

# The Influence of Multicultural Education on Canadian Literature

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## Abstract

As the sum of the substantial and spiritual wealth of human society, culture is a representative symbol of a society or a group, and it also determines the path of the development of society and the group. In the context of contemporary social diversification, Canada as a country of immigrants is the most typical example. In order to find a solution to avoid racial conflicts and achieve population education equality in a multi-ethnic country under the culturally diverse social background, one of the main policies promulgated by the Canadian government is to use multicultural education in a society where English and French are two mainstream languages. China enables the legal status of races and ethnic groups to be recognized, and the integration and prosperity of multiple cultures can be realized. This method of education has undoubtedly penetrated into the lives of the Canadian people and is reflected in literary works. In recent years, Canadian literature has gradually weakened the influence of English and French literature and formed its own literary characteristics. This paper will start from the perspective of Canadian multicultural education system, the origin of education and the status quo of literary development, and discuss the impact of this education system on Canadian literature.

## Keywords

Multicultural education; Canadian literature; Influence.

## 1. Introduction

As a typical example of a country of immigrants, Canada has the characteristics of diverse ethnic groups in many aspects. In the 1960s, Multiculturalism as a new concept began to emerge in Canada. It includes three different levels of meaning: refers to the societies of different cultures and nationalities; refers to the mutual inclusion and respect of different cultures in a multicultural society; also refers to the policies adopted by the government towards a multicultural society (Yang, 2004). While accepting foreign cultures, the native Canadians are also working hard to overcome and eliminate the negative influence of ethnic prejudice. For instance, French people once required French as their official language in the 1960s, due to Canada was under the colonial rule of Britain and France for a long time, language habits as well as literary works were affected by French to varying degrees.

At the same time, there was a wave of Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which undoubtedly made Canada also affected by this change. After a "Quiet Revolution" occurred in Quebec in 1960, a large number of immigrants came to Canada, and at the same time brought the idea of a "multicultural education system". In 1971, the Canadian Trudeau government promulgated a series of multicultural policies to institutionalize and standardize multi-ethnic issues. Since then, the impact of this movement has slowly penetrated into the lives of the Canadian people, and they have received a subtle influence. The early literary works went from uncharacteristic features to the strong local charm of Canada in the later period, which is largely due to this multiculturalism movement.

## 2. The Development Process of Multicultural Education

### 2.1. The Origin of Multiculturalism

According to historians, Canada's multiculturalism originated in the 16th century. Europeans immigrated to this new world, accompanied by the introduction of the two major religions, Catholicism and Protestantism. The establishment of colonies between Britain and France, the influx of immigrants from all over the world, the mixed situation of coexistence of multiple cultures and the disputes over the status of national languages gradually emerged. In 1871, British Canadians accounted for 60.5% of the national population, French Canadians accounted for 31.1%, and the population of other ethnic groups, including indigenous peoples, accounted for only 8.4% (Tian, 2003). One hundred years later, in 1971, the proportion of the population changed a lot. British Canadians dropped to 44.6%, French Canadians dropped to 28.7%, but the population of other ethnic groups, especially those of color, has increased significantly. The population of indigenous peoples rose to 1.4%, and the population of other peoples rose to 25.3%. (Tian, 2003) They came from Asia, Europe and Africa. They come from different regions, speak different languages, come from different ethnic groups, and have different religious beliefs. This laid the foundation for the formation of a diverse culture in Canada.

### 2.2. The Movement Stage of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education was formally born in the "Civil Rights Movement" (The Civil Rights Movement) in the United States in the 1960s. The purpose of this movement was to eliminate public prejudices in public places, housing, employment, and education. Since 1960, a "Quiet Revolution" has taken place in Quebec. French Canadians demanded political, economic, and cultural rights, and demanded that French be an official language. After the 1960s, due to the emergence of a large number of immigrants, multicultural education has affected countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada. In 1969, the government of Pierre Trudeau established the "Royal Bilingual and Dual Culture Committee". On October 8, 1971, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau announced that the federal government had begun to implement a multicultural policy. Although cultural education has made great progress in the 1960s and 1970s, multicultural education has not been institutionalized. Therefore, in the following decades, the multicultural education movement has reached a low point (Jin, 2014).

### 2.3. The Status Quo of Multicultural Education

Canada is the first country in the world to adopt multicultural education as a national policy. Since the 1980s, Canada has improved the policies and legislation related to multicultural education, and multiculturalism has gradually become institutionalized, specifically from bilingual education, curriculum settings, and teaching.

Bilingual education (official language education) is one of the important parts of Canadian multicultural education. It not only solves the problem of the relationship between language and education, but also closely links language symbols with cultural content. Multicultural curriculum theorists believe that the school curriculum should no longer be modularized, but should be diversified, penetrate into the school environment, and cultivate students' cross-cultural communication skills. Different curriculum and teaching content require matching teaching methods. German multicultural curriculum expert Tolia Rückelk puts forward: "Multicultural curriculum should focus on children's experience as the center, highlighting the integration of intuition, image, and specificity with children's cognitive structure and life experience; the second is to break the traditional and single Teaching methods, and take modern courses and modern methods."(Rückelk )

According to a survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2020, Canada ranks first in the global education quality ranking of

countries. Canada has invested a high proportion of education funds, and the standard of teachers has also been guaranteed, which has truly realized educational equity.

