europeans. After Europeans arrived in North America, during the early settlement of colonies, Native American languages continued to be spoken along with a variety of European languages. English, however, eventually became the dominant language in modern day Canada and the United States. Today 97.6% of the Canadian population, outside Quebec, speak English (Statistics of Canada, 2006) and 96% of the population of the United States speaks English "well" or "very well" (U.S. Census, 2000). To help students better understand how English swept across Canada and the United States teachers can ask them to map the languages spoken throughout the United States and Canada at different points in history and develop hypotheses about when and under what circumstances languages become dominant.

Though most people in the United States and Canada speak English, both countries are linguistically diverse. There are approximately 337 languages are spoken or signed in the United States (Grimes, 2000). See Table 1 for a list of languages spoken by Americans at home. As a result of immigrants coming to Canada from countries where English or French is not their mother tongue, the percentage of Canadians who speak a non-official language has grown from 18% in 2001 to 20% in 2006. Excluding English and French, the most commonly spoken languages in Canada are Chinese, Italian, German and Punjabi. See Table 2 for a partial list of the non-official languages spoken in Canada.

Table I

Languages Spoken in the U.S. (Excluding English)

| Language | Number of Americans Who Speak the Language at Home | Percentage of Americans Who Speak the Language at Home |
|------------|--|--|
| Spanish | 28 Million | 10.71% |
| Chinese | 2 Million | .61% |
| French | 1.6 Million | .61% |
| German | 1.4 Million | .52% |
| Tagalog | 1.2 Million | .46% |
| Vietnamese | 1.0 Million | .38% |
| Italian | 1.0 Million | .38% |
| Korean | 890,000 | .34% |
| Russian | 710,000 | .26% |
| Polish | 670,000 | .25% |
| Arabic | 610,000 | .23% |

Source: U.S. Census 2000

Table II

Languages Spoken in Canada (Excluding English and French)

| Languages (Mother Tongue) | Number | Percentage of non-official mother tongues |
|---------------------------|-----------|---|
| Chines Languages | 1,034,090 | 16.4 |
| Italian | 476,905 | 7.6 |
| German | 466,650 | 7.4 |
| Punjab | 382,585 | 6.1 |
| Spanish | 363,120 | 5.8 |
| Arabic | 286,785 | 4.6 |
| Tagalog | 266,440 | 4.2 |
| Portuguese | 229,280 | 3.6 |
| Polish | 217,605 | 3.5 |
| ? | 156,415 | 2.5 |
| Ukrainian | 141,805 | 2.3 |

Source (Statistics of Canada, 2006)

Canada, unlike the United States, developed an official language education policy that includes self-contained, withdrawal, transitional, and mainstream programs that enable students to maintain their mother tongue (Ashworth, 1992). In addition, nine First Nations languages have official status in the Northwest Territories. Canada also has an official bilingualism policy, guaranteed by the Canadian Constitution that requires all official documents to be made available in both English and French.

Even though some states have adopted unofficial bilingualism, the United States as a whole has not embraced an official policy on language diversity.² In fact, many U.S. politicians fiercely defend speaking English as a marker of an individual's commitment to the United States and the legitimacy of his or her residence in the country (King, 1997). According to ProEnglish, an advocacy group that supports English Only, 30 states have adopted English as the official language (ProEnglish, 2009).

On the surface it would appear that there are stark differences between language policies in the United States and Canada. A close analysis, however, reveals a more complex picture. Students should be encouraged to investigate the extent to which what is happening in the United States reveals a much more accepting climate for language diversity than statements by politicians suggest. After all, economic as well as political power can influence a nation's response to language diversity. Students should look at the ways in which demographic changes and economic factors are driving businesses in California, the southwest part of the United States, and Florida to print signs and provide brochures in Spanish, as well as to hire bilingual staff. Students could also research the extent to which businesses in Hawaii are providing services in Asian languages.

Businesses in areas where a significant percentage of the population speak a language other than English find that bilingualism is a necessary consequence of doing business. Businesses want to make their services and products available to as wide a range of people as possible. Making them accessible in the languages of their customers increases the probability that they will select their products and services

When the political context of language policies is implicit, its connection to larger societal issues such as economic realities may remain unexamined. Examining both the political context and economic dimensions of language policies can deepen students' understanding of all aspects of the issue. For example, teachers can ask students to research and list all of the states with unofficial bilingual policies. Then research the demographic profiles of the states. With these data in hand, teachers can ask their students to predict the languages in which public documents and business materials are provided. Students can also interview government officials and business officials to find out why they made the decision to provide services and materials in languages other than English.

