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April 15, 2002

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- ARTS & LEISURE ▾
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- ENTERTAINMENT ▾
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60-DAY SEARCH

Mandatory history classes urged
 Results of poll on Canada alarm professor

Emma Poole
 Calgary Herald

A leading Canadian historian says there should be mandatory Canadian history classes in schools, after a recent poll showed almost half of the nation could not identify **John A. Macdonald**, Canada's first prime minister.

Dr. David Bercuson, director of the Centre for Strategic and Military Studies at the University of Calgary, **said most Canadians** have no idea of the country's achievements.

"I think when you try to explain to Canadians **the tremendous** accomplishments that they have made as a nation ... they don't understand what you're talking about because **they haven't seen** the examples put before them in school," Dr. Bercuson told a Global Sunday panel.

"I think [Canadian history classes] should be mandatory, but I also recognize the constitutional reality that the federal government is not going to take responsibility for it."

Dr. Bercuson said pressure must be put on **provincial** curriculum writers to include the classes in high schools across the country.

The panel also consisted of 18-year-old Michael Cooper, the youngest member of the Alliance National Council, Michael Blondeau, a news media producer, and Canadian historian Catherine Carstairs.

Dr. Bercuson's comments come on the heels of a poll commissioned by the Dominion Institute, a think-tank that advocates mandatory history classes in **provincial** curriculums.

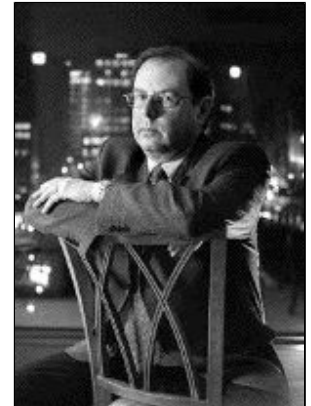
The poll, conducted by Ipsos-Reid, shows **Alberta** was the only province where a majority of people passed **the three-question** quiz administered between Dec. 14 and 20, 2001.

Only 49% of Canadians knew Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act and 19% knew Wilfrid Laurier was the country's first francophone prime minister.

Of the 1,000 residents questioned, 60% failed the quiz, including one-third who could not answer a single question.

Quebecers performed the worst with a mere 19% of participants passing the test.

Miss Carstairs said she believes far more **students** are learning



Dave Chan, National Post

David Bercuson, director of the Centre for Strategic and Military Studies, says most Canadians have little knowledge of this country's "tremendous accomplishments."



Wilfrid Laurier

sort

by: date rank

and enjoying the nation's history than **20 years ago**.

"I don't think it's important to have history **standards**. I think that there's incredibly valuable things happening **in Canadian history classrooms** right now across the country. There's a real **enthusiasm about Canadian history**," Miss Carstairs said.

Dr. Bercuson disagreed. He said professional **educators are making history boring** and that significant events, such as the Korean War, **are quickly being forgotten**.

"Very few Canadians know anything about **the Canadian involvement in the Korean War**, and yet it was the third-largest conflict that **we've been involved in**," Dr. Bercuson said.

"Either we've all got to put pressure on our **provincial curriculum writers or provincial ministries of education** to make sure there is history in high schools in this country," he said.



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