assertion of Canadian identity has been occurring in recent years. Canadians are now more confident about their identity than ever before. This finding is reinforced through public opinion research, which suggests that Canadians are less likely to foresee a union with the United States than ever before. Canadians also seek to define themselves through a more personal definition of Canadian identity rather than through government policies.[6]

THE FUTURE OF CANADIAN CULTURE

In tandem with the evolving Canadian identity, Canadian culture has also undergone considerable change in recent years. The sources of these changes include: the emergence of strong aboriginal voices; the increased national and international popularity of Canadian women in music; an increase in the volume (and the export) of Canadian television; rising interest in Canadian heritage; and a "shattering" of old ideals of Canada, particularly the notion of Canada as either a British nation with a francophone minority or a country of "two nations". What has replaced it, however, is unclear: "There is clearly an attachment to Canada and a general Canadian identity, but what this means beyond some general propositions about diversity and the welfare state is far from clear."[7] As well, a culture of activism among Canadian youth is beginning to play a key role in the development of Canadian culture. Youth are now demanding a role in public policy, as seen recently at protests in Quebec, Vancouver and Windsor.

Despite these new influences, Canadian culture is still characterized by important continuities. These include the maintenance of liberal democratic values, multiculturalism, and the Official Languages Act. However, the recent changes, juxtaposed over continuities in Canadian culture, have brought ambiguities that will be difficult to address. For instance, while multiculturalism policy may work well in some cases, some argue that it may not be appropriate for others: "What does one do with national groups (First Nations and Quebecois) who do not think of themselves as ethno-cultural groups within a multicultural framework?"[8]

Nonetheless, others maintain that multiculturalism can be seen as the only viable model to meet the needs of a diverse Canada. Looking upon ambiguity as a strength rather than a hindrance to integration, the multicultural model accommodates diversity by recognizing the equality of Canadian citizens, regardless of ethnic origin. Hence, it is seen as a valuable tool in the integration of immigrants and refugees. This is achieved through a balance of collective and individual liberties.

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[6]Commentary by Evan Potter, available in online video at www.ecommons.net/ccfpd-europe.

[7]Andrew Nurse, "A Changing Canada: Canadian Culture," available (both in online video and text) at www.ecommons.net/ccfpd-europe.

[8]ibid.