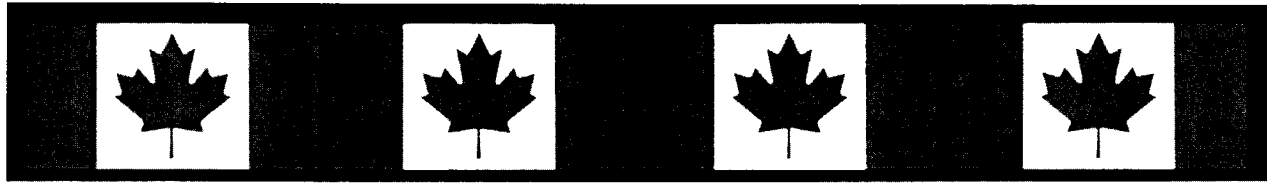


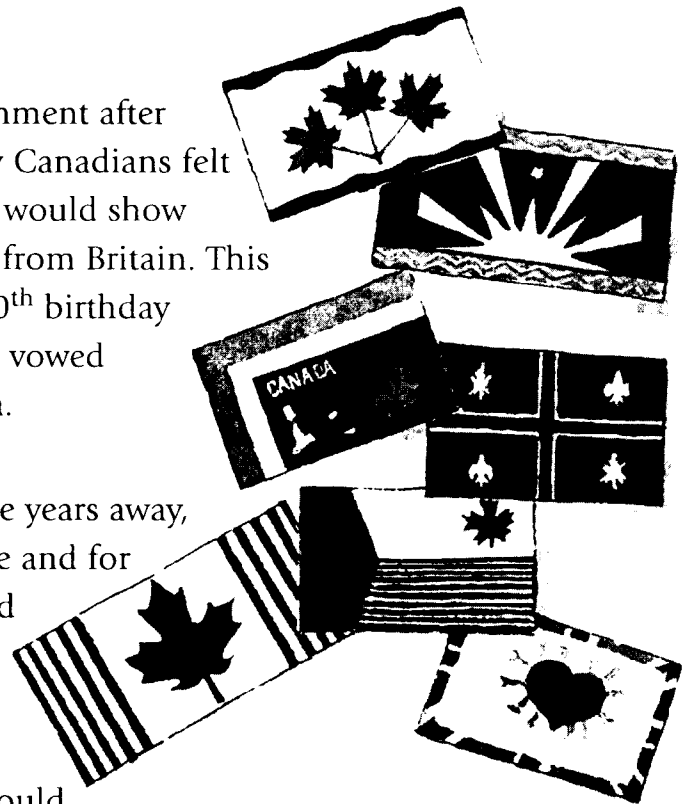
# A Flag of Canada's Own



Shouldn't a country have a flag of its own?

This question was asked by the Canadian government after World War I and again after World War II. Many Canadians felt it was time for the country to choose a flag that would show Canada had a unique identity and was separate from Britain. This feeling became especially strong as Canada's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday approached. So, members of all political parties vowed to work together to create a new flag for Canada.

In 1964, with Canada's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday only three years away, Prime Minister Pearson decided it was time once and for all for Canada to have its own flag. He organized a flag committee made up of 15 members of Parliament from the five political parties represented in the House of Commons. The committee's job was to find a flag design that would appeal to all Canadians.



As well as getting advice from flag experts, the flag committee asked Canadians for their suggestions. Thousands of people sent in ideas. The flag committee room was soon filled with bags and bags of mail containing letters and drawings from across Canada, and even from Canadians living outside the country.

