INTRODUCTION

IMMIGRANTS' STORIES OF SETBACKS AND RESILIENCE KEEP REWRITING — AND ENRICHING — OUR NATIONAL NARRATIVE

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Let's begin by acknowledging that "Canada 150" — a phrase that's all the rage this year — might well be imagined by this country's Indigenous people as a reference to the 150 *centuries* or so that they've been here. That's right: 15,000 BP isn't a bad estimate for the date when the peopling of North America began, a time when Ice Age hunters from Asia migrated — emigrated, one might say — to the future Canada across the Bering Land Bridge. We should acknowledge that all other immigrants who followed — from Viking seafarers 1,000 years ago to the hardy European farm folk of the early 20th century to the Syrian refugees just months ago — arrived to a place occupied for so long by the continent's initial "migrants" that the words most commonly used to describe them (Aboriginal and Indigenous) convey the notion that they've *always* been here, presumably since the origins of the Earth itself.

But migrants they were, too, scholars have shown. And migrants, in the broadest sense, we all are. People being people, we move to new lands, encounter unsettled spaces or prior inhabitants, clash and blend, struggle and adapt, settle and — sometimes — move on again. Baggage? Yes, of course. Some gets lost or tossed along the way; some is gifted to the new nation; some is still being unpacked as years give way to decades, then to generations.

Canada, more than most countries, is a nation of newcomers. Multiculturalism, diversity, difference: although some strain to say these words with menacing tones, in Canada they are terms that ring with pride. There have been dark episodes in our collective history, no doubt, and in recent decades there have been many expressions of sorrow and shame for past wrongs. Tensions persist and injustices remain. But immigrant communities, so rich a part of our present and so central to the country's

future, continue rediscovering and retelling their stories of setbacks and resilience — and rewriting our national narrative in the process.

This collection of essays by expert observers of the immigration experience — including voices from several of Canada's immigrant communities — explores a wide range of perspectives on the role immigration has played in the creation of the country, in enhancing our collective culture, in strengthening our economy and making Canada a model of multicultural tolerance for the world. This is a timely spark to conversation. Immigration is under fire in many parts of the globe, religious and ethno-cultural conflict continue to disrupt international stability, and Canada faces its own controversies and challenges in balancing the integration and accommodation of its immigrant communities. This is truly an opportune moment to reflect upon the profound influence of immigration in Canadian history, to gauge the present state of public opinion and knowledge with regards to that past, and to begin charting the next 150 years in the country's evolution.

Past surveys have revealed that most Canadians acknowledge the overall positive contribution made by immigrants to the country. Amongst other things, they recognize that immigrants have enriched our culture, have introduced innovation and fresh ideas, have strengthened our economy. They appreciate how immigrants have enhanced our reputation — as well as our opportunities and influence — around the globe.

One in five Canadians was born outside of this country, and another 20 per cent are children of immigrants. Go back a further generation or two and most Canadians — apart from the country's First Peoples — would find they derive from the settlement era's ancestral immigrant stock. But how knowledgeable are Canadians about the history of immigration to the country? A recent survey — the results of which are included in this issue of *CITC* — revealed that about half of the population believes they have a *good* knowledge of the history of immigration to Canada, but fewer than one in ten of all Canadians say they possess a *strong* knowledge of such history. And some of the results suggest respondents don't know quite as much as they thought they knew about the story of immigration in Canada.

Policy-makers and service-delivery agencies devote considerable energy and time to address the needs of newcomers. In doing so, they contribute to the evolving role that immigration plays in the ever-changing story of the country. But what narratives best capture the migration experience and identify the pivotal events and challenges for immigrants across our history? How is the story of immigration best situated within Canada's broader historical narrative?

This year's celebration of the 150th anniversary of Confederation extends to us an important opportunity to reflect upon the critical contributions of immigration to our history: the special role of newcomer communities, the unique experiences of individuals, the cumulative impact of centuries of immigration to Canada and the multicultural identity it nurtures.

This collection of essays — its cover graced by a colourful and evocative scene titled *Journey*, by Montréal artist Louise Sultan — was supported with

funds from the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax. And it has also been enriched with contributions from two of the museum's historians: Monica MacDonald and Steve Schwinghamer. MacDonald, the CMI's manager of research and acting chief curator, sets the scene for the articles that follow by surveying the epic sweep of Canadian immigration history — the highs and lows, from the tragic *Komagata Maru* refusal in the early 20th century to the 1970s' emergence of multicultural diversity as a pillar of Canadian identity. Today, she writes, Canada "stands out in the world for its liberal attitude to immigration and response to those seeking refuge."

