The Anatomy of an Urban Legend: Toronto's Multicultural Reputation

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REVIEW

Issue
Toronto's Multicultural Reputation

Background
According to noted American folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand, urban legends are "realistic stories concerning recent events (or alleged events)." Their storytellers "assume that the true facts of each case lie just one or two informants back down the line with a reliable witness (the so-called FOAF, or Friend Of A Friend, factor), or in a news media report.”

More folklore than history, urban legends are believed to be true, and are subject to considerable repetition. Almost as difficult as dandelions to uproot, some urban legends have displayed a persistent character – lying dormant for a time, only to sprout up again at a later date.

This paper explores the evolution, spread, and demise of Toronto's urban legend, namely that the United Nations had declared Toronto to be the world's most multicultural city.

Beginning in the late 1980s, this thought began to be expressed in a variety of media, for example, news reports, articles about Toronto, speeches by prominent citizens, municipal government advertising, and federal government documents. In classic urban legend fashion, writers began to cite earlier reports as their source. Thus the legend became almost self-perpetuating, though it did tend to appear in the media in definite cycles. Nobody ever questioned the authenticity of the assertion.

Issues in Measuring Demographic Diversity
How a decision on the world’s most multicultural city could be reached is not clear. Several methodological questions are raised such as:

- Would it be based on a simple count of different ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups living in a given place?
- Are data for the demographics of different cities compatible and reliable for such conclusions to be drawn?
- Assuming data problems could be resolved, could a place be the world’s most multicultural city if it could count one

SUMMARY

Urban legends are stories that are believed to be true, but have no basis in fact. In the late 1980s, an urban legend emerged about Toronto: the United Nations had declared Toronto to be the world’s most multicultural city.

This report has two purposes. First, it explores the origin and spread of this urban legend. No evidence is found of a declaration by the United Nations or any of its agencies.

Second, this report examines Toronto’s claim to such a title by investigating how Toronto expresses diversity, incidents of racial tension, and studies of immigrant and visible minority experience in Toronto.

This report concludes that while Toronto has the ingredients to become a great multicultural city that will never be possible as long as the city’s major institutions fail to reflect the diversity of its residents.

To link to the original report CERIS Working Paper Series #18 [http://ceris.metropolis.net/frameset_0.html]

POLICY MATTERS is a series of reports focusing on key policy issues affecting immigration and settlement in Canada. The goal is to provide accessible, concise information on current immigration research and its implications for policy development. POLICY MATTERS is produced by the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto (CERIS).
member from each ethnic / racial / linguistic group?

- Would the size of the different groups influence such a decision?

When American geographers James P. Allen and Eugene Turner attempted to find the most ethnically diverse place in the US, they suggested "diversity in a population refers to its heterogeneity, and a measure of relative diversity should describe both the richness or variety of subpopulations and the equality or evenness of their sizes."[III]

But this raises further questions:

- Who would judge the boundaries between the groups to establish the categories to measure the city's diversity?

- What about the recency of arrival?

- To what extent would assimilation mute a city's multicultural structure?

- How should ethnic media, and other institutions and service providers, be blended into the equation?

The task of resolving these methodological concerns would be formidable. As John Barber, the Globe and Mail's urban affairs columnist, observed in 1996: "There is no doubt that Toronto is one of the most multicultural cities, and it is reasonable to wonder whether it might be the ultimate in that respect. But rankings are hard to establish. You look hard for facts and quickly wonder what 'culture' is."[IV]

Brunvand suggests that urban legends "are told and believed by some of the most sophisticated 'folk' in modern society - young people, urbanites, and the well educated." Author

The purpose of this study is:

- To explore the origins and spread of Toronto's urban legend, and

- To examine Toronto's claim to such a title by looking at how Toronto expresses diversity, incidents of racial tension, and the experiences of immigrants and visible minorities in Toronto.

Analysis Part 1
Stalking the Legend

Without question, Toronto is Canada's most cosmopolitan city. Certainly it is one of the most diverse urban centres in the world. Toronto's ethnic / racial / linguistic / religious diversity is not the issue. What is in question is whether or not the United Nations (UN), or any of its agencies, ever officially commented that it was the world's most multicultural city.