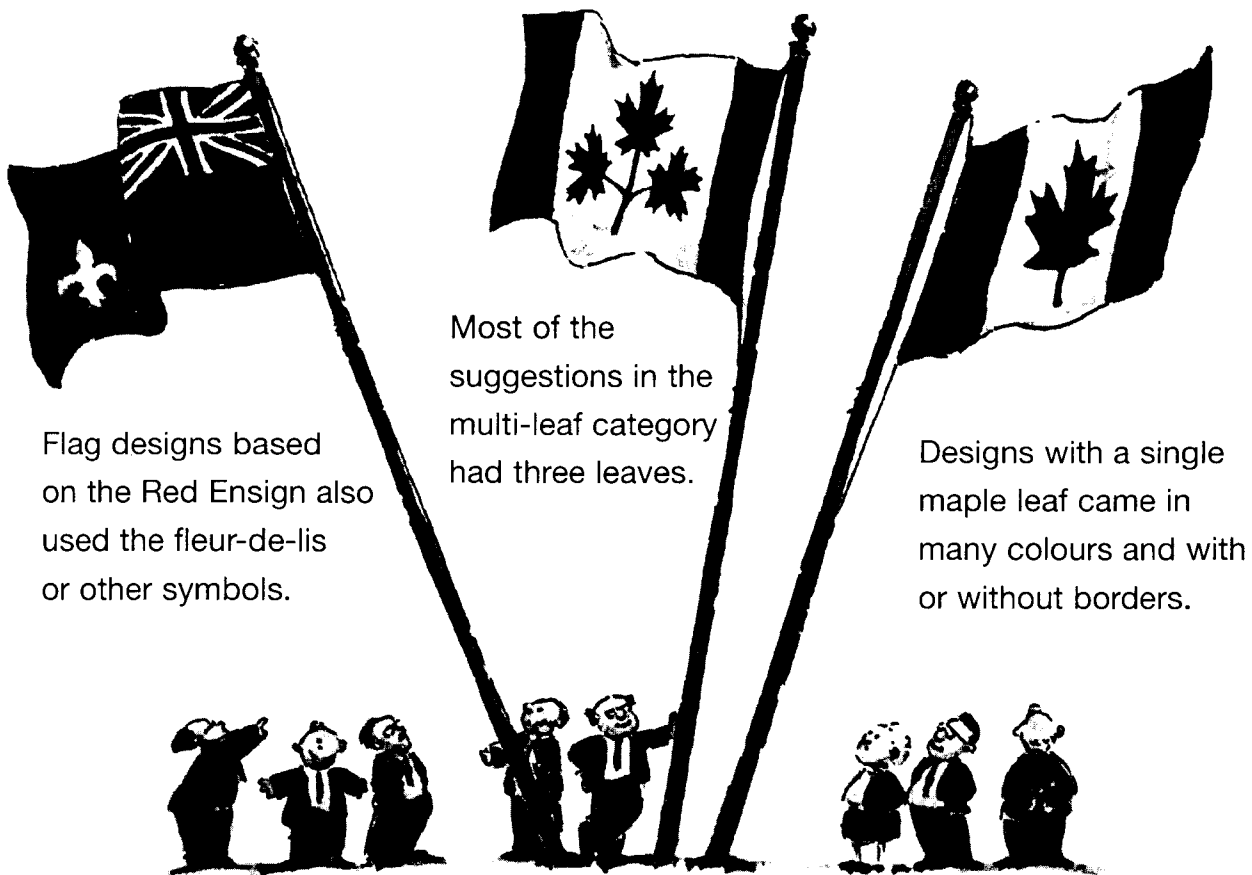
Schoolchildren, families, business people and organizations sent in drawings, paintings, collages and photographs, on tissue, wrapping paper, cardboard and fabric. Even a 100 kg (220 lb.) flag model with blinking lights was sent in. As members of the committee chose their favourite designs, they stuck them on the walls of the committee room. Soon the room was covered with hundreds of designs.

Every letter and flag design that was sent in to the government was delivered to the flag committee for consideration. People felt strongly about the need for a new flag, and most encouraged Prime Minister Pearson with his mission.

Famous artists, such as the Group of Seven's A. Y. Jackson, sent in sketches and even spoke to the flag committee.

Some symbols were unusual, including rabbits, eagles, Canada geese and even hockey sticks. Often people sent in detailed letters explaining the meaning of their designs. Others mailed in poems, songs and even essays they had written in support of their ideas.

Today, thousands of those submissions, ranging from simple crayon sketches to professional artists' paintings, are saved at the National Archives of Canada as part of Canada's heritage.



After weeks of looking at designs and listening to experts, the flag committee had to choose a design to present to Parliament for approval. First the committee divided its favourite designs into three groups: versions of the Red Ensign, flags with a single maple leaf and ones with a number of maple leaves. Then the committee had to choose one of these groups.