### **3. The Development of Canadian Literature**

#### **3.1. The Development Process of Canadian Literature**

Canadian literature is mainly embodied in English literature, and English literature has been affected by many factors in the process of its production and development, such as history, race, ideology and culture, international politics, foreign literature, and so on. The development process can be divided into five periods: colonial period, founding period, mature period, development period and prosperity period. Before the founding of the Commonwealth, Canadian literature used English and French literature as the main form of expression. The literary works they produced were the external form of the extension of English and French culture, lacking their own national characteristics and representative works, so they did not receive enough attention in the international literary world. After the 1960s, Canada's multicultural movement gradually matured and showed a trend of vigorous development.

It is worth mentioning that Canadian literature has also been hindered by religious consciousness in its development. There are a large number of Puritans in Canada, and they are powerful. Whether it is French or English literature in Canada, they are very careful with Puritans. The characters and stories they create and the thoughts and feelings they express try to avoid the religious consciousness of Puritans, which undoubtedly restrains the writer's creation.

#### **3.2. Features of Canadian Literature**

Canadian literature reflects the social life in various periods of Canadian development, and is full of nationality. Before the founding of Canada, Canadian writers began to look for national identity and called for the creation of Canada's own literature. Most of the early literary works express the love and nostalgia of the writers for this vast land of North America. During the establishment of the Federation, many poems were permeated with patriotic enthusiasm, advocating a tenacious and optimistic attitude towards life, and the unyielding strength and fighting spirit.

The various stages of Canadian literature development were influenced by English, French and American literature to varying degrees. Canadian writers with a sense of accomplishment will not mechanically imitate other countries' literary systems and mechanically imitate writing styles and techniques but use them as reference materials to create literary works with Canadian characteristics. For example, *Anne of the Green Gables* by Montgomery, this novel was created in the context of Canada at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, and it is in a period of slower economic development. Prince Edward Island is the smallest province in Canada with the smallest area, the smallest population, and the smallest population density. The village of Avonli in the novel is a small village on Prince Edward Island. Montgomery depicts the peaceful and harmonious pastoral life and magnificent ocean landscape on the island, which has the characteristics of the primitive livelihood structure of Canada at that time(Zhu, 2005).

### **4. The Impact of Multicultural Education on Canadian Literature**

#### **4.1. Enhancing the World Influence of Canadian Literature**

Multicultural education in Canada is a top-down reform process. The concept of "Multicultural" has penetrated into the lives of Canadians and has become a way of life-oriented thinking and cognition, which has brought harmonious development in all aspects of society. More and more

"Canadian Institute of Culture" proves the influence of Canadian literature on a worldwide scale (Fan,2017).

Multicultural education has enhanced Canada's international status and popularity, and at the same time directly or indirectly promoted the development of Canadian literature. More and more scholars have begun to attach great importance to the development and progress of Canadian literature, and have joined the research and commentary of Canadian literature. This undoubtedly has played a positive role in promoting the growth of Canadian literature.

#### **4.2. Aroused the Passion for Creation of Canadian Foreign-born Writers**

As one of the major immigrant countries in the world, Canada's literary development was at a low point in the early stage. The works of local writers were unable to gain a place in the world literary world because of the lack of national characteristics. At the same time, the works of foreign writers were also very scarce. The reversal of this situation occurred after 1971, when the Canadian government began to implement a policy of multiculturalism. The implementation of this policy has enabled the harmonious development of Canadian cultures of all ethnic groups, which to a certain extent greatly stimulated the writing enthusiasm of foreign writers(Fan, 2017). For example, in the work "Days and Nights in Kolkata", Indian writers Brady Mukdi and Clark Blaze described the differences and collisions, complementarity and integration of Chinese and Western cultures with a large amount of space. At the same time, the works of Chinese writers have also contributed to the development of Canadian literature. Such as Li Sijia's "Remnant Moon Tower" and Cui Weixin's "Jade Peony". Japanese writer Joey Ogawa was also one of the influential foreign writers at the time.

#### **4.3. Promoted the Formation of the National Characteristics of Canadian Literature**

Due to historical factors, Canada was under the colonial rule of Britain and France, and the two major factors including Britain and France, which were mixed in culture, formed a "dual culture", and it is difficult to form its own cultural characteristics(Sleeter, 1993). By advocating cultural inclusiveness, it not only promotes the integration of foreign cultures, but also frees local culture from the shackles of "dual culture", forming national cultural characteristics with Canadian characteristics.

Under the influence of multiple factors such as specific history, geography and religion, Canadian literary works present the theme of diversity and "pursuit and desire". Canadian literature advocates a positive and optimistic attitude towards life and a willingness to resist defeat. This is the crystallization of national spirit and national culture. In the development of literature, female writers have made outstanding contributions. Al Roy, Montgomery, and Alice Monroe have all shown their pursuit and desire for feminism and their optimism and optimism in life. strong. These works have inspired the national self-confidence and pride of the Canadian people, and constitute the national characteristics of Canadian literature.

### **5. Conclusion**

Multicultural education resolved ethnic and racial issues for Canada, and promoted the steady development of society specially in literature field. However, the educational concept is a directional issue, and its realization method and approach are dynamic. In other words, Canadian multicultural education should also keep pace with the times, develop and mature in the course of change.The development of multicultural education has led to the development of Canadian literature and promoted the harmonious integration of local and foreign literature. However, Canada as a new literature, must also pay attention to exploring the influence of English and French literature on Canadian literature. This influence will continue to exist for a long time after all.

In conclusion, the implementation of Canada's multicultural education policy begins with the children development and is implemented in the lives of every citizen. It has played an irreplaceable role in Canadian literature, and the influence and conviction of Canadian literature in the world. In addition, it also stimulated the creative enthusiasm of local writers and foreign writers, contributed to the efficient output of literary works, and promoted the formation and embodiment of national character in literary works.

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