Logically, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) would have made a declaration about Toronto's multicultural character. In fact, it never did. The first published reference to a UN statement appeared early in 1989. It quoted then-Toronto Mayor Arthur Eggleton: "[Toronto is] noted by the United Nations as being the most racially and culturally diverse city in the world."[V] Within two months, the American press was reporting "the United Nations has proclaimed Toronto the world's most multicultural city."[VI]

By the end of the year, the sentiment was being included in the Metropolitan Toronto Convention and Visitors Association's promotion materials.[VII] By mid-1993 the idea was part of the message of American travel writers.

In classic urban legend fashion, writers began to cite earlier reports as their source; so the legend became almost self-perpetuating, though it did tend to appear in the media in definite cycles. Nobody ever seemed to question the veracity of the assertion. Author

The search for evidence to support this notion began late in 1990. To date no concrete proof of a UN declaration attesting to Toronto's demographic diversity has been found.

The search for evidence included:

- Internet and on-line entry points to Toronto, American, and international newspapers and periodicals;

- CD-ROM data bases, for example, Canadian Business and Current Affairs;

- Contact with the Mayor's office and the Committee on Community and Race Relations;
A letter to the Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations; and

Contact with Metro Toronto’s Multicultural Relations Office, which led to a researcher at Trinity College, University of Toronto.

The last sequence of events revealed that the Multicultural Relations Office had released a document that made reference to Toronto as Canada’s most multicultural city. It had used some UNESCO data from the researcher to make that claim. This, however, was a far cry from a formal UN declaration.

Addressing a group of school children … to promote literacy, he [the then-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar] praised Canada’s “more and more multi-racial and multicultural society,” its “beautiful diversity,” and its “literacy in different languages” without any reported reference to a UN declaration about Toronto’s demographic situation. Author

Perhaps the creation of the UN declaration legend was simply the work of an overly-zealous municipal civil servant. If so, this tradition of myth-making by Toronto boosters continues. Among other things, Torontonians have proclaimed their city to be “The Big Apple of the North,” “Hollywood North,” “The City That Works,” and the favourite Toronto mantra of the late-1980s, “A World-Class City.”

With the amalgamated City of Toronto other slogans appeared – “Toronto – Home to the World; Diversity – Our Strength; and Toronto: The World Within a City. Thus, many myths about Toronto’s image, which have been rooted in Toronto’s demographics, were created over the years by both local residents and outsiders."

After the initial flurry of activity in 1989, 1990, and 1991, only two references to a UN declaration on Toronto appeared in local media in 1992 and 1993. But in late 1994 a comment in a Fortune magazine article suggesting that “the United Nations has called metro Toronto the most multicultural city in the world” was picked up by the Canadian media.

An advertisement appeared over the signature of Toronto Mayor Barbara Hall in the Toronto-based urban affairs magazine, The Next City. Entitled, “Consider Toronto”, the ad was designed to entice business to Toronto. It gushed about how well Toronto had fared in international surveys, including the one done by Fortune and concluded: And the United Nations has declared Toronto the world’s most multicultural city."

Old legends, especially urban ones, apparently die hard. After being informed that research failed to provide evidence for the mysterious UN declaration, the mayor instructed City of Toronto staff to remove the phrase from all future communications."

The probable path of the legend now, at least can be sketched out – from somewhere in the race relations area of the municipal bureaucracy - to the speeches of the municipal politicians and local media reports of those speeches - to press releases from the Metropolitan Toronto Convention and Visitors Association - to stories by American travel and business writers and - back to the Toronto media.

In 1995, John Barber, the respected urban affairs columnist for the Globe and Mail, described the “United Nations has declared … idea as a “myth … which harmlessly stroked the civic ego.” Author

The belief in the legend, and the desire for it to be true, are symptomatic of a long-standing characteristic of Toronto and its citizens – namely, an abiding insecurity. This insecurity about Toronto’s place within the urban world fuels a desire to be loved and recognized by others, especially Americans.

As former Toronto Mayor John Sewell observed in 1986: Toronto’s leaders have a psychological problem of major proportions. They are desperately insecure about the city’s status and image. They long for Toronto to be deemed part of the big leagues.

Belief in the existence of a UN declaration was a symptom of Toronto’s long-standing psychological illness. Surely Toronto, one of the world’s great multicultural cities, has evolved to the point where it does not need the approval of an external agency, such as the UN, to remind its citizens of the splendid cultural opportunities the city’s
demographic diversity offers to its residents.

