

Key Findings

This report details the findings of our review of the substantial body of literature dealing with the Canadian idea, that is, what Canadians identify with as the most important and valuable things about Canada. As the Bank of Canada considers how to approach the design of a bank note to commemorate Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation, this literature review provides examples of past research findings on which to build and focus to suit the Bank's specific purposes.

The key findings are as follows:

- The Canadian idea is a paradox. It unifies to the extent that it reflects and fosters the aspirations of many different people. This is reflected in the distinctively Canadian notion of a cultural mosaic in opposition to the American notion of a melting pot. In the literature, it is reflected in a significant focus on matters related to diversity and multiculturalism and also to strong regional identities within Canada.
- The notion of Canadian diversity isn't limited to ethnic or cultural diversity. There seems to be a strong appreciation for the diversity of achievements in wide ranging fields (i.e., science, sports, literature, arts and entertainment, etc.).
- While Canadians respect their history and say it is an important part of their identity, there is little evidence that they are engaged with it or that it actually forms a core of their identity.
- Canadians don't have firm or fixed notions about how to celebrate or commemorate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, but most say it should emphasize accomplishments over the past 150 years (73%) versus a focus on historical figures (63%) (Association for Canadian Studies (ACS), 2012).

Knowledge Gaps

The 150th Anniversary of Confederation is, by definition, a historical event. The literature, however, does not clearly point to whether or not Canadians expect the commemoration to focus on the history of Confederation itself, on Canadian historical accomplishments in general or on themes and values (i.e., diversity) which define the country and will shape its future. The literature does not shed light on Canadians' specific expectations of how bank notes ought to commemorate Confederation, what form of commemoration would be most appropriate and whether it is appropriate for bank notes to commemorate Confederation at all. We do know that commemorative items can figure as very important aspects of the national celebration. One of the best remembered legacies from the 1967 Centennial was the commemorative coins (House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, 2012). Indeed, the commemorative coins are the second most remembered aspect of the celebrations that year after Expo ("Gearing up for Canada's 150th," 2010).