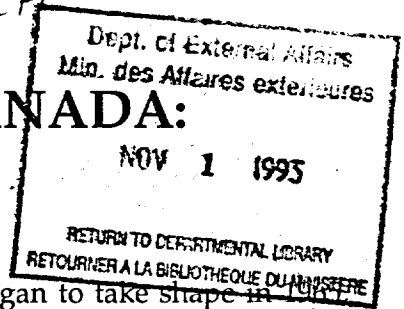


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COMMONWEALTH DAY IN CANADA: NOTES FOR STUDENTS



What is Commonwealth Day?

It is an annual day to celebrate Canada's membership in the modern Commonwealth.

Its purpose is to promote understanding and learning about the modern Commonwealth.

What is the Commonwealth?

It is an organization of 50 countries, from the six continents, which emerged from the dismantling of the largest empire in the history of humanity. It is unique in that its members gained their independence on amicable terms and remained part of a new and modern concept — an international family.

The special strength of the Commonwealth lies in the combination of diversity and shared values: diversity of its members, and shared inheritance in language, culture and the rule of law. The Commonwealth way is to seek consensus through consultation and the sharing of experience. It is uniquely placed to serve as a model and as a catalyst for new forms of friendship and co-operation, in the spirit of the charter of the United Nations.

It brings together 1.3 billion people of various faiths, races, languages, traditions and levels of economic development. The modern Commonwealth represents about one quarter of the world's population and over one quarter of the membership of the United Nations.

The modern multiracial Commonwealth began to take shape in 1949, when India became a Republic but retained its Commonwealth link.

The growth of the Commonwealth accelerated in 1957 when Ghana gained its independence. After Ghana, many other nations, particularly African nations, became independent and usually became full members of the Commonwealth.

Its current form began to take shape in 1949 when the Commonwealth Secretariat was created. Many other Commonwealth programs and institutions have since been formed.

Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the Commonwealth.

What does the Commonwealth do?

It promotes continued partnership and co-operation among its members.

It promotes understanding and tolerance among citizens of its member countries.

It works toward reducing prejudice, ignorance, disease and poverty in member countries.

It contributes to better understanding and good will among people around the world.

It promotes economic development, democracy, respect for human rights, women's equality, and technological development among member countries.

How does the Commonwealth accomplish this?

The Commonwealth Secretariat is the flagship of a vast range of intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), specialized agencies and professional associations. It is primarily devoted to the implementation of decisions made by Heads of Governments at their biennial meetings. The Secretariat conducts a very wide range of activities and programs. These include:

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation is the primary mechanism for development co-operation among member countries. The Fund responds to requests for small-scale technical assistance, provides experts and short-term consultancy services,