Legal Context

The Japanese internment in the United States and Canada during World War II is an example of the extent to which laws exist within a socio-political context. By exploring this context, students can learn how these two nations that pride themselves on being nations of laws failed to protect the rights of individuals within their borders.

After the Japanese government bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, both the U.S. and Canadian governments interned people of Japanese descent (Daniels, 1981).

Even before this, however, Japanese people living in the U.S. and Canada faced discrimination and did not have the full protection of the law (Okihiro, 2001). For many years Japanese immigrants were legally prevented from becoming citizens in both countries. There were also tight restrictions on Japanese immigration. In 1907, the Canadian government limited the number of Japanese immigrants to 400 people a year. The United States used measures such as the Gentleman's Agreement--an informal agreement between the U.S. and the empire of Japan--to restrict Japanese immigration. In addition, the California Alien Land Law restricted the rights of Japanese to own and lease land. Students can use key concepts such as *prejudice* and *discrimination* to reflect on the following generalization: *When sanctioned by law, prejudice can lead to increasing levels of discrimination.*

Leading up to the internment, people of Japanese descent living in British Columbia (where most Japanese living in Canada were based) and the western United States experienced increasing levels of discrimination (Scantland, 1986). Initially, these residents were under surveillance; later, their respective governments required them to surrender cameras, radios, binoculars, and other items that were regarded contraband. Finally, fear, economic gain, and prejudice, led both North American countries to force Japanese into internment camps. Eight internment camps were erected in British Columbia. Sixteen camps were established in the United States.

The internment of Japanese Canadians was not Canada's first national internment. During World War I, the Canadian government enacted the War Measures Act, which empowered the government to intern enemy aliens. As a result, between 1914-1920, 8,579 men, mostly Ukrainians, were interned and forced to work in the logging industry in

Northern Ontario & Quebec, the steel mills in Ontario & Nova Scotia, in British Columbia, Ontario & Nova Scotia mines, and in helping to create Banff National Park. This chapter in Canadian history only recently came to light. For many years it was hidden from the public and many of the official records associated with it were destroyed. It isn't clear if the Ukrainian internment was motivated by fear, anti-immigrant feelings, economic exploitation, or a mixture of several reasons. It is clear, however, that even in nations such as Canada and the United States citizens must recognize the fragility of human rights and vigilantly guard against challenges to them.

The historical experience of people of Japanese and Ukrainian descent in North America offers a good opportunity for students to study the gap between the law as an ideal and the law in daily practice. One way to explore this is for students to examine how individuals from marginalized groups as well as those from mainstream groups describe their experiences with the law and with representatives of the legal system.

Historical Context

During the American Revolutionary War, Africans who were enslaved in the United-States escaped to Canada in search of freedom. Between 1783 and 1785, Black Loyalists (slaves who fought on the side of the British in exchange for freedom) established communities in Nova Scotia where some of their descendants remain today (Grant, 1973). Once in Canada, some Africans left and established communities in Sierra Leone, on the west coast of Africa. The story of enslaved Africans who fought with the British is a unique angle on the issue of freedom and the Revolutionary War. The story of

these individuals and their experiences, however, are generally not addressed in U.S. or Canadian textbooks.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, George Washington (still a general at the time and not yet president) demanded that enslaved Africans who had joined forces with the British be returned to their owners. Instead, Sir Guy Carleton, the British commander in chief, agreed to pay for their freedom and allow the former slaves to stay in Canada (Remembering Black Loyalists, 2001). Other enslaved Africans joined Washington's Revolutionary Army and fought against the British in hope of earning their freedom. The economic advantages of the slave system, coupled with a newly formed and fragile union that supported slavery, allowed such a system to continue in the United States for nearly 100 more years. Students can use key concepts such as *change, cooperation, and conflict* to reflect on generalizations about the legacy of slavery and the ways in which the past is implicated in the present (Casciani, 2007).

During the period leading up to the Civil War, an institution called the Underground Railroad developed to assist runaway slaves to escape. Michigan was a hub for as many as 200 Underground Railroad terminals, many of which led to Canada. Canada was an important destination for runaway slaves because slavery was abolished in Upper Canada in 1793 and until 1833 there was no formal extradition treaty between the United States and Canada. Even after 1833 when the parliament of Upper Canada passed the Fugitive Offenders Act, slaves from the United States fleeing to Canada could only be sent back to the U.S. if they were found to be felons, which was difficult to prove in many instances.

