



The Soul of
Canada

An Overview of National Identity

Dorothy Maclean

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The question of Canadian unity is usually approached from a political or economic perspective. Yet politics and economics can be divisive, one viewpoint being set up against another. Unity does not come from such divisiveness. If unity is a goal, what is needed is a view from some level of wholeness which all Canadians can share. From such a level, all aspects of life, including the political and economic can be promoted.

People of most nations are consciously or unconsciously molded to a unified outlook which emanates from their soul qualities as expressed through their geography, their history, and their sense of belonging or identification. Canadians, though, have yet to know any such consensus. They are separated geographically, their population being sparsely distributed along the U.S. border. They consider Canadian history dull and unimportant, and usually identify with only one language. What I wish to convey in this booklet is an understanding of the soul of Canada, and an appreciation of and familiarity with soul qualities as necessary ingredients in the formation of a stable, united country.

From my experience, affirmed by the testament of people through the ages, I know there is a realm of qualities, an essence common to all persons, an innate divinity which some call "soul." My own background has given me ample proof of this. One job that has come my way has been to attune to the essence of nature, and here too, I find soul energies. I have consciously contacted and cooperated with these energies at a place in northern Scotland, called Findhorn, while helping to create a garden there which became famous due to the health and vigor of its produce, which phenomena confounded the experts. Out of this experiment of cooperation with the soul energies of nature grew a thriving community.

One of the processes in the development of the community was the growth of an over-identity, a soul energy, of which I was aware from the beginning. This energy came to life slowly, deriving its essence from everything in the environment including the geography, the land, and all living and inanimate things there. As at that time the group was centering on growing food and so was intimately connected with the seasons, the oversoul needed at least one year's cycle to acquire maturity.

It communicated that the contribution of our constructive thoughts and feelings were vital ingredients that it was able to use as building blocks; it needed most particularly our supportive recognition and love. Conversely, our separative thoughts and feelings had an adverse effect on its achievement. Also, through our conscious awareness of its presence, we gave power to its Beingness and made a fundamental contribution to its formation and work.

When I returned to live in Canada in 1976, after an absence of over thirty years, I was startled by the possibility that if Canada did break up, the Canadian West might be the scene of economic and military confrontation between major world powers. Having recognized that a geographic region has an ensouling intelligence, I was prompted to contact the essence of the place called Canada. What I tuned into was an energy with enormous purity, reflecting the vast untouched lands of Canada. Also, this energy or Being seemed not truly connected with its people and its destiny, which to me reflected the lack of Canadian identity. It conveyed a need for the help of its people in order to be fully functional, just as the soul of the small and growing group at Findhorn had needed our human aid, our thoughts and feelings, for its growth.

I had lived in several countries and considered myself a citizen of the world with no desire to be limited by nationality. As far as I was concerned, I had outgrown nationalism. Yet on returning, I found myself strongly and nostalgically loving my environment—nothing tasted as good as Niagara peaches, no climate was as rich as the diverse Canadian one, especially after dull years of British rain or California sun. The people felt comfortable to me because I understood them, being a seventh generation Canadian, though fortunately there was now the new blood of immigrants to enliven them. There were new buildings since I had left, and old buildings that had been renamed—for example, the huge new John Robarts library in Toronto, and the Edward Johnson Hall. I felt linked with them, as I had been at university with John Robarts, and my father had known Edward Johnson. Feelings of connection with my country that had never surfaced or been acknowledged before began to emerge, and I wondered at how deeply I was affected by Canada.

So I began to explore how much the soul of a country is connected with its inhabitants. I introduced the matter in my workshops, approaching the question of Canadian unity, and whether such a unity

was desirable, from a soul level. This was new and exciting to the workshop participants, especially the idea that each of us, by tapping our own beingness, could find inner roadways for attuning to the vast complex Being of Canada.

Recognizing that outer form gives an indication of inner essence, we explored some of the attributes which make Canada unique. What were those attributes? How could we describe Canada? How is it different from its neighbor to the south and its mother countries across the seas? From these workshops, whose participants consisted of a cross section of Toronto and included native-born Canadians of British and French origin as well as new immigrants, a consistent and cohesive image and feeling of the Canadian soul began to emerge.

