



Hello! Bonjour! Intro to Canadian Life EX. version

Hello everyone! It's your Coordinator of International relations (CIR) Mary again. In the Kyotanabe City newspaper-Hotto Kyotanabe 2018 March issue, I introduced about multiculturalism and mosaic society in Canada. Here I will talk about how to properly ask Canadians about their heritage background. Over 200 different ethnicities are living in Canada. 80% are of European descents, 20% are of Asian descents, 4% are First Nations and 3% are of African descents. You usually can't tell a Canadian's ethnicity, background or culture purely based on appearance. Above that it is considered not polite to ask "Where are you from?" directly to a Canadian.

Where are you from? (X)



Canada is a multicultural country. For example, there might be a Canadian whose father was an immigrant from Germany but him/herself was brought up in many different countries because of the family. So the question "Where are you from?" may actually implied a negative meaning of the person being asked is not Canadian-born or that he/she has an accent when speaking. This can be taken as an offensive question in some cases.

Moreover, it is very likely to get a simple answer like "I am Canadian" as well. Many Canadian don't consider their appearance or culture when it is different than others. They are born, raised and live in Canada so they always consider themselves as Canadian.

Where is your family originally from? (O)



We Are All Canadians

However, if you asked "Where is your family originally from?" the question itself is considered polite to ask and is not offensive to Canadians. They will understand that you are asking about their ancestry or heritage background. Usually they will explain in a friendly manner. When people meet for the first time, it is a common topic to get to know the other better.

This question also genuinely shows that you are interested not only in the person but also his/her family, which leaves a good impression as well.