Toronto is, without question, a world-class cosmopolitan city.

Analysis Part 2

Diversity

Torontonians, and visitors to the city, know that Ontario’s capital probably has few equals in terms of its complex demographics. Toronto’s celebration of its multiculturalism, through many festivals and other cultural events, is both highly symbolic and unusual among world cities. For example, the Toronto Star’s editors in a 1994 series on Urban Issues declared multiculturalism as a “unifying force” in Toronto.\(^\text{ix}\)

... author Antoni Shelton observed: “one feature that makes Toronto unique and other cities green with envy is that our multiracial communities live cheek-to-cheek in relative harmony.”

Author

Toronto’s multiculturalism is more than numbers that make up the census data. The city now has a global look and feel to it. This is reflected in many things such as:

- Street signs and conversations in foreign languages, and

- Information brochures in various languages published by the City of Toronto, the Toronto Transit Commission, and other groups.

Toronto has long recognized and promoted its diversity through the city’s:

- Implementation of employment equity and multiculturalism policies in the 1970s;

- Establishment of race relations committees, and recognition of Black History Month (February);

- Surveys of workforce distribution (women, visible minorities, aboriginals, and disabled.)

Both the City and Metro made progress in the equity-hiring area prior to their absorption into the new City of Toronto in 1998.\(^\text{xv}\)

Multiculturalism has proven to be good for the local economy, attracting local residents and tourists to a variety of special celebrations. Some of these events include:

- The CHIN International Picnic at Exhibition Place;

- Caribana, which one study concluded pumped about $200M into Toronto’s economy with the annual parade;

- The Chinese community’s Toronto Lion Dance Festival; and

- The Global Roots Festival.

By 2000, Toronto’s calendar boasted over four dozen ethnocultural festivals, parades, and related events.

Toronto’s diversity is also reflected to some extent in its electronic and print media outlets. These include:

- Radio station CHIN, broadcasting in over 30 languages since 1966;

- Television station CFMT, broadcasting programs in some 15 languages since 1979;

- Other electronic media like CIRV-FM and CHKT (AM 1430) carry significant quantities of ethnic language and multicultural programming;

- Urban / Dance Station Flow 93.5FM, on air in 2001; and

- Aboriginal Voices on 106.5 FM, also on air in 2001.

At the end of 1998, Toronto’s ethnic press numbered 157 publications, serving about 40 different groups. In addition to the Greater Toronto Area’s (GTA) rich ethnic press, there was evidence of increased interest in multicultural news and issues in the mainstream press.

Both the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail dedicated specific reporters to cover diversity issues and devoted a series of articles to immigration and diversity issues. While such changes are welcome in the mainstream media, newsrooms do not yet reflect the city’s diversity.

Writing in 1998, a former Toronto Star employee and now journalism
professor, John Miller observed: 
"... There is no black sports columnist, no Asian business columnist, and no one on staff writing about lifestyles from a diverse perspective. ... Why is race covered so negatively and stereotypically, and racism – the police, silent Canadian variety – covered hardly at all? Why do the images seen in the pages of our newspapers fail to match the images of the people we see in the streets around us?"

**Tensions**

Any place that aspires to the title of the world's most multicultural city must be characterized by harmony and a willingness to share power. Toronto has room for improvement on both counts. There have been moments of racial tensions.

For most Torontonians, the 1992 Yonge Street riot was nothing like a holocaust, but it was a troubling incident nonetheless. Author

In May 1992, hundreds of young people, black and white, rioted in the downtown area after an anti-racism rally. A report on the riots to Ontario's Premier Bob Rae concluded that Toronto had a problem of “anti-Black racism” and “racism is pervasive”, though not everyone agreed with the theoretical framework, methodologies, or findings.

Toronto, which long prided itself on its rich and harmonious racial mix, suddenly appeared vulnerable to some of the worst problems of large US cities. This event was not a surprise.

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Months before the riots, a report for the Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority suggested that Blacks made up 50% to 70% of the population in the 10 high-rise developments studied and concluded that they were living in "near-ghettos."

While the Yonge Street Riot was the most dramatic example of racial/ethnic tension in Toronto during the 1990s, it was not the only incident. Several other situations stood out.