Canada is a multi-national and bilingual country, which includes the two well-grounded French and British cultures, the immigrant cultures from Europe, Asia and Africa, and the largely ignored indigenous cultures. Rather than being mixed into a homogeneous whole, as in the United States, these cultures have remained distinct; Canada is described as a mosaic rather than as a melting pot. This is an immense resource for the country. Yet each Canadian culture has not appreciated the other and has let partisan prejudices limit its perceptions. For example, the solid materialism of the Scottish and English pioneers and businessmen can be tempered by the intuitive and artistic sensibilities of the French. Instead of detracting from one another, these qualities can complement and add to one another. The English and French are only beginning to appreciate each other's contribution, and until recently Anglophones have made Francophones feel inferior. As we Anglophones are in the majority, it is we who will have to demonstrate the greater sensitivity.

If we are an uneasy mix and bothered about two official languages (Russia has ninety-three official languages), then we simply have not taken advantage of the magnificent opportunities afforded by our background. The fact that each culture has kept its distinctiveness is encouraging, because each individual, each culture and each country must find its uniqueness in order to become fully functioning. Without individuality, one is only a weak member of a group. Only as we become truly individual are we free enough, un-defensive enough, to play our part in the whole. French Canadians, through their searching return to

their heritage, have in fact been leading the way in preparing themselves for this larger group participation.

The backbone of modern Canada derives from both our French and British heritages, and it is to our credit that Canada has come so far as a country while maintaining both. Moreover, each culture feels strongly Canadian. Canada is their home and has allowed them to flourish; there is no feeling of France or Britain being the Mother country as there has been for, say, Algerian or New Zealand settlers. If this country had joined the American union, there is little doubt that the French culture would have virtually disappeared just as it has in Louisiana.

Of course, throughout our research it became increasingly clear that the Canadian variety really consisted of a mix of cultures. For instance, there has long been a strong Ukrainian culture in the West, with generations of Ukrainian speaking people. Now (in 1987) the original ruling culture is no longer in the majority in some districts.

One member of our group had been in the battleground of these two cultures all her early life, being a child of the only English-speaking family in a Quebec village. She saw no answer to these cultural difficulties; it came as a revelation to her that a country could have a unifying factor, a soul. Through the incorporation of this concept into her vision, the long enmities that had shaped her life could be resolved.

Another of our group, an immigrant, had always felt guilty about being part of and treasuring her native culture and, for this reason, had never felt truly Canadian. Through our workshops she began to appreciate that now she had two heritages, her native and her adopted one, and that the differences between them were an enhancement rather than a diminution, of her inheritance. Her burden of guilt vanished, and she felt liberated and gladly Canadian for the first time.

Another attribute that makes Canada unique is its geography, made a unit by the Canadian Shield. It is a land of severe seasons which provide a definite rhythm for our activities and, according to Naturalist John Livingstone, it is the home of some of the most successful, because most adaptable, animals in the world. Canada has some land still unpolluted, still unraped, still wild, almost eagerly exuding the essence of creation in an original purity. This essence acts on its inhabitants, teaching us, changing us, awakening a similar note in our own pure souls. Most Canadians, having a love for and feeling a closeness to the land, can

easily reach this almost virgin country, which draws one with its powerful energy, and we all benefit from the change of environment and peace found there. Immigrants returning to their native lands find that the Canadian countryside haunts them and draws them back. I have found more life and power in a tiny wildflower than in the largest, most cosseted garden blooms. During my own absence, I greatly missed the delicate potency of the spring flowers in the Canadian woods.

There is also something that virgin areas can teach us: the wilderness helps us to become more aware, not only because it lacks the distractions of civilization, enabling us to be more observant of our environment, but also because our survival can be contingent on that awareness of our surroundings. Nature covers a thousand related subjects and teaches us to focus on broader issues.

Our most famous painters, the Group of Seven, have depicted the power of nature, appreciating and painting the land as it is in its unaltered state for the first time. The McMichael Collection, for instance, holds for me a vitality unsurpassed by that of the great galleries of the world. Emily Carr likewise painted the living power of the Western trees, and native Indian artists like Norval Morrisseau draw fresh inspiration from nature.

