INTRODUCTION

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Since the 1970's the dramatic growth of the Canadian population of Chinese origin has been an important contributing factor to Canada's increasing interest in China. A recent survey conducted by the firm Leger Marketing for the Association for Canadian Studies reveals that some 38% of Canadians think that things that happen in China have an important impact on their lives. For its part, the population of China has a favourable view of Canada. The ethnic diversity of the far more populous China is something about which relatively few Canadians are knowledgeable. On the other hand, the less populous Canada portrays itself to the globe as a diverse nation in which international immigration has played a fundamental role. China's diversity is increasingly influenced by internal migration. The two countries diverge in their respective degrees of urbanization, with the cities being home to a considerably greater share of the Canadian population and in particular its minority ethnic groups. On the other hand, the ethnic minorities of China are disproportionately located in the rural areas of the country.

Despite these divergences, there are at least two areas in which the Canadian experience interests those Chinese researchers that examine issues of migration and identities. First, the issue of common or shared identity and specifically how ethnic minorities adjust to majority culture and norms. In effect, to borrow from terminology increasingly employed in Canada, how does the majority reasonably accommodate its ethnic and linguistic minorities? Yet another matter of critical importance to China in its ongoing efforts to address its internal diversity is the movement of its ethnic minorities from the outlying regions of the country to its larger cities. Researchers and policy-makers in China see some analogies between its internal migration and the movement of First Nations from the reserves to the country's urban centres and how Canada meets the economic and social challenge of such migration. As is often the case in comparative migration research, contrasting the experience of ethnic minorities in China with that of Canada's First Nations is imperfect. Yet such comparisons provide important opportunities for both countries to learn about their respective histories. Several of the essays included in this publication address issues of internal migration in Canada and China, cross-border migration and minority language and cultural preservation. The essays attempt to identify several of the challenges facing national minorities and migrants in China and Canada.

Canadian researchers are increasingly interested in understanding the impact of transnational ties on international migration. Many migrants from China to Canada have returned to their home country and maintained status in both countries. This has prompted debate about the rights and responsibilities of dual citizens. The Asia-Pacific Foundation's Kenny Zhang observes that: "...now is the time for the governments of both China and Canada to understand the changing direction of people mobility and changing identity/identities of Canadians in China." He concludes that: "...there is an urgent need for both countries to work together on policies that will deepen the connections across the Pacific and ultimately benefit Canada and China, as well as the individual migrants." Technologies allow migrants from China and elsewhere to maintain contact with their countries of origin in ways that are unparalleled. For example, migrants from China in Canada can readily consume media via the internet in Mandarin. What does this mean for the future of social integration and the persistence of multiple identities in the context of the effort to thicken Canadian identification?

Leading scholars, researchers and policy-makers in Canada and China have contributed essays to this special edition of Canadian Diversity which we hope represents a turning point for constructing a research agenda on issues of migration and identities and expanding opportunities for dialogue and exchange.