The “Into the Heart of Africa” exhibit at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1989 was picketed for many weeks in 1990 by a group called the Coalition for the Truth about Africa.

The 1993 revival of the musical Show Boat, as the inaugural production at North York's Performing Arts Centre, outraged the city’s Black community.

The Black community was also incensed by two encounters of prominent Black Torontonians with people in positions of authority. Police conducted a car search of the chief assignment editor at CITY-TV, which produced no evidence. The trial of Black activist Dudley Laws on charges of smuggling immigrants into Canada and the US was later ruled invalid for a number of reasons.

Reports surfaced in 1994 and 1995 about the mistreatment of Somalis in a condominium complex of six high-rise buildings.

Racial tensions arose between young Somalis and Black and East Indian students at Kipling Collegiate Institute. Happily, problems seem to have been resolved, though violence did erupt between Sri Lankan and Punjabi students at another school.

In 1995, comments by the Deputy-Mayor of Markham about Markham becoming too Chinese and driving long-time residents to move out outraged members of the Chinese community. The Deputy-Mayor also objected to the so-called Asian theme malls that had emerged in the community.

If Markham is getting too many ugly malls, the issue is one of aesthetics and zoning, not ethnicity. Making it into one sows the seeds of dissension ... (Editorial in the Toronto Star). Author

This episode was followed by local and national media. It was finally defused in late September when the Markham Council appointed an advisory committee to examine issues of concern to the Chinese community.

For the most part, Toronto’s diverse groups feel happy about the diversity of population. However, a highly-criticized study for the federal government found the acceptance of non-white immigration to be the lowest for Toronto of all the “regions” examined. This resulted in some declaring Toronto to be Canada’s racist capital.

In contrast, an earlier and equally criticized study by York University researchers found that whites were not racist. Clearly, the truth lies...
somewhere between these two extremes. Other surveys have produced more balanced findings.

**Immigrant and Visible Minority Experiences**

In 1985, the *Toronto Star* conducted a survey involving interviews with 200 randomly-selected members from Italian, Chinese, Portuguese, East Indian/Pakistani, Jewish, Black, and Anglo-Saxon groups. The findings concluded that respondents were reasonably satisfied with most aspects of their life in Toronto.

All groups were happy with their access to health care and with the quality of TTC service and recreational facilities, and every group was dissatisfied with the availability of rental accommodation in Metro Toronto. Author

However, prejudice and discrimination were seen as the most pressing problems for East Indian/Pakistani, West Indian/Black, and Jewish respondents. East Indian/Pakistani, Chinese, and West Indian/Black respondents also felt that they had less opportunity as an ethnic group than other Canadians.

A similar survey in 1999 by the *Star* examined the attitudes of 150 members from Italian, Portuguese, Caribbean and African Blacks, Chinese, Hispanic, South Asian, Filipino, and West Asian/Arab groups, along with a random sample of 402 Torontonians from all backgrounds. One-fifth of the members of each group felt there was prejudice against their community and one-tenth of each group had faced discrimination in finding a job.

On the other hand, the majority of members in each group was satisfied with life in Toronto and felt that their children had good opportunities there. This survey also found that:

- Respondents personally experienced discrimination at the following rates: Chinese, 37%; Filipino, 40%; Hispanic, 37%; Black, 60% - this is in comparison with a 29% rate for the random sample of Torontonians;

- Only about 40% of Black respondents felt their community had been treated fairly by police and the courts. This was followed by Hispanics, where 59% claimed to have been fairly treated by police and 65% so treated by the courts;

- About half of South Asian, Filipino, and Hispanic respondents, 64% of Chinese, and 68% of Black participants felt there was prejudice against their community in Toronto;

- Just 49% of South Asians and 32% of Blacks felt their communities had been treated fairly by the media;

- Racism was a concern for 71% of Black respondents, an “alarming” figure according to Goldfarb and Associates who did the polling; and

- On the question of power sharing – has your group been given equal access in being named to boards and commissions – 77% of Italians, 63% of Portuguese, and 50% of Chinese participants responded in the affirmative. The figures were lower for others – 43% for South Asians and 37% for Hispanics.

World-class Toronto, apparently, failed “to make everybody smile,” especially many well-educated immigrants who experienced difficulty entering the professions in their new home city. Author

A 1998 survey of 827 randomly-selected Torontonians conducted by York University’s Institute for Social Research found “no statistically significant differences in the unhappiness of Whites and non-Whites, the young and the old, and males and females.