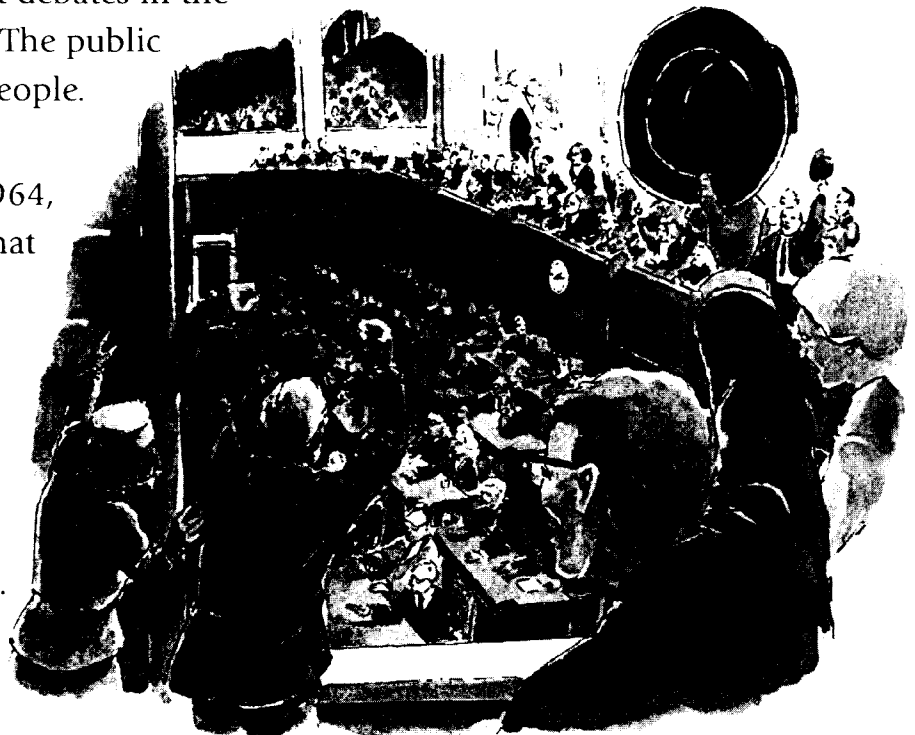
The committee members were from five different political parties, so imagine how surprised they were when the votes were counted and they had all chosen the same category—the single maple leaf.

The flag committee presented its choice to Parliament. Now all members of Parliament had to vote on whether to approve this design as Canada’s new flag. Getting them to agree would not be easy.

Prime Minister Pearson wanted a flag that was “distinctly Canadian which could not be mistaken for the emblem of any other country.” He appealed to the honourable members to unite around the new flag.

But John Diefenbaker, leader of the Opposition, fought hard to keep the Red Ensign that showed Canada’s historic link to Britain. Discussion led to debate that lasted for 15 days. It was one of the longest debates in the history of Canadian Parliament! The public galleries were jam-packed with people.

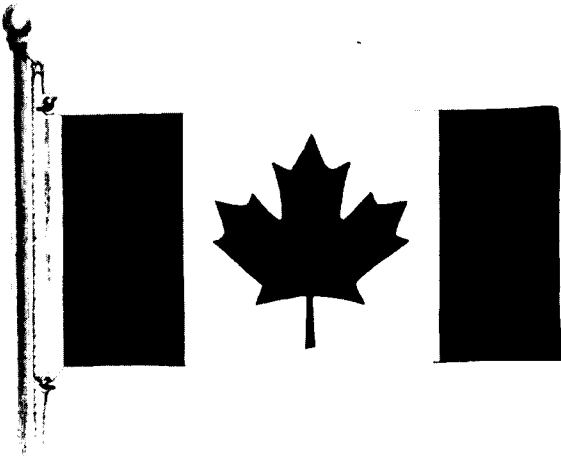
At 2:13 a.m. on December 15, 1964, debate was closed—something that is rarely done—and a vote was taken. Cheers, screams and desk-banging greeted the announcement that the Maple Leaf flag had received an overwhelming majority of votes from the members of Parliament.



Three days later the Senate passed the flag motion, and on December 31, 1964, Queen Elizabeth II, Canada's queen, gave her approval. Now it was official—after almost a hundred years, Canada had its own flag.

One reason Canada's Maple Leaf flag is recognized all around the world is because of its great design. That design was the result of a lot of hard work by a number of experts.

George Stanley, a professor at Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, suggested a single maple leaf design in red and white because it could be seen clearly from a distance.



