THE 21ST CENTURY MIGRATION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLES: IDENTITY FORMATION AND CULTURAL RETENTION

While the intra-national and international migration patterns of Aboriginal peoples mirror those of the non-Aboriginal populations, their impact and motivation differs substantially. It is characterized by movements from rural areas to urban centres as the migrants seek economic and social opportunities. However, it may also be cyclical in nature due to the strong ties between the migrants and their home communities. The objective of this panel is to explore the migration patterns of Aboriginal people in the Americas, in Oceania and elsewhere internationally to highlight the similarities and differences that are found and to examine the impact Aboriginal migration has on their cultural identity (including language retention) and on the community at large. A specific focus will be to compare the international outcomes of these migrations to the observed outcomes in Canada.

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LATINO MIGRATION AND ITS INFLUENCE IN CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM.

The Latin American migration has been continuous since mid-1950 until nowadays. At the University of Toronto, the OIES has established that there had been four waved of Latino migrants in Canada:

- 1960: Professionals and entrepreneurs well educated from Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela.
- 1970: Political persecuted refugees, well educated, from South America (specially Chile), after Dictatorship
- 1980-1990: Central America refugee – specially from El Salvador – after the civil war in their own countries.
- 2000 and after: Well educated professionals from Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, among other countries, who had passed the immigration process of the Canadian federal agencies, after a rigorous process of selective immigration policy, on the base of the capacities and abilities in order to contribute within the Canadian economic grow.

This panel will examine the different ways of inclusion or/exclusion in the Canadian society of these different national groups, and the perception of – individual or/and collective – success or failure in order to contribute, not only with the Canadian economic, politic and cultural growth, but also with the affirmation of each national cultural in the Canadian tapestry, in order to consolidate a more democratic and equal society.

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Narrative opens up spaces for negotiating the questions of identity which are entailed by migration. In a world which is continually in process, such spaces are multiple. They are located, as Homi K. Bhabha has emphasized through his concept of the “Third Space”, mainly within the contact zones between cultures. Narratives of migration inevitably deal with these spaces at the intersection of cultures. Accordingly, the chronotope and narrative parameters of these texts are expressive of processes of self-creation and identitary transformation. This is why the study of the literature of migration must pay attention to the genres and literary modes employed, and to the textual (and in particular the narrative) strategies which migrant literature has developed to deal with its themes.

The panel will therefore address questions of migration from a narratological perspective, investigating the multiplicity and transitory nature of migrant identities as manifested in (contemporary) Canadian immigrant narratives. Contributions should analyse, on the example of narrative renderings of migration and exile, the transformation and fictionalising of intercultural experience in narrative. They should focus on narrative renderings of the following:

- cosmopolitanism, cultural hybridity and mixed or fragmented ethnic identities;
- trans-culturation and the blurring of ethnic and cultural borderlines in the wake of migration;
- the experience of living and writing in exile, as it were, and the exploring of an inter-cultural sphere of literary production and of transitory identities;
- the experience of living with or in between several languages, societies and cultures and the resulting emphasis on the permeability of ethnic and cultural boundaries and on the multiple identities of protagonists;
- the relations between the representation of polyglot and trans-cultural identities and the (often complex) aesthetic structure of works;
- the significance of works as Canadian contributions to an international body of literature on migration.

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Migrants arrive with broad plans, defined intentions, and – usually – hopes as well as with a personality fully socialized but often in a society with limited options or unsatisfactory and unfair social and economic regimes. While many reflections remain within families, past migrants have published life-writings whether anecdotal memoirs, diaries, letter exchanges with family and friends, or thoughtful autobiographical reflections. In the present such plan and projects sometimes appear in the press, often in crisis situations – plans cut short by a massive family or personal bouleversement; adjustments – in societal and personal identity dimensions – may be discussed in community groups; scholarly approaches may include interviews and longitudinal studies. Statistic Canada’s data also provide overall comparative data on the degree of economic insertion of migrants as well as on “problems.” The other side of the “problems”-approach, less often mentioned, is that the vast majority acculturate to region-specific Canadian ways, i.e. a métissage of multiple inputs, in a non-problematic negotiated course. This panel would bring together research on migrant self-writings, self-reflections, self-statements in public with an emphasis on plans and projects all reflecting a socialized flexible mix of pre- and post-migration identity in the frame of a broadly accommodating Canadian frame of reference that is capable of providing room for a range of cultural identities. On an implied theoretical level – or directly if a paper is proposed that panel will question the concept of one national identity – the premise of much of Western political theory. The hypothesis is that national self-views/identities are not fragile, brittle, dogmatic, or fundamentalist that a different self-view contributed by individual migrants or the arrival of larger cultural groups be a threat or even destructive. Methodologically papers may be based on published life-writings, oral history and interviews, or press/media analyses.
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MIGRATION, PARTNERSHIP AND SOCIAL COHESION

This panel will explore the social issues of migration with reference to means and modes of social integration, multi level governance, Partnership working and working across sectoral boundaries (between the public, private and third sectors). We welcome papers that address these complex social, cultural and political issues from the point of view of the three sectors and of immigrants themselves.

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BRIDGES OVER FEAR? THE ROLE OF THE MIGRANT CHURCHES IN THE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

A substantial number of immigrants since 1965 – perhaps a majority – have been Christians. Their influx into the United States and Canada, writes the Rev. Dr. Eileen W. Lindner. Writing in the National Council of Churches’ 2010 Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches, which she edits, Lindner suggests that the increasing religious pluralism resulting from new immigration patterns may alter the views of the faith community on a variety of public issues.