However, the study indicated that the level of unhappiness increased with English proficiency. This highlighted the problems faced by well-educated immigrants in entering the professions in their new home city. Overall, the results seemed to point out that the “City That Works” could be even better.

Diversity is a cherished characteristic of contemporary Toronto for most citizens. Studies conducted for *Toronto Life* and the United Way of Greater Toronto both found that the city’s diversity was recognized as one of its greatest assets.

The rich mixture of people from such a wide variety of
backgrounds has transformed Toronto forever.

Conclusion
Ultimately, the city’s reputation on the world stage will be determined by facts, achievements, and the imaginative promotion of Toronto’s multicultural character and overall quality of life — not by internally-fabricated urban legends.

Only when Torontonians learn to appreciate the wonderful complexity of their city, without approval from others, will Toronto be able to claim a place near the pinnacle of the urban hierarchy. The mark of that achievement will be measured by the degree to which Toronto’s diverse residents participate in the life of their city, which is recognition of their acceptance as Torontonians.

Should this outcome occur, then the UN may well bestow some sort of honour on Toronto. But that kind of award-deserving level of maturity and sophistication has not yet been realized.

For example, the Caribana festival has not, in the view of many members of Toronto’s Black community, received the respect it deserves. In their view, government and corporate support, when given at all, seems to have been provided reluctantly with too few of the economic benefits generated by the festival returning to the community.

To be sure, Caribana needs to be better organized. But it also needs more support from the business sector and broader community, neither of which could imagine a Toronto summer without Caribana.iii

But before Torontonians step forward to receive any multiculturalism awards, they should remember Toronto has been home to Ernst Zundel, one of the world’s most infamous Holocaust deniers. And hate crimes have been on the increase in Toronto.

Swastikas are still applied to Toronto synagogues periodically, and both Jewish and Roman Catholic cemeteries have been vandalized. Author

Youth bear an often heavy burden in the new Toronto. Many young, immigrant Torontonians still search for “racial peace” in their new environment, making “new worlds out of their parents’ old ways.” Many agonize over pressures created by the need to balance their “heritage with Canadian culture.”

Any smugness about the quality of life in Toronto received a significant jolt in the spring of 2000 with the release of four reports on the immigrant and visible minority experience in Toronto.

One study, by researchers at York University and the University of Toronto (U of T) concluded that Blacks were much more likely to be stopped, questioned, and searched by police than whites or Asians.xxiv

The second report, by researchers at U of T, examined changes in unemployment rates, employment income, and the per cent of families living below the poverty line for visible minorities and non-visible minorities. For the Toronto area, on every measure, visible minorities fared more poorly.xxv

The third report, by researchers at York University, examined the racial bias within Canada’s English print media. It pointed to the continuing presence of racist statements, the tendency to stereotype people of colour, and their under representation in the media.xxv

A study released in spring 2000 examined the conditions of the 89 ethno-racial groups with at least 2,500 members in Toronto. Prepared by the Institute for Social Research at York University, the study uncovered “enormous ethno-racial variation” on socio-economic dimensions such as income, employment rates, education, and rates of poverty. The differences were almost all tied to race.

... many of the city’s institutions still do not reflect Toronto’s multicultural mosaic in their workforces, creating what one young journalist called our own version of “a tale of two cities.” Author

There are other incidents of discrimination faced by immigrants and visible minorities, for example:

- Toronto Life has published articles on the mistreatment of Filipino nannies in Toronto homes;
Statistics released in 1998 by the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration seemed to suggest that Jamaicans were being targeted for deportation; and

A poster used by the Toronto Police Association was widely viewed as stereotyping young Latin American males as criminals. Despite requests to do so, the Association officials refused to apologize for the image.

Many of the city’s institutions still do not reflect Toronto’s multicultural mosaic in their workforces. Some examples of this situation include:

- In 1997, fewer than 5% of the firefighters in Toronto were from minority groups, and the organization was seen to be resisting changes in its hiring practices;

- At the TTC, minorities were 12% of the workforce in 1991, a figure that improved in 1993 to just 14%;

- At Ryerson University just 11.8% of faculty belonged to visible minorities. At U of T minority representation fell from 9.1% to 8.7% between 1997-98 and 1998-99; and

- In the amalgamated City of Toronto’s new Council, elected in November 1997, it was found that among its 57 members 15 were women (26.3%) and seven were visible minorities (12.3%).

