OVERVIEW

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This edition of *Canadian Diversity*, entitled "Multiculturalism @ 50: Promoting Inclusion and Eliminating Racism", considers the evolution and public perceptions of Canadian multiculturalism and explores the drive to reframe the policy in a society increasingly aware of the problems caused by embedded social inequities and racism. In his introduction, guest editor and eminent political philosopher Will Kymlicka, questions how best to characterize multiculturalism in its first 50 years – has the policy succeeded in challenging "inherited hierarchies", has it acted, rather, as a mechanism to control differences, or do both assertions have some validity? Building on the consensus of contributing authors that the policy requires revamping, Kymlicka leaves us to ponder the question of multiculturalism's potential to assist in the transformative change required to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The issue is divided into four sections: (1) Evolution & Progress, (2) Terminology & Perceptions, (3) Inequities & Exclusion and (4) Decolonization & Reconciliation.

Section (1), **Evolution & Progress**, contains two articles by scholars providing an overview of multiculturalism's evolution, highlighting the contradictions in a policy that has guided progress but has also failed to live up to its stated aspirations. Both scholars see the COVID-19 pandemic as a defining watershed moment that has the potential to inspire positive change.

Can multiculturalism be emboldened, asks Yasmeen Abu-Laban, to provide the impetus for the creation of a more solidaristic and equitable society? She finds hope in the increased awareness, novel perspectives and reflective thinking that have emerged in recent years. Ratna Ghosh examines the persistence of controversies around difference and diversity and their negative impact on equality of opportunities. She proposes the development of more complex, multidimensional and global notions of citizenship, in order to combat hate, discrimination and racism.

Section (2), **Terminology & Perceptions**, examines how multiculturalism is viewed, perceived and defined by theoreticians as well as in the popular imagination. Augie Fleras calls for a more nuanced analysis of multiculturalism, rooted in the idea of seeing it through the lens of a riddle, a mystery, and an enigma. While it may be deserving of its popular reputation as a generator of positive change, it has also been a promoter of division and resentment, reproducing "the very conditions that necessitated change in the first place".

Jack Jedwab looks at what motivates both critics and defenders of multiculturalism and particularly at what underlies multiculturalism's ongoing popularity among Canadians. The fact that multiculturalism's biggest supporters are those who most value diversity and the members of the very marginalized groups who most stand to benefit from reform, suggests that the policy does have a positive contribution in promoting equity and inclusion.

In his review of the ongoing debate about the real nature and

role of interculturalism, Bob White rejects portrayals of interculturalism as either a replacement for multiculturalism or as a mere variant. White suggests it be viewed rather as a unique way of thinking that resists hegemonic frameworks and can inspire a rights-based model of innovation and integration.

Section (3), **Inequities & Exclusion**, considers the way in which neoliberal and neoconservative values have impacted the ability of multiculturalism to give Canadians a fair shake. The rules for citizenship acquisition, argues Elke Winter, are not only symbolically important but determine the demographic future of a society whose growth depends on immigration. That these rules are guided by the "same market-driven logic" as our immigration policies undermines our stated aspirations of racial equality, inclusion and social justice.

John Carlaw discusses the repercussions of a politically pragmatic and creative, but ultimately *disciplinary* neoconservative multiculturalism that pays lip service to a pseudo-pluralist diversity but actually fuels xenophobia and masks the intensification of social inequalities. If we hope to move towards a more emancipatory form of politics, posits the author, we must have the courage to challenge and move beyond the colonial structures that underlie such models.

Section (4), **Decolonization & Reconciliation**, looks at the roots of multiculturalism in the structures and ideologies of the colonial system. Avigail Eisenberg exposes the ways in which Indigenous law and political authority are often central to struggles over land development and resource exploitation, and argues that restoring Indigenous political authority and governance practices requires a readiness to embark on foundational changes that go beyond simple cultural protections.

Rita Kaur Dhamoon finds examples of the embedded nature of racism and discrimination in the greater levels of incarceration, violence, disproportionate health issues, and economic marginalization experienced by BIPOC communities. Without the will to overhaul our laws and institutions, Dhamoon argues, multiculturalism stands little chance of contributing to the resolution of these structural inequities.