

The Great War and Identity

The Royal Family and Kitchener, ON



Britain (and Canada)'s King George V, Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II and Russia's Tsar Nicholas II. All were Queen Victoria's grandchildren.

- When Britain declared war on the German empire in 1914 Canada, as an integral part of the Empire, was at war – no questions asked.
- Anti-German sentiment swept across the British Empire at this time with many different effects, including Canadian citizens with German or Austro-Hungarian heritage being sent to internment camps.¹
- The British Royal Family, known as the House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (a German name), is originally from Germany.

His Majesty King George V changed the family name to the ultra-British “Windsor” on July 17th, 1917. The Royal Family renounced all German titles, and abandoned their German relatives.



Badge of the House of Windsor

¹ According to the Canadian Encyclopedia: According to official records, 8,579 men were held at 24 internment camps and receiving stations across Canada. This included 5,954 men of Austro-Hungarian origin, the majority of whom were Ukrainian. There were also 2,009 Germans, 205 Turks, and 99 Bulgarians. Roy, Patricia E. "Internment in Canada." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. Article published August 27, 2013; Last Edited June 11, 2020.

- From 24 to 28 June 1916, the city of Berlin (Ontario) held a referendum that saw only 18% of registered voters participate. Of the 892 who voted, 346 selected to rename the community Kitchener, after Lord Horatio Kitchener (of recruiting posters fame), the British Secretary of State for War who had drown in June after his ship struck a mine.

Retaining the name Berlin was not one of the options on the ballot.

Choice	♦	Votes ♦	% ♦
Kitchener		346	38.79
Brock		335	37.56
Adanac		23	2.58
Benton		15	1.68
Corona		7	0.78
Keowana		3	0.34
Invalid/blank votes		163	18.27
Total		892	100
Registered voters/turnout		4,897	18.22



Berlin, June, 1916 Voting for a new name for the City of Berlin	Berlin, Juni, 1916 Abstimmung für den neuen Namen der Stadt Berlin	BROCK
		KITCHENER
		CORONA
		ADANAC
		KEOWANA
		BENTON

The original shortlist of names was Huronto, Bercana, Dunard, Hydro City, Renoma and Agnoleo.

LIST OF SUGGESTIONS OF NAMES		
AS RECOMMENDED		
By Special Committee of the City Council.		
ONTARIO CITY	AMITY	MAJESTY
EDWARDSTOWN	EMPORIA	ENGADA
VERBENA	UNITED CITY	HENLEY
BROCK	INDUSTRIA	BELDA
CABOT	PROGRESS	GEORGIA
ANZAC	SAXON	BALAMORE
SUPERIOR	ALLIANCE	CAMEO
HAVERLIN	NAIDANAC	URANUS
TECK	BALADAN	WINDIGO
HYDRO	FACTORIA	IMPERATOR
RENEBY	KANNATA	MACASSA
PONTIAC	EDISON	ALDAN
KING GEORGE	ARCOT	ARENA
HOMELAND	COSMOS	PANADA
CANADIA	VERDALE	ORION
KHAKI	VERO	RAWACA
ONTARIO	KEOWANA	BERCANA
TAMAKWA	CORONA	ARTEAGA
HURON	BENAVY	COLONIA
EMPIRE CITY	WOOLWICH	MATABANICK
PRINCE EDWARD	LESTER	CANARIO
KEESHENAH	KENNUCK	ASTRACA
EMPIRE	DAWN	MINEOLA
DUNARD	EMBLEM	MECHANO
BRIEF	MUTUAL	SCOTTEBY
IMPERIAL CITY	ALTYNE	HURONTO
NUNDAWA	AGNOLEO	HYDROPOLIS
HYDRO CITY	BURBANK	HONORA
OUNETA	ONTONIA	TWIN-CITY
ATKINS	NEWBORN	CANDOR
BRETANIA	UNISON	BENTON
KESHENAH	PREMIER	CONFIDENCE
VINITA	BODMIN	NACADA
CADAC	ONTACAN	INDUSTRY
READING	PATRIA	ALCOTA
PRINCE GEORGE	PATORIA	CHICOFIE
CANATA	PARAGON	BROCTON
RENOMA	WAKASHA	

- Even with the name change, Kitchener's German identity remains quite strong. Can you think of some examples? Click [here](#) for one!

- In 1897, a bust of Kaiser Wilhelm I was placed in Berlin/Kitchener's Victoria Park. However, it was thrown into the park's lake once war was declared in 1914. It was moved to the Concordia Club, but was stolen and paraded through the streets of the city before disappearing while in the possession of a drunken mob.



The bust of the Kaiser after it was pulled out of Victoria Park Lake on August 23, 1914.

Explain how the renaming of Berlin to Kitchener highlights a problem with nationalism that has gotten out of control.