But like any large and complex urban centre, Toronto can be full of pleasant surprises. For example:

- In Thornhill a group of 70 people from six different religions meet regularly to develop mutual understanding and hold a “Peace Meal” each January in honour of Martin Luther King Jr., and

- Since 1997, children at an affluent school in North Toronto have participated in a program called Bookshare, whereby books are donated to less affluent students in downtown schools. The program spread to seven other schools in 1998.

The real goal should be the creation of the world’s most successful multicultural city. Author

Unfortunately many decisions related to immigration and immigrant services do not reside at the local level. Recent cuts by the federal and provincial governments for immigrant services and ESL programs have not made the creation of an inclusive city any easier.

In the final analysis, Torontonians should not be content with the title of the world’s most multicultural city. The real goal should be the creation of the world’s most successful multicultural city. Luck, good will, resources, and a willingness to share power will all be required to reach that lofty goal.

The citizen’s of the so-called “City That Works,” are going to have to work together in order to make a true cosmopolis appear on the shores of Lake Ontario. All the ingredients are present, but the appropriate recipe has yet to be identified.

Endnotes


2 For references see original study (#29 to #38).


6 Robert N. Jenkins and Peter Benesh, “Toronto: The Most Sophisticated City in the World?,” _St. Petersburg Times_, Sunday 12 March 1989, E1. At the time this article was published, Benesh was resident in Toronto and may well have heard Eggleton’s speech or seen the article quoting from it in the _Toronto Star_.

7 MTCVA, “Toronto Blue Jays Fans Hope for Bad Weather,” _PR Newswire_, Thursday, 28 September 1989. The MTCVA is now known as Tourism Toronto.

For references see original study (#61).


For references see original study (#93).

For references see original study (#98).

For references see original study (#100).

For reference see original study (#102).

Metropolis
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The Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto (CERIS) is one of five Canadian Metropolis centres dedicated to ensuring that scientific expertise contributes to the improvement of migration and diversity policy.

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About Metropolis

Launched in 1996, the Metropolis Project aims to improve policies for managing for managing migration and diversity by focusing scholarly attention on critical issues. It involves policymakers, researchers, and NGOs in all project initiatives.

Metropolis’ goals are to:
- Enhance academic research capacity;
- Focus academic research on critical policy issues and policy options;
- Develop ways to facilitate the use of research in decision-making.

Structured as a partnership, the project has both Canadian and international components. Metropolis encourages communication between interested stakeholders at the annual national and international conferences and at workshops, seminars, and roundtables organized by project members.

Find out more at: www.metropolis.net

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This research examines the social implications of ethnic residential neighbourhoods through a critical analysis of their development in the Toronto area.

The Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) with a population of 4.7 million consists of 23 municipalities with the City of Toronto as its core. The City of Toronto is a recently consolidated (1998) municipality created through the merger of the historic City of Toronto and five inner suburbs (Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough, York, and East York). This core is ringed by a series of rapidly-growing suburban municipalities and edge cities.

Apart from a literature review, some published accounts, case studies, and field observations in the Toronto region were used for this research.

Multiculturalism, Old and New Cities historically have been multicultural. Yet, the old multiculturalism was a private affair. Individuals spoke their languages, cooked exotic foods, and even formed neighbourhoods reminiscent of their homeland— all in their private domains.

Toronto, and other Canadian cities, have a long history of Blacks, Jews, Italians, and Chinese

Summary
As a result of racism and economic discrimination, residential segregation impedes social equity and cultural integration. Yet, in Canada, many ethnic groups choose to congregate together and form neighbourhoods based on their identities.

Multicultural policy supports the preservation of heritage and identity as a group right. Residential concentration builds ethnic institutions and communities by pooling the necessary population base.

The Toronto Metropolitan Area, one of the most multicultural regions of the world, illustrates this situation.

This research outlines the formation process of these neighbourhoods. It examines the social benefits and costs of ethnic residential communities.

