INTRODUCTION

The 32 million inhabitants of Canada give a reflection of the diversity within the country. According to the Canadian heritage website (2009), Canada has got a make up of ethnic, cultural and linguistic which is unmatched anywhere on earth. The Canadian heritage website records that an approximate of two hundred thousand immigrants flows to Canada annually. The reason given for the popularity of Canada among the immigrants is, “its quality of life and its reputation as an open, peaceful and caring society that welcome newcomers and values diversity” (Canadian Heritage Para. 1).

The Canadian heritage was set up to foster the growth of diversity in Canada. There is a strong recognition of cultural diversity among the Canadians. This paper looks at the diversity in Canada from a broad perspective. The diversity issue in Canada stands out as a unique feature and the paper makes an effort to bring out that uniqueness. This paper will show the roots of the diversity of Canada experiences and consequently show the impacts cultural diversity has had on the lives of the Canadians.

THE ROOTS OF CANADIAN DIVERSITY

The SFU (n.d.) argues that the Canadian Diversity is not a recent occurrence but rooted deep in the history of Canada long before it was Canada. The SFU website records that the colonies which were to become Canada and originally inhabited by the Aboriginal people experienced continued waves of immigration. Immigration to the colonies which were to become Canada started as early as the 17th century with the French and British colonization. Throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries there was continued immigration. By the time the United States was being created, the United Empire Loyalists fled to Canada. There were further immigrations to the land from Europe at the
beginning of the 20th century. The last six decades has seen many immigrants flowing in to Canada from different countries (SFU Para. 2).

CANADA’S SUPPORT FOR DIVERSITY

The SFU (n.d.) argues that diversity has been a cornerstone to the development of Canada. This has prompted the institution of a number of policies in support of diversity development. An example is the Quebec Act of 1774. This Act was instituted to recognize the legitimacy of the French language, Roman Catholic Faith and the French Civil law in Quebec. However it should be noted that the Aboriginal people did not enjoy that privilege but all the same it was a big step forward towards encouraging diversity (SFU Para. 3).

In 1971 Canada set a record as the first country to enact an official multiculturalism policy. This was affirmed by the multiculturalism Act in 1988. The Canada government has held various constitution debates and evolution which are centered on the accommodation of diversity within Canada. These debates include the Charlottetown Accord and Meech Lake proposals (SFU Para. 4).

SOME OF THE PROGRAMS WHICH SUPPORT DIVERSITY IN CANADA

There are a number of programs which are used to foster the growth of diversity in Canada. The department of Citizenship and Immigration (2010) listed a number of such programs which are used to ensure that the country of Canada grows in diversity. The first on the list is multiculturalism. This program is used by the Canadians and the new comers to develop a lasting relationship. This is done by helping communities make contributions to the society by
ensuring that their economic status makes it possible for them to do so. The program is based on the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (C.I Para. 1). The Community Historical Recognition program (CHRP) assists in the funding of community based projects that have got a keen interest on the ethno-cultural communities which are affected by the historical wartime measures (C.I Para. 3). Grants and Contributions is another program which provides funds purposely for projects which are aimed at facilitating and strengthening social, economical and cultural integration in Canada. The Chinese Head Tax Redress Program is used to enable the young people learn about the cultural diversity of Canada (C.I Para. 1).

‘Racism. Stop it’ is yet another program in form of competition which gives the youth chances of expressing their views on how racism can be stopped. Paul Juzyk Award for multiculturalism, the Black History Month, Annual Report and Holocaust Task Force are among the many initiatives of the Canadians to strengthen their diversity (C.I Para. 5).

**THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED BY CANADA’S DIVERSITY**

The diversity of the Canadians people is far reaching. The diversity extends beyond ethnicity or race, culture, religion and historical roots. Equally diverse is the geography of the Canada. There are three oceans, prairies, the Arctic, mountains, remote and rural landscapes. There are diverse religion beliefs and affiliations, the economic status are also diverse as well as sexual orientations. The kind of diversity available in Canada makes various people from different original setting to feel part of Canada and identify with the country. With this kind of orientation, it is very convenient and very possible for the Canadians to take the center stage of solving international issues. Canada’s diversity allows
it to easily influence the world at large (Rea Para. 4).

Canada has got two official languages: French and English. This linguistic duality complemented with the cultural diversity is a big asset and main drivers of the productivity of the country. The linguistic duality of the citizens makes it possible for the citizens of the country to get in touch with various parts of the world thus bringing on board various skills from different parts of the world. Due to the ability to make establishments to the outside world, the citizens and the incoming immigrants are able to bring in new attitudes which may include respect, tolerance, synergy and a concern for accommodation. All these factors are known to positively contribute towards the economic growth and development of Canada (Canada Para. 10).

The language industry has set Canada apart as the leading in the language industry. Canada leads in the fields of human translation, production of language technology & services, and language training. The skills of the Canadians particularly in the field of teaching languages have been of great significant to the country. The republics of the former Soviet Union are known to use the Canadians teachers in various fields especially in education (Canada Para. 14).

**THE IMPACT OF CANADA’S DIVERSITY**

The diversity of Canada has played a major role in the nation of Canada as well as at the international platform. The SFU website records that the Aboriginal people of Canada assert their independence and rights at the international forums. The Quebec has a seat reserved for it at the UNESCO as well as other international bodies. It should be noted that almost 10 percent of the Canadians live overseas. The policies which have been adopted by Canada
with regard to diversity have had great impact at the international level. For instance there are a number of policies which have been influenced directly at the international level due to the Canadian policy influence. These include the promotion of democracy abroad, advising on the issues of human rights, sharing of expertise in federalism in the former Soviet bloc countries and developing countries. Canada is also renowned in the field of the peace building and consultations with Diaspora groups on issues of post conflict reconstruction and security (SFU Para. 5).

THE FUTURE OF CANADA’S DIVERSITY

SFU (n.d.) strongly believes that diversity issues will continuously play a big role in the years ahead. According to a 2006 census carried, it was shown that twenty percent of the Canadians are born out of Canada. This is said to be the highest percentage in the past seventy five years. This figure ranks Canada in the second position after Australia. SFU (n.d.) makes a projection that by 2020 to 2046 period the population growth of the population of Canada will mainly be due to the immigration. Further projections put the year 2017 as the year when one in five, that is a percentage of between 19 to 23, Canadians will be a member of visible minority group. This is expected to be manifested in the cities of Vancouver and Toronto. Additional estimates make claims that by 2017 the young aboriginal adults will show an increase of 41.9 percent (FSU Para. 6).

CONCLUSION

Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Its diversity ranges from language, ethnic, geographical and cultural. The Canadians are proud of their diversity and have come up with so many initiatives and programs to foster unity and strength among themselves. Their diversity has been a source
of their strength specifically to their economy. The language diversity has lead to the development of the language industry: the largest in the world. Canada can also use its diversity to influence international policies. The government of Canada needs to put more efforts in the development of the language industry. This will likely help in the development of other industries for instance the tourism industry. The immigrants have made Canada a popular destination mainly due the diversity of this country.