Jack Jedwab, president of the Association for Canadian Studies, offers insights drawn from a survey probing Canadians' knowledge about and attitudes towards the country's immigration history. He finds, in short, that the perception Canadians have that their country embraces and celebrates the diverse histories of its peoples actually strengthens the national bond rather than weakening it — as some observers once feared — through the showcasing of sub-national narratives. The great majority of Canadians seem most comfortable wrapping themselves in a patchwork quilt of histories, perhaps recognizing that any community's sense of belonging to a greater whole requires that its own special story — origins, evolution, struggles and triumphs — is woven into the grand national saga.

Morton Weinfeld, Chair in Canadian Ethnic Studies at McGill University, offers an intriguing explanation for why Canada — despite its "very far from perfect" record of welcoming immigrants to the country — has outshone almost every other country in the world in terms of its relative openness to diversity and success at integrating newcomers. The reason? "In large part, luck," he writes.

Madeline Ziniak, chair of the Canadian Ethnic Media Association, details "the power of reflection" — the validating mirror that multilingual media have afforded Canada's immigrant communities, beginning with a German-language newspaper in 18th-century Nova Scotia. "Throughout the generations," she writes, "immigrant communities as well as second and third generations have derived considerable and necessary knowledge about this country from publications, broadcasting programs, and more recently Internet streaming and blogs." Such news sources not only helped inform and bind the newcomer communities they served, they contributed to a broader nation-building process that forged the diverse, tolerant and multicultural country Canada would become.

Montréal educator Linton Garner chronicles the deep-rooted history of Black Canadians in the story of the country's evolution, from the first wave of Black Loyalists during the 18th-century U.S. War of Independence and the mid-19th-century influx of escaped slaves before the U.S. Civil War to the post-Second World War arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa. "Regardless of our origins, or whether our ancestors came here in the 18th, 19th, 20th or 21st centuries, we all face the same issues today. The issue of racism still plagues our legacy, as it did our forefathers."

Ryerson University professor Myer Siemiatycki, explains how 2,000 years of experience as "outsiders" in many lands prepared Jewish immigrants for life in Canada, a country that was initially very "wary of whether these newcomers belonged" here.

But such attitudes were "not an isolated example of racism and discrimination," he writes: "Policies towards indigenous peoples as well as other racialized immigrant groups – Chinese, South Asian and Japanese – reflect a Canada that would take some time to outgrow its narrow white, Christian, Anglo/French founding nations, exclusionary self-definition."

Toronto-based immigration advocate Avvy Go and Dora Nipp of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario chart the diverse contributions of Chinese immigrants to Canada — even as they were repeatedly forced to overcome unfair barriers to entry and then endure other hardships as "perpetual foreigners" in a country they helped create.

University of Ottawa historian Tim Stanley further details the deep impact of Chinese immigration on Canadian society, linking the present-day "panic" over Vancouver house prices to hostile attitudes of generations past. "The Chinese roots of people and things Canadian," he writes, "are well worth remembering if we wish to maintain Canada as a democratic and multicultural country."

Meanwhile, Canadian Museum of Immigration historian Steve Schwinghamer delves into the vaults of the country's immigration archive to shed light on how prejudicial attitudes towards the Amish and other conservative religious groups in the 1950s and '60s led to more rigorous screening and — far from the first time in the 20th century — the *de facto* identification of an "undesirable" class of migrants as they sought a new life in Canada.

McGill University education professor Ratna Ghosh, a leading authority on South Asian immigration in Canada, notes that this population is now the No. 1 source of newcomers to Canada and the single largest visible minority community in the country. "The contribution and influence of the South Asian community has also grown considerably in recent years," she writes, highlighting Canada's current 19 South Asian MPs and four federal cabinet ministers.

UQÀM sociologist Victor Armony examines the experience of Latin American immigrants to Canada — particularly Quebec — and how they provide "unique insights into diasporic citizenship" in a multiethnic, bilingual society. Among other observations, Armony notes that Spanish is one Quebec's two most-spoken unofficial languages, and that the province's fast-growing Latino population may play a much more significant role in its future.

And, finally: with a deeply personal recounting of his own immigrant experience, Farid Rohani, chair emeritus of The Laurier Institution, offers glimpses of the journey from stranger in a new land to "taking ownership" of one's adopted nation. An immigrant from Iran, he recounts learning from his uncle to see Canada as *our* new country. "We must be productive, not be passive; we must plant roots, contribute, go forward."