

Program of Study

When the 2001 Census data on immigration and ethnicity was released in January 2003, it created headlines across Canada. The media based in Central Canada, a region that has historically received high numbers of immigrants, was mainly concerned with the changing ethnic profile of incoming immigrants. Its counterpart in the Atlantic Provinces, however, was preoccupied with the lack of immigrants coming to and staying in the region. In particular, the New Brunswick media argued that the province is entitled to a certain proportion of immigrant arrivals and that these immigrants would benefit the provincial economy. Since Canada historically has been and continues to be an immigrant-receiving nation, considerable historical and social scientific research has been done on immigration — with the exception of the Atlantic Region. Even population studies of the Atlantic Region tend to ignore the topic, focussing instead on out-migration.

The proposed thesis will address this neglect in the Canadian historiography by examining immigration to New Brunswick between 1945 and 1971. These dates encompass the gradual liberalization of immigration policy since the Second World War, ending with the first census date after the major immigration policy changes in 1967. This is a study of public policy and the extent to which it influenced immigration to the Atlantic Region on both a broad demographic level and at the level of the individual immigrant. The first chapter will examine the historiography of immigration and situate the thesis within the larger framework of the scholarly literature relating to Atlantic regional development. The second chapter will explore the demographic profile of the 95, 374 immigrants who came to the Atlantic Region between 1945 and 1971 and compare this profile to the national immigrant population according to age, gender, ethnicity or nationality, occupation and geographic settlement. This information will be used to analyze how New Brunswick fits within the regional and national trends. The third chapter will examine what role, if any, immigration policy played in the regional development programs that were put in place in the post-war period, using the New Brunswick experience to explore how both provincial and federal governments addressed the issue of population policy during this period. The final chapter will draw upon case studies of specific immigrants who came to the province in order to assess how public policy affected individuals. The thesis will rely on a variety of sources, including the census, the annual statistics of the immigration department, provincial and federal government documents and oral interviews. With regard to oral history, the tri-council policy on research ethics has been consulted.

Focussing on demographics, government policy, and personal experience, the thesis will be a comprehensive analysis of immigration and public policy during the immediate post-war period. Although the social history of the immigrant groups that have come to the province has already been done to a limited extent, this will be the first historical inquiry into twentieth-century immigration policy in the Atlantic Region. Shedding light on this topic will inform current policy debates that have recently intensified as politicians in the region increasingly take up immigration as a factor in regional economic development.