

O Canada

Canada's National Anthem

History • Timeline • Lyrics

Prepared for a community presentation by members of the Women's Institute

Introduction

O Canada is the national anthem of Canada and an important symbol of national pride. It is sung at schools, sporting events, ceremonies, and community gatherings across the country. The anthem reflects Canada's history, geography, and the shared responsibility of citizens to care for their country and communities.

History of O Canada

The music for O Canada was composed by Calixa Lavallée, a Canadian pianist and composer. The original French lyrics were written by Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier, a judge and poet from Quebec. The song was created in 1880 for a national convention of French Canadians held in Quebec City during Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day celebrations.

O Canada was first performed on June 24, 1880. Over time the song became popular across the country. Several English versions were written, but the most widely used was written in 1908 by Robert Stanley Weir. In 1980, the National Anthem Act officially proclaimed O Canada as the national anthem of Canada. In 2018 the English lyrics were updated to reflect inclusive language.

Timeline of O Canada

1839 – Birth of Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier, author of the original French lyrics.

1842 – Birth of Calixa Lavallée, composer of the anthem's music.

June 24, 1880 – O Canada is performed publicly for the first time in Quebec City.

1908 – Robert Stanley Weir writes the English version of the anthem.

1927 – A revised English version becomes widely used across Canada.

1967 – A parliamentary committee recommends O Canada become Canada's national anthem.

July 1, 1980 – The National Anthem Act officially proclaims O Canada as Canada's national anthem.

2018 – The English lyrics are updated to reflect inclusive language.

Calixa Lavallée (1842–1891)

Calixa Lavallée was born in Verchères, Quebec. He showed musical talent at a young age and became a respected pianist, composer, and teacher. Lavallée worked and studied in Canada, the United States, and Paris, gaining recognition for his musical abilities. He composed many works but is best remembered today for the music of O Canada.

Sir Adolphe■Basile Routhier (1839–1920)

Sir Adolphe■Basile Routhier was born in Saint■Placide, Quebec. He studied law at Université Laval and later served as a judge of the Quebec Superior Court. In addition to his legal career he was a respected poet and writer. His poem O Canada became the foundation of Canada's national anthem.

Official English Lyrics

O Canada!

Our home and native land!

True patriot love in all of us command.

With glowing hearts we see thee rise,

The True North strong and free!

From far and wide,

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

God keep our land glorious and free!

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Paroles françaises officielles

Ô Canada!

Terre de nos aïeux,

Ton front est ceint de fleurons glorieux!

Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,

Il sait porter la croix;

Ton histoire est une épopée

Des plus brillants exploits.

Et ta valeur, de foi trempée,

Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.

Protégera nos foyers et nos droits.

Quiz

1. When was O Canada first performed?
2. Who composed the music?
3. Who wrote the original French lyrics?
4. Who wrote the widely used English version?
5. In what year did O Canada officially become Canada's national anthem?

Answer Key: 1) June 24, 1880 2) Calixa Lavallée 3) Sir Adolphe-Basile Routhier 4) Robert Stanley Weir 5) 1980