

Canada's Century

by Chad Gaffield

ALAN THORNTON



ROSS ANANIA



One hundred years ago, a remarkable group of leading Canadian politicians attending the first annual banquet of the Canadian Club of Ottawa exchanged lofty predictions about the future of Canada. What remains a mystery is why their many expectations *were met* during the following century. Canada may not have fulfilled Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's

In 1900, Canada included a small population underpinning a dependent economy strung out over an immense and poorly integrated territory. Today, Canada occupies, for better and for worse, one of the top positions in almost every international ranking. How did this happen? What are the social, economic, demographic, cultural and political changes that explain what

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bold predictions about the 20th century, but without a doubt, Canadian society underwent profound changes that are largely unexplained today.

has been called Canada's Great Transformation? To what extent have these changes varied across the country and among different individuals and groups?

The Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI) is one of the most comprehensive humanities and social science research projects ever undertaken in Canada. Over the next four years, it will build unprecedented historical databases related to Canada's changing character during the first half of the 20th century.

Headquartered at the University of Ottawa's Institute of Canadian Studies, CCRI has established centres across Canada that will contribute to the construction of databases using the census enumerations that took place at 10-year intervals between 1911 and 1951. By adding these databases to ones already available for previous and subsequent enumerations, the CCRI hopes to explain Canada's transition from a predominantly rural, agricultural society on the international

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periphery to a highly urbanized, industrial country on the world stage. This information will be made available to researchers and the public for the first time, and become valuable to public policy debates that affect the future of Canadians.

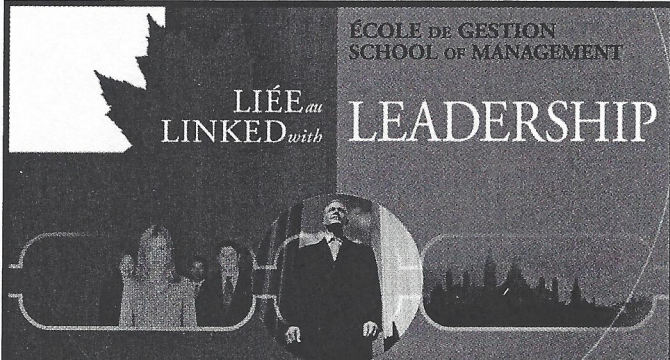
To understand Canada, there must be an understanding about its diverse provinces and territories. Canada is certainly more than the sum of its parts. But the CCRI believes that pan-Canadian interpretations must be based on sophisticated knowledge of changes in vastly different communities. Therefore, the first phase of CCRI work has focussed on establishing CCRI centres at leading educational institutions known for their research about their home provinces and regions.

The Atlantic Canada CCRI centre recently opened at Memorial University in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency. The Centre interuniversitaire d'études québécoises has two centres located at the Université Laval and the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. CCRI centres at York University and the University of Toronto are taking the lead for Ontario, while the University of Victoria is hosting the centre responsible for Western and Northern Canada.

Working in collaboration with Statistics Canada and Library and Archives Canada, the CCRI team includes more than 100 members, who communicate through a Web-based and Virtual Private Network communications system. Despite the intensive use of information technologies, face-to-face contact is vital. Team members, however, who met at the University of Ottawa in March 2004, weren't prepared to speculate at that time about the factors that might explain the making of modern Canada. ■

Chad Gaffield is the lead researcher in the CCRI. He is a professor in the University of Ottawa's Department of History and was the founding director of the University's Institute of Canadian Studies.

What are your ideas about 20th-century Canada? Send them to ccri@uOttawa.ca. To learn more about the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure, visit www.canada.uOttawa.ca/ccri.htm.




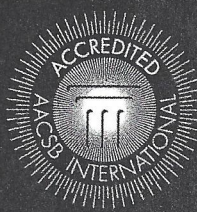
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