Like other nations, Canada has taken and continues to take from the land without replenishing it, both from the surface and from the mineral and fossil wealth, with the resultant dust bowl areas, water and air pollution, and energy shortages. People have upset the balance of nature all over the world, but almost alone among industrial nations, Canada has natural resources left. I believe that, unique among industrial nations at the time, Canada did consider the indigenous peoples and the environment by passing the Berger Commission report, headed by the Honorable Thomas Berger, which stopped, at least temporarily, a pipeline from passing through some of its northern land.

Sadly, the great white pine and hardwood forests of southern Ontario have already disappeared; the landscape there is now man-made. Wherever Europeans settled in Canada, they raped the land. The nature forces of this continent have expressed anguish to me at this unending exploitation, like the thoughtless bulldozing that continues to scour the land. In most of the European countries, centuries-long interactions between man and nature molded a more natural countryside, allowing

roads to follow the contours of the land and houses to be built of local stones in comfortable mellowness. Though in some of the Southern countries the land is now bare and people scratch a scant living from it, the nature forces understand that the people there are doing their best and have sympathy for their poor efforts.

The exploitation of our land is particularly evident in comparison with the reverence for nature that Canada's native population exhibited. The Indians, having lived close to the land, knew how dependent they were on the health of the earth, the waters, the air and all living creatures, which they considered to be their brothers and sisters. Some tribes made no decision without taking into account the needs of seven future generations of human and non-human life. Were Canadians to hold such an attitude, we might pass on to the next generation the unique heritage of being one of few countries in the world that has yet unspoiled land. There is still some little prairie not ploughed, some few great Pacific trees not cut, some taiga, tundra and Arctic spaces not invaded, although all these too are receiving permanent scars. Unless Canada honors this heritage, its land will become as polluted as that of other countries and we will lose all the opportunities that wilderness has to offer.

People everywhere are learning they are part of the environment. Canada still has the opportunity to learn how to live on the land without exploiting it completely. Canadians can learn to blend science with ecology and be the forerunner of a holistic approach to the environment. We could become not just custodians of, but participants with the land. Canada has the opportunity to become a prototype for a new blending between humanity and nature.

Other qualities that make Canada unique emerged from our group meetings, which also seem consistent throughout Canadian history. One is that Canadians and Canada often act as intermediaries, middlemen, balancers, compromisers, peacemakers. It comes naturally. When I worked in the United States for a British firm, representatives of both nationalities would confide in me, as a non-threatening Canadian, their complaints about the other, and I would automatically defend the party attacked. Peter Varley wrote that compromise is our one definitive doctrine. The Loyalists who left the Thirteen Colonies more often than not simply disapproved of change by violence. They came to this land in order to live according to their beliefs—not for Canada, the violent

severing of the bond with Britain, but peaceable, Government-sponsored action. Indeed, North America would be the poorer if our fellow Americans did not have the balance of Canadian democracy. Today Canada continues the role of go-between, a role consciously developed by Ottawa and practiced in his time by Lester Pearson. Of course, the shadow side of this characteristic is our very lack of definition, our blandness or nothingness; we forget that any characteristic can be used positively or negatively.

Connected with this spirit of compromise is the fact that both French and English-speaking Canadians have often looked to government for aid and the establishment of policy. For instance, the Royal North West Mounted Police, founded in 1873 to avoid the type of violent development occurring in the American West, controlled the sale of guns in the Canadian West—contrary to many a movie. Also, because of the small population and the large scale of the projects needed for the growth of the country, Canadians have looked to government for financial backing more often than in most countries, as when British Columbia joined the Canadian union only after the Government promised a railway link. For good or for ill, government has had a tremendous role to play in Canadian development, and numerous White Papers indicate that change continues to be initiated through government. As Herschel Hardin wrote, “Only by publicly organized investment could a country like Canada, with its small domestic market and lesser population, keep within hailing distance of the great U.S. spectacle and defend itself ... The public enterprise tradition in Canada has sustained the culture of private enterprise ... Public enterprise and financing are at the core of what Canada is all about, economically speaking.” Consequently Canadians would be wise to be particularly aware of and responsible for their government.

