INTRODUCTION

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Jack Jedwab is the President of the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute. Holding a PhD in Canadian History from Concordia University, he taught at Université du Québec à Montréal and McGill University. He has taught courses on the history of immigration in Quebec, on ethnic minorities in Quebec, on official language minorities in Canada and on sport in Canada. He has also authored essays for books, journals and newspapers across the country, in addition to being the author of various publications and government reports on issues of immigration, multiculturalism, human rights and official languages.

Canada is widely described as a nation of immigrants owing to a long history of migration and the demographic importance of its immigrant population. In 2021, more than 8.3 million people, or almost one-quarter (23.0%) of the population, were, or had ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident in Canada. It's a large and diverse group of peoples not only in terms of the hundreds of countries from which they hail but also on the basis of the immigration pathways through which they ended up entering Canada. In 2021, for the first time in the country's history over one million Canadians were refugees (1 039 275) according to the census with 218,430 admitted as permanent residents from 2016 to 2021. The primary places of birth of refugees have changed considerably over the decades, in tandem with conflicts and international events.

Who is a refugee? The first modern definition of international refugee status was issued by the League of Nations in 1921 and thirty years later, the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention defined "refugee" (in Article 1.A.2) as any person who "...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country;

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or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

This edition of *Canadian Issues* seeks to expand our understanding of the history of refugees in Canada and makes the connection between past refugee movements and more recent ones. To that end the varying contributions that follow aim at addressing important gaps in Canadians' knowledge about the history of refugees as polls suggest that too many of us mistakenly believe that the country has always welcomed refugees.

This edition of *CITC* begins with an essay I've penned that describes the unparalleled challenges that were encountered by displaced persons in the aftermath of the Second World War. Several democracies, like Canada, were very reticent to admit European Jews into their countries, and this was despite increased awareness of the horrific tragedy and suffering that Jews endured. In the aftermath of the Second World War, international conventions for the protection of refugees ultimately emerged in response to the untenable migration experience encountered by Jews seeking a new home.

In her essay, Stephanie Bangarth focuses on the fear and racism that guided refugee admission in Canada across much of its history. Amongst other examples, she looks at the case of Chilean refugees attempting to enter the country in the 1970s. Thereafter, attitudinal changes emerged in Canada largely as the result of public campaigns that featured social justice and human rights principles. Bangarth wonders whether history is repeating itself as she draws parallels between the Chilean experience and the disproportionate security concerns raised in Canada in regard to the recent admission of Afghan refugees.

Looking at the Canadian response to the 1959 World Refugee Year (WRY), Marlene Epp's essay suggests that the government's actions at that time paved the way for broader civil society engagement in years to come. While she says it is difficult to assess the direct impact of WRY in Canada's future response to refugees, it does provide a glimpse into a highly concentrated moment when Canadians were galvanized to think and act collectively in support of a global need.

Ira Robinson looks at the historic migration of Jewish refugees to Canada which he maintains is vital to understanding the multifaceted Canadian Jewish story. The arrival of multiple waves of Jewish refugees in Canada significantly influenced the way that the Jewish communities of Canada understand themselves and their world. Knowledge about that immigration, he further contends, contributes to a broader understanding of the evolution of Canadian immigration and refugee policy in the twentieth century.

Rafael Girard contends that the diversifying of immigration in Canada in the 1970s was a direct result of the way in which the government managed the program rather than of a deliberate choice. He observes that there was very little legislation and even fewer parliamentary debates behind these dramatic shifts in immigration but points to the importance of key changes in immigration regulations creating the legal framework and their vigorous implementation by departmental civil servants that made for a substantial contribution to

making Canada a more diverse country in the decades ahead.

Hamilton, Veronis and Walton-Roberts observe that between 1980 and 2015, Canada was resettling relatively low numbers of refugees each year. That changed in 2015 when Operation Syrian Refugees led to the resettlement of over 26,000 Syrian refugees in 118 days. Building on this experience, Canada has quickly resettled cohorts of Afghan refugees and Ukrainians using a variety of temporary policies and programs. They caution that while it may be too early to speak about the durability of these policies, since 2015, we have witnessed significant changes in Canada's refugee policies.

Following a comparative analysis of the recent Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian migration movements to Canada, Alboim and Cohl identify three interconnected elements for successful refugee movements—government leadership, media coverage, and public participation. They argue that government policies and programs work best if they secure public support. An engaged and committed public incites the government to exercise stronger leadership and action. Reporting on progress, challenges, and vehicles for participation encourages the media to bring issues to the forefront which will, in turn, drive public engagement on behalf of refugees.

Aziz Rafi documents the economic trajectory of recent Afghan refugees using three indicators of economic integration—employment status, occupational status, and employment income. Rafi uses the analysis to draw attention to important social barriers and calls for more attention to be directed at social justice. Despite the fact that an overwhelming proportion of Afghan refugees were highly educated (with almost two-thirds' post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree received in Canada) a larger portion of refugees arrived in Canada at a younger and core working age, they were disproportionately concentrated in low-skilled, low-paying jobs and often experienced underemployment, deskilling, and discrimination. Rafi concludes that the devaluation of human capital and the non-recognition of their foreign credentials is an obstacle to maximizing their human potential in their new home.

Wilkinson, Othman, Veisman, Wong and Ogoe conclude that more resources and information are needed for Afghan refugees when it comes to securing settlement and newcomer services. The authors remind us that while Canada has welcomed many refugees over the years, it has also denied many others. With that in mind, the authors suggest it is important for the general public to learn more about the history of Afghanistan and the turbulent history of Afghanistan leading many to come to Canada. The authors recommend that further research is needed into the interprovincial migration of newcomers and the reasons that lead them to leave their original destination. This, so as to contribute to understanding the resources Afghan refugees might need upon arrival and most importantly, aid with affordable housing and sustainable employment, and the reasons that lead them to leave their original destination.

Gina Csanyi-Robah reminds us of the continued challenges that some communities have in overcoming racism when it comes to refugee admission in her essay looking at the experience of

Roma refugees from Europe that sought asylum in Canada between 1990 and 2013, She documents her own personal efforts to sensitize Canadian officials to the discriminatory attitudes and practices and expresses the hope that the Roma community be able to live without the shadow of negative "Gypsy" stereotypes and systemic discrimination and the importance of addressing injustices and eliminating racism that continues to confront the Roma.

I conclude with an essay that looks at the evolving numbers of refugees admitted by Canada and the United States over the course of the twenty-first century. From 2000 to 2017 the US admitted considerably more refugees than Canada did (though certainly not on a per capita basis). But since 2018 refugees admitted by Canada exceeded those admitted south of the border (with the exception of 2020 with admission numbers affected by the pandemic). The Biden administration has not meaningfully reversed the steep declines in refugee numbers enacted under the Trump administration and this is despite President Biden's much higher annual targets. The inability to reconcile admission numbers with targets is widely attributed to the decline in support for the organizational capacity/infrastructure needed to receive refugees south of the border. That does not appear to be the situation where the refugee resettlement sector remains robust.

Our thanks from the Association for Canadian Studies and the Metropolis Institute for the many excellent contributions to this issue (save my own) which provide considerable opportunity for reflection about the past and the future when it comes to refugee admission and resettlement.