Once Parliament voted for the red-and-white Maple Leaf flag, flag committee member John Matheson worked to perfect the design. Red borders were included to balance the bold central leaf and make the flag stand out. Then Matheson had to choose a maple leaf as a model for the flag's leaf. He wanted to pick one that most Canadians would recognize, so he chose the sugar maple leaf.

The design of the leaf on the flag was developed by designer Jacques St. Cyr. His 11-point leaf looks like a real maple leaf when the flag flies on a windy day.

Just as there are many maple leaf shapes, there are also many shades of red. A bright scarlet shade was chosen for Canada's flag so that it would be different from the lighter red of Britain's Union Jack and the darker red of the American flag.

Most Canadians got their first glimpse of the new flag on February 15, 1965. It was a cold cloudy day in Ottawa, but people began to gather on Parliament Hill early in the morning to welcome Canada's new flag. The crowd cheered and the sun broke through the clouds as the new Maple Leaf flag reached the top of the flagpole for the first time. Today, that original flag hangs in the prime minister's office.

Written by Ann-Maureen Owens and Jane Yealland.  
Illustrated by Bill Slavin and Esperança Melo.

1. What is the main idea of the text "A Flag of Canada's Own"?

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2. According to the authors, why did many Canadians want a new flag?

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3. The authors begin the passage with a question most likely because they

- a do not know if Canada had a flag of its own.
- b want readers to think about their own opinion.
- c are going to answer the question in the first paragraph.
- d think Canada needed to be separate from Britain.

4. Read the sentence below.

The committee members were from five different political parties, so imagine how surprised they were when the votes were counted and they had all chosen the same category—the single maple leaf.

This statement suggests that

- a no one liked the multi-leaf design.
- b members of different political parties usually agree.
- c members of different political parties usually disagree.
- d the single maple leaf category was unpopular.

5. Which of the following statements is an opinion rather than fact?
- a Flag designs were sent in from many places.
  - b Some flag designs were better than others.
  - c Many Canadians sent in their ideas to the flag committee.
  - d Prime Minister Pearson appealed to members to support the new flag.

6. Read the sentence below.

First the committee divided its favourite designs into three groups: versions of the Red Ensign, flags with a single maple leaf and ones with a number of maple leaves.

The colon is used to

- a begin a list.
  - b divide the sentence.
  - c separate each of the three groups.
  - d draw attention to the words that follow.
7. Describe how you know that "A Flag of Canada's Own" is a narrative.

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8. Prime Minister Pearson organized a flag committee representing the five political parties to choose a new flag for Canada.

Why was it a good idea for Pearson to form a committee to make this decision rather than making the decision on his own?

Use ideas from the text and your own ideas to answer the question.

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9. Identify and explain the unique characteristics of the design of Canada's flag.

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10. Read this sentence:

But John Diefenbaker, leader of the Opposition, fought hard to keep the Red Ensign that showed Canada's historic link to Britain.

In this sentence, what part of speech is the word "hard"?

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11. How do you know that all of the flag submissions were valued?

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12. In some ways, creating a new flag is similar to working on a class art project. There needs to be a plan, and you need ideas for a good design.

In what ways was creating the new Canadian flag different from working on a class art project? Use your own ideas and ideas from the text to answer the question.

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13. Prime Minister Pearson in "A Flag of Canada's Own" could be described as a strong-minded person.

Use information from the text to explain why he is a strong-minded person.

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14. If you were asked to present the information contained in this text using a different form of writing, what form would you choose? Explain your choice.

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15. According to the text, where would you find the original Canadian flag today?

- a on a pole in front of the Parliament Buildings
- b in the prime minister's office
- c in the Canadian National Archive
- d in the flag committee room

16. Read this sentence:

So, members of all political parties vowed to work together to create a new flag for Canada.

Which of the following words has the same meaning as the word "vowed"?

- a co-operated
- b promised
- c hoped
- d tried

17. Which of the following people acted both as a flag committee member and as a flag designer?

- a Prime Minister Pearson
- b John Matheson
- c George Stanley
- d A. Y. Jackson

18. What is the name of the writing below each flag on page 5?

- a caption
- b heading
- c label
- d subheading

19. Read the following sentence from the text:

At 2:13 a.m. on December 15, 1964, debate was closed—something that is rarely done—and a vote was taken.

Write the compound word from the above sentence.

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20. Why do the authors include the cartoon on page 5?

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