Another unique quality is the communications network, which is integral to the Canadian make-up. As mentioned, the railway link brought the Pacific West into the union, and the population is to this day a thin ribbon stretching from coast to coast along the original railway route. Communication technology plays a vital part in connecting far-distant regions, and Canada has developed a very sophisticated communications system and industry. Even Canadian radio “hams” have a satellite of their own. It is appropriate that Marshall McLuhan, the

communications king, was a Canadian.

Canada is also a country of personal space and freedom. One can go quietly about one's business without having to follow every passing fashion, be concerned about the effect of what one says, or adhere to any special image. The characteristic spirit of compromise, or common sense, or perhaps the harsh climate, keeps Canadians from extremes. Canadians are non-aggressive, allowing their fellows to discover their own pace and personality. A nation that encourages such individual development can produce great leaders and innovators. In the same manner, a nation that allows its diverse groups to develop their special aptitudes gains strength. And as each group recognizes the other's special qualities, the country can attain unity.

Having explored some of the qualities that make Canada unique, and assuming that such qualities are reflections of the inner life of the country, our group was ready for more direct perception. I shared my experiences of soul energies, sometimes called angels or devas, and the group was willing to try to experience, in a similar meditative manner, the Canadian soul as a living Being. During this experience, like me all sensed this Being to be of tremendous purity, and they likened the Canadian soul to its vast natural resources. Some felt an Indian influence; some had the impression of youthful vitality; but all experienced a powerful presence. A love for the country began to grow in each one of us. We realized that we continuously breathe in the atmosphere of Canada on many levels and that, when we decide to do it consciously, we can open ourselves to the energy which is Canada and let it flow through us. We exhale it in the shape, qualities, feelings, and thoughts of each of us at that particular moment. These go forth and are shared by all other life here in this country, here on this planet.

Our individual experiences and the ideas exchanged and put into practice through the weeks of the workshops brought reality to the idea that we can help build a country by our thoughts and feelings as we live and work. No one is helpless in building his or her country; each can contribute on some level. From the seed of our daily work and meetings with people, we can spread our thoughts to the nation as a whole. Each of us can wield power that way — potent power, as in the Bible, where one good man could save a city. As one member said,

“I have lived for eight years within this country, surrounded by its land and its peoples. Now this country is beginning to live in me as well, in a conscious way. I am beginning to discover the inner avenue to this place, this place where I am connected with other life, where the soul of a country shares its being, its consciousness, its energy, with the soul of an individual. I think of how the living qualities of Canada nurture and help shape us. As I walk through the streets, ride on the streetcar, go shopping in the various stores, I think of the many peoples in this country, and I begin to hold them and their development in my mind, together with thoughts of the Being of Canada.”

Our group realized that the task of each of us as individuals is to work toward a fuller understanding of ourselves. Until we explore and understand all the various aspects of our identity, we are not in control of our lives and destinies, but are the unconscious pawns of our reactions. Nations too, like individuals, need to develop insight into the various aspects of their identities. Apart from the Francophobes in Quebec, who in the 1960s began to search for and find their unique heritage and worth, Canada has not thoroughly begun this search. As a first step in building a strong and unified country, all of us need to be aware of and open to the many different cultures and life forms within Canada. To do this, we must first get in touch with the unifying source of all the diverse aspects of our own beings, our own souls, our own inner natures. From there we can get in touch with the unifying source of a huge expanse of land and peoples, the Soul of Canada. To express our soulness truly, we must honor our roots, our own characteristics whatever they are. Those aspects are all part of us, vehicles for expressing the whole of ourselves, neutral characteristics which can always be used constructively.

I should like to mention here that, although I had had a gut feeling that Canadian unity was at the time preferable to splitting the country into separate states, I had considered other options. For example, when the lack of a Canadian identity was brought to our awareness, I wondered if it would be advisable for Canada to join the American union politically. I asked this question of the Angel of the United States, who intimated that North America needed the balance and variety of the Canadian

approach to democracy.