Students should be encouraged to study this tragic period of American history and

learn about the diverse groups including whites as well as Blacks, Quakers as well as African Methodist Episcopalians, women as well as men, young as well as old who helped enslaved Africans escape to freedom on the Underground Railroad. The diversity of the groups involved in the Underground Railroad is reflected in the Gateway to Freedom Memorial located at the Detroit River in Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit, Michigan. The memorial depicts six fugitive slaves as they prepare to board a boat provided by George De Baptiste, a prominent black businessman, and cross the Detroit River to Windsor, Canada. On the other side of the Detroit River in Windsor, the Tower of Freedom Monument located in the Civic Esplanade depicts a former slave who upon reaching Canada raises his arms to celebrate his emancipation while a Quaker woman offers assistance to a newly liberated woman and her child. Bethel African-Methodist Episcopal Church and Second Baptist Church along with several other institutions that were active in the Underground Railroad are named in a plaque at the foot of the Detroit monument. The Underground Railroad remained active until 1865, when the 13th Amendment was signed into law and it ceased operations.

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, Canada played a crucial role in holding up a beacon of freedom for enslaved Africans. It did so during a period when the meaning of the statement, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” which was eloquently stated in our Declaration of Independence was misunderstood and ignored, For helping Americans live up to its values, we owe Canada a debt of gratitude.

Conclusion

The issues covered in this article can serve as a departure point for engaging students in discussions on multicultural issues in the U.S. and Canada. The examination of such issues in multicultural nation states benefits from a comparative approach that allows diverse perspectives to be raised and examined. Using a comparative approach for examining multicultural issues within political, legal, and historical contexts can reveal important intersections, parallels, and connections between the United States and other nations.

Activities

This, the final section of this paper, provides concrete examples of how important issues described earlier can be taught within secondary social studies classrooms.

1. Both the United States and Canada are linguistically diverse nations with rich environments for sociolinguistic investigation. Ask students to review the information in Tables 1 and 2, which contain information on the major languages spoken in Canada and the United States. Students can use the information in the tables to compare and contrast linguistic patterns in each of the countries. They can also develop hypotheses about where concentrations of individuals who speak the languages would most likely be located, research their hypotheses and then discuss their findings.
2. Eight internment camps were erected in British Columbia and sixteen internment camps were established in the United States. Ask students to locate all of the camps on a map. Next read *A Child in Prison Camp* by Takashima Shizuye about the Canadian internment and *Journey To Topaz: A Story of the Japanese-American Evacuation* by

Yoshiko Uchida to the students. After reading the story ask students to identify where the people in the stories lived before they were interned and the relocation camps they were sent to live in.

Explain to the students that students like the characters in the books attended schools with children like them until they were sent to the internment camps. Thirty-three percent of the students at Washington Elementary School in Seattle, Washington were Japanese Americans. Teachers at Washington asked their students to write compositions about how they felt about the Japanese evacuation. The students expressed regrets about losing their friends and talked about how studious, punctual, and cooperative they had been. They also mentioned how their Japanese American classmates had served on the Seattle Junior Safety Patrol, made contributions to the American Red Cross and participated in the War bond Campaign and the Conservation Waste Paper, Tinfoil, and Metal Tube Drives. The Japanese American students also wrote compositions. One little girl wrote about how hard it would be for her to leave the trees in her yard. Her grandfather had planted them in 1893. Another child ended her composition with a prayer, which read, "Please keep my family together for the duration, and then make it possible for me to come back to my school, my home, and my friends" (Banks, 2005). Ask your students to write a composition explaining how they feel about the internment.

3. The Underground Railroad, which was a secret group of abolitionists who housed, fed, and guided slaves from the south to Canada, operated in a number of southern, eastern, and northern states. Have students go to the National Geographic Society's webpage on the Underground Railroad and assume the role of an enslaved African who

must decide if she will board the Underground Railroad and try to escape to freedom.

After the simulation, ask students to select a state and then investigate the role that people in it played in creating and supporting stations on the Underground Railroad.

4. *Crossing the Boarder*, Sharon A. Roger Hepburn (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), chronicles the history of Buxton, an extremely successful all-Black settlement founded in southern Ontario prior to the Civil War. After reading Hepburn's history of Buxton, students could compare Buxton's history with that of Josiah Henson's failed Dawn settlement, in an effort to discover why Buxton was successful and Dawn was not. Ask students to examine these settlements in light of such variables as availability of religious activities, local white settlements, the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches and planning. Finally, students might wish to compare the development of Buxton with another successful Black settlement founded in the U.S. about the same time.

Notes

¹ Multicultural education is defined in the *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* 2nd Ed. [James A. Banks and Cherry A. McGee Banks (Jossey-Bass, 2004)] as "a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates for this purpose, content concepts, principles, theories and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral science, and particularly from ethnic studies and women's studies."

² In Hawaii, Hawaiian along with English is prescribed in the state constitution as an official state language. Alaska provides voting information in several Native American languages and Tagalog as well as English. In Louisiana and in Maine, French is commonly used in legal documents and in commerce.

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