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A new Liberal prime minister redefines Canada while tension between a natural-resource economy and environmentalism grows.

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Canada Today

In 2015 Canada got a major facelift with Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau. Suddenly the world saw photographs of a young leader surfing, hiking, marching in gay pride parades and championing women's rights. There was a collective sigh of relief as Canada became cool again. But with oil prices plummeting and the not-too-quiet whisper of recession in the air, the future isn't looking rose-tinted for everyone; tension between natural resources and a carbon-free economy runs high.

Best on Film

Room (Lenny Abrahamson; 2015) Canadian-Irish film about a mother and son finally released after years of captivity.

Sleeping Giant (Andrew Cividino; 2015) Teens surviving summer in an isolated Ontario cottage community.

Bon Cop, Bad Cop (Eric Canuel; 2006) An Anglophone and Francophone join forces; one of Canada's top-grossing films.

C.R.A.Z.Y. (Jean-Marc Vallée; 2005) A gay teen growing up in a large Catholic family in 1970s Montréal does his best to fit in.

Best in Print

The Illegal (Lawrence Hill; 2015) A marathoner in a fictional land running from the law; takes on race and immigration.

Indian Horse (Richard Wagamese; 2012) An Ojibwe man in rehab recalls his life as a hockey star, touching on Ojibwe rituals and spirituality.

Dear Life (Alice Munro; 2012) Most recent collection of short stories by the 2013 Nobel Prize laureate.

Alias Grace (Margaret Atwood; 1996) A fictional drama set around the notorious real-life 1843 murders of a gentleman and his housekeeper.

Economy

Compared to its international brethren, Canada weathered the global financial crisis pretty well. Yes, the economy dropped into a recession, and Ottawa posted its first fiscal deficit in 2009 after 12 years of surplus. But six years later, Canada clawed its way out and was only one of the seven major industrialized democracies to return to surplus in 2015. The Conservative government of the time focused on federal job cuts that impacted many departments, including Parks Canada and Aboriginal Affairs. In their first full year back in office, the Liberals planned for a \$30 billion deficit in 2016–17, claiming investment in job creation, support for the middle class and infrastructure would build a brighter, more sustainable future.

Oil Between Neighbors

Voltaire may have written off Canada as 'a few acres of snow' back in the mid-18th century, but those few acres have yielded vast amounts of oil, timber and other natural resources, and propelled Canada to an enviable standard of living.

Extracting and developing the resources have, however, come with an ecological price. Oil, in particular, is a conundrum. Northern Alberta's Athabasca Oil Sands are the world's second-biggest oil reserves, and they've done an excellent job boosting the economy. They also produce 5% of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, according to Environment Canada. The pro-industry camp says improvements are being made and, when compared to other oil producers such as Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, the oil sands measure up, especially when human-rights issues and decreased transportation distances are factored in (most of Canada's oil goes to the USA).

The controversial Keystone XL pipeline played into these themes. Aimed to funnel Alberta's crude oil to refineries on the Texas and Louisiana coast, much of it was