Recognition of and proper use of our national characteristics is indeed an important and vital subject as we relate increasingly to different peoples throughout the world. Yet it is an unconscious part of our makeup. We are so used to reacting automatically according to our individual and national makeup that we don't know we are automatons. We act as we always have, and thereby can tread on the toes of those of other cultures whose trained reactions are quite different. We can appear rude to another when we are trying to be polite. We can appear insensitive or belligerent, or give signals opposite to what we desire, if we don't understand ourselves. If we don't understand what we are, how can we possibly hope to understand or relate to another? Now that as nations we are reaching beyond our own European backgrounds into Asian and African backgrounds, it is indeed important to know who we are, to become conscious enough to use our talents appropriately, to have the choice to be wiser.

We don't have to go beyond our own European/American upbringings to get into trouble! I remember, when the small Island of Erraid was given to the Findhorn community to run, a group of less than a dozen British people went there to bring the island to life again. The buildings and gardens had to be revived, and relationships had to be built up with the nearest neighbors on the Island of Mull. The neighbors were dour Scottish islanders highly suspicious of the community, and it was not easy to establish normal relationships with them. But it was worked on, with good results. Then a young California couple went to the island and resurrected all the suspicions of the islanders when, on meeting, they threw their arms around them and hugged them. This to me was a negative use of a positive characteristic, done quite unconsciously. We all do this sort of thing. I was quite unconscious of my own "Canadianisms."

For example, one of my automatic reactions surfaced when I was giving a workshop in Ottawa and attuned to the essence or Angel of our Government there. I found it to be in a cage, unable to fulfill its purposes. Why? Because of the negative attitude of most Canadians toward their Government. I realized that my dislike of political strategies and political backbiting had maneuvered me into the position of ignoring or thinking only destructively of government. I had helped build that cage. So I

changed my attitude; I can now support the principle of government of the country, which is very necessary and very needful of support, regardless of feelings about personalities. As I have mentioned, Government plays a greater role in development here than in most nations, and recognition of this fact contributes to our development. Even an astrological chart of the country spelled out our strong administrative connections.

It is our connections, our relationships, that we should build on. Most of all, let us relate to our spirit, the core of our being. Though we cannot prove spirit, it is more lasting than perishable physical vehicles. We all function from spirit anyway, and relate to it all the time, mostly unconsciously. When we love anything, we relate to it. When we do anything for love, whether for a person or a country, we are relating to its essence. We all nurture and shape our country. The forms of this identity will change as opportunities are given us for learning and maturing. Though Canada may have, as published in a report called *A National Understanding*, a very remarkable degree of freedom, and though we are “an example to the world of a country grounded in common sense and in peace and brotherhood and goodwill among men,” we still separate ourselves into warring pieces. We need to use all our common sense in order to be a successful country, but even more we need to evoke our soul.

People and nations live by their imagination, by the dreams that relate them to their land and its past. Canada has myths of courier du bois, the U.E.L.s, the Mounties; but there is no central or controlling myth to focus Canadian diversity and foster its distinctiveness. Some say we are unconsciously united by what we have borrowed from American behavior, and yet we continue to reject certain expressions we see of American life such as its violence. Some say that unity will come from our need to make a common front against the demands of all the countries on which we still depend, not only economically, but in all cultural domains. None of these points of view give us any inspiration.

Behind all the searching for Canadian unity stands an energy, the Soul of Canada, which is both myth and reality. It is a myth that is being born as we help create our own and our country's destiny; it is a reality that all Canadian peoples can recognize, as we recognize our own expressions of it. This intelligent energy, a needed link with the power

of the universe, has positive unifying qualities. Forever changing and inclusive of past and future, it is the essence of truth. Canada can blend its past, including the days when the native Indians lived in attunement with their surroundings, with its more recent history, and with the future as a technically-developed multi-national civilization, living in harmony with the land. It is a great myth, a truly Canadian blend, a myth we can bring to birth by expressing living mythic qualities in the present. Out of the existing diversity of the land, Canadians can build on the richness of the human experience, not toward a unity of identity, but toward a creative plurality. Canadians can sponsor a vision of organization based on qualitative understanding, cooperation, and harmony between diverse elements. To do this we need a clear perception of and attunement to an over-identity. The Soul of Canada holds this vision, this imagination, this over-identity.