“With the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity of the immigrant communities more diverse and nuanced views of matters ranging from abortion to aid and trade policy as well as immigration policy may find voice as these churches enter into civic engagement in their new culture,” Linder writes. “As they do, a new fault line in Christian theology and practice may open within the American religious landscape.” This panel will look at the role of the migrant churches in Canada in the Canadian community or communities as acting as a bridge to understanding. Migrants have always challenged the Christian Church. The first is the challenge to compassion and sensitivity to combat people facing hunger, homelessness and marginalization. The second challenge is that of the churches being a prophetic witness in the face of often unjust treatment of immigrants. The Church in this context is as a mouthpiece for the poor and downtrodden and not fearful of the other who holds to different views. The third challenge is particularly on the part of the evangelical churches, to see migration as an avenue for evangelism. The Christian Church has always flourished in the context of migration but this has created problems as the newcomers often challenge the old paradigms of church.

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THE MIGRATORY MIND

For Pierre Ouellet, migratory writers include not only people from different migration streams whose writing reveals the cultural horizon of their country of origin and their country of adoption, but also people born in Canada who have never travelled. The migratory mind, or intellectual nomadism, can be defined as intense intellectual mobility and the sharing of cultural elements from distinct worlds. For intellectual migrants, the trend
of authors choosing their intellectual ancestralities is not limited to writers from their own country, but is characterized by border crossings and transcultural transitions. The panel will look for examples of Canadian and Quebec authors whose migratory minds are the starting point for their writing in English or French.

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NEW LOCAL SPACES OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN CANADA

This panel would look at the wide variety of emerging local spaces that bring together Canadians of different cultural backgrounds. These spaces can be around cultural practices (music, art, theatre, fashion) and cultural mediation, or around public good and social action and how a cultural difference permeates. We encourage presentations that look at these new local spaces in material, but also in discursive, terms. We will prioritize proposals that address any combination of the following:

- Analysis of explicit or implicit negotiations of perspectives emanating from cultural differences
- Impact (positive or negative) of cultural differences on the objectives pursued by these spaces;
- The interplay between cultural differences and voice.

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LANGUAGE CHALLENGES IN THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS

(coming soon)

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CULTURAL CHALLENGES IN THE MIGRATION PROCESS ON CANADA’S EAST COAST

Canada’s east coast has long been a cultural crossroads, from early European contact with Aboriginal peoples to the settlement of Acadian, Black Loyalist, Maroon, and Middle Eastern populations. While the culture of the region is often depicted as predominantly, even monolithically, Celtic, the multiethnic and multicultural history of the region is receiving more attention in contemporary studies. In this emerging cultural history, migration – both past and present, both in and out of the region – has left other cultural trails. This panel invites papers exploring some of these lesser known trails and dispelling myths of cultural insularity on Canada’s east coast.

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First we will distinguish multiculturalism (Taylor, Kymlicka) from cosmopolitism (Anthony Appiah) and internationalism (Seyla Benhabib).

Then we will examine the basics of Kymlicka’s Canadian multiculturalism: 1/ protection of the minority within the majority, and the individual within the minority, 2/ relationship between equality and difference with regard to group-specific rights, 3/ difference between immigrant communities and founding communities, 4/ assertion that life is not a zero-sum game and that people can live within several systems at once without necessarily suffering a major loss, 5/ difference between the dominant Anglophone society and the Francophone society, which must exert greater control over the introduction of newcomers into interculturalism, as supported by Bill 101.

We will then analyse certain criticisms of multiculturalism, such as the ones raised by Daniel Bonilla Maldonado, in Columbia, where the new 1991 constitution is inspired in part by the theories of Kymlicka and Taylor. Bonilla Maldonado points out that liberal multiculturalism cannot accommodate non-liberal societies, including Aboriginal societies.

We will then look at the relationship between multiculturalism and international organizations, as raised by Kymlicka: “Moreover, the particular conception of multiculturalism being promoted by international organizations is, I believe, a morally progressive extension of existing human rights norms” (Will Kymlicka, Multicultural Odysseys: Navigating the New International Politics of Diversity, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 6). In contrast to the prevailing views after the First World War, when ethnic communities were perceived as problems that could lead to war, today’s European vision of international relations asserts that “the accommodation of ethnic diversity is not only consistent with, but in fact a precondition for, the maintenance of a legitimate international order” (ibid., p. 45). This means that the ideas of nation and even nationalism are not inherently opposed to multiculturalism, suggesting once again the perspective that life is not a zero-sum game.

We will focus on a few potential problems raised by Kymlicka and those mentioned for other contexts by Bonilla Maldonado, for example: 1/ the question of belonging: do we belong or are we independent and in what ways, 2/ the position of women in multicultural situations (Okin), 3/ the desire expressed by many newcomers to blend in, integrate and not be visible, 4/ are work, professional integration and diploma recognition part of culture, and 5/ how does multiculturalism deal with the issue of work.

With the help of Carlos Sandoval Garcia (El mito roto: inmigración y emigración en Costa Rica, (The broken myth: immigration and emigration in Costa Rica) San José, Editorial UCR, 2007, p. XV), we will conclude that multiculturalism can help redefine research parameters by circumventing the methodological nationalism that has guided and still often guides many studies in the social sciences and humanities.

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FOR A LOVE OF THE HUNT-MOBILITY, FAMILY NETWORKS AND SOCIAL COHESION IN A PLAINS METIS TRANSNATIONAL BRIGADE, 1840-1890

(coming soon)

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