AFTERWORD (1987)

Since this booklet was first published in 1977, I have given many workshops throughout the world which have included the subject of nationality and have helped me to realize the great importance of this subject. I have found that most people consider national identity only in the negative sense, as something not only outgrown, but the cause of much of the world's troubles, a view that I had when I returned to Canada. This attitude is a complete swing of the pendulum from the Victorian view epitomized by Sir Walter Scott's poem on patriotism which I had to memorize at school:

*Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
"This is my own, my native land!"
Whose heart has ne'er within him burn'd
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd
From wandering on a foreign strand?*

Indeed, nationality, like many qualities, has been used mainly for destructive or separative aims. Until we step out of our country, we simply swim in its psychic environment and unconsciously follow its patterns, and our view of our country is completely biased. We do not know what we are, because we need comparison to become aware of what we are. We have to relate to differences before we know uniqueness.

We have been national robots. Now that space photos have shown us one world without national boundaries, we can enlarge our identity and work for our own region in the knowledge that it is part of a whole. If we don't consider other regions or identities, we are simply fooling ourselves, and our shortsightedness will bring its own foolish consequences. So there is the paradox that we cannot be of service to our country, cannot be true nationals, until we have extended ourselves to a planetary vision. "Think globally, act locally."

In any connections that I have had with the soul or "Angel" of anything, whether of a country or of a pebble, I have found only holistic views. Such essences glory in differences because variety makes the whole richer. There is no competition, no sense of ego making someone better

than another. There is only great awareness of and joyful support for otherness. If we would only emulate the Angels of our countries, and make a healthy use of conflict, we would transform the world and end wars.

I have searched for books on the subject of national identity, and so far have found only one of significance to me. This is Rudolph Steiner's *The Mission of Folk-Souls*, a translation of talks he gave in Norway in 1910. I like his approach because he deals with life in terms of energy. The book is an esoteric treatise but it confirms much for me. For instance, he maintains that we humans can learn of the creative steps that our countries must take in any age only through the national angel (termed by Steiner a Folk Soul, of the rank of Archangel) who in turn comes under a still higher angel called the Spirit of the Age. He claims that two streams are working in man: his personal destiny, and his contribution to his own people. He also said that the keynote for the last era was, "Man, know thyself and you will know the universe and the gods," which was the inscription on the temple at Delphi, while the keynote for the present era will be "Know yourselves as Folk Souls." That is a far cry from our negative view of national identity and gives the theme planetary importance.



Dorothy Maclean was born and raised in Guelph, Ontario. After graduation from the University of Western Ontario she worked with British Intelligence in many countries during World War II. After the war in Britain, while in commercial jobs or at art school, she searched for the essential qualities of living. In this search she experienced a conscious communion with her inner divinity, which led her to Scotland with Peter and Eileen Caddy. Together

they founded the Findhorn Community, whose famous garden is based on Dorothy's attunement to the essence of the forces of nature. She spent eleven years there, exploring and blending with the inner realms as well as acting as Secretary of the Findhorn Foundation.

In 1973 she left Scotland for California, USA, where she co-founded the Lorian Association. There she spent three years lecturing, writing and leading workshops focused on the wholeness of humanity and on humanity's cooperation with nature. Then she lived in Toronto for eight years as President of the Canadian Lorian Association. Now living part time in Washington State, she continues with her workshops and talks on themes of collaboration with inner worlds, in particular humanity's connections with and participation with national angels as described in this booklet.

Her work with nature has been described in *The Findhorn Garden*. She tells her own story in *To Hear the Angels Sing*, published by Lorian Press.

About the Publisher

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The Lorian Association is a not-for-profit educational organization. Its work is to help people bring the joy, healing, and blessing of their personal spirituality into their everyday lives. This spirituality unfolds out of their unique lives and relationships to Spirit, by whatever name or in whatever form that Spirit is recognized.

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