To link to the original report CERIS Working Paper Series # 28 http://ceris.metropolis.net/virtual%20library/community/WP28 Qadeer.pdf

Policy Matters is a series of reports focusing on key policy issues affecting immigration and settlement in Canada. The goal is to provide accessible, concise information on current immigration research and its implications for policy development. Policy Matters is produced by the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement—Toronto (CERIS).
clustered in their respective neighbourhoods (and lately, the Polish and Portuguese). These were private “little homelands” created by immigrants as a result of their cumulative individual and group initiatives (Harney, 1985: 11).

A common new form of residential segregation arises from the predominance of one ethnic group, usually recent immigrants of similar income class(es), in a neighbourhood, making it a culturally distinct part of an urban area. When such residential concentrations are complemented by similar ethnic businesses and institutions ... they become ethnic enclaves (Portes & Bach, 1985: 203)

The ‘new’ multiculturalism was forged in the 1970s and 1980s in an era of international human rights, post-modern societies, and free trade. With, for example, Canadian “dotcom” companies recruiting software engineers from India or China, and Canadians living and traveling abroad, the traditional normative uniformity of ways of life broke apart.

New and diverse tastes in food, dress, music, art, and recreation emerged, thereby increasing the demand for ethnic products and services. Diversity of lifestyle has come to be valued and cultivated by most urban Canadians. This socially-sanctioned and sustained ethnic diversity is the source of the new multiculturalism.

This new form accommodates not only the individual’s right to organize his/her private life in accordance with her/his culture, but also sustains the groups’ right to build communal institutions. Within the limits prescribed by the Canadian Constitution and the Charter, the new multiculturalism sustains the groups’ right to build communal institutions and maintain their heritage and language in the public domain. The new multiculturalism does not “prevent or impede integration, but [serves] to renegotiate the terms of integration” (Kymlicka, 1998: 58).

The group rights of ethnic communities give a new meaning to their residential concentration. They validate the formation of ethno-cultural neighbourhoods and enclaves. Ethnic segregation by choice becomes an instrument of building communities of distinct (sub) cultures.

*Its [Canada’s] bi-national and bilingual society is a mosaic of cultures. This mosaic is imprinted in the ethnic enclaves and residential concentrations in cities, and in regional cultures at the provincial scale. Author*

This is not to romanticize ethnic enclaves. The point is that the new multiculturalism lends support to the formation of cultural communities. It envisages the urban structure to be a federation of communities – a mosaic of cultures. The Toronto CMA is an example of such an urban structure in evolution.

Research Findings

**Issue 1: Formation of Ethnic Residential Concentrations**

Ethnic concentration is an outcome of two intersecting factors:
- Immigrants’ housing search behaviour; and
- The structure of the local housing market.

The following three-stage process of immigrants’ settlement and the formation of ethnic residential concentrations can be identified:

**Stage 1: Formation of the Nucleus of an Ethnic Residential Concentration** – Once landed in Canada and Toronto, an immigrant typically contacts friends, relatives, or acquaintances for help in finding a place to live.

Some immigrants may lodge temporarily with a co-ethnic, while looking for permanent housing. Refugees and other sponsored immigrants may stay in motels, shelters, or institutional facilities. In their search for permanent housing, they tend to turn to their sponsors as well as co-ethnics for information and forms of guarantees requested by landlords.

Home-owning co-ethnics may rent some parts of their homes to newly-arrived immigrants. New immigrants who are buying homes seek advice from those already settled. Through these ethnic networks, newly-arrived immigrants are channeled to areas where their predecessors are living.

Access to housing is modulated by the vacancy rate and rents/prices. During the recessionary phase of real estate, a new area may open...
up to recent immigrants – for example an apartment building or sub-division. The infiltration of that particular ethnic group turns it into its neighbourhood. The Somali concentration on Dixon Road in Etobicoke is an example of this process.

Stage 2: ‘Tipping Over’ to an Ethno-Community – As the population of an ethnic group builds up to a visible presence in an area, it reaches a tipping point triggering its transformation into an ethno-community. When this happens, households of other ethnic backgrounds filter out. The demand for the neighbourhood’s housing stock mainly comes from the infiltrating ethnic group.

In rental buildings, landlords may begin to rely on ethnic networks to fill vacancies, sparing landlords marketing costs. In the home-ownership sector, the ethnic concentration creates a niche market with distinct price, quality, and symbolic characteristics.

The concentration of an ethnic group helps the development of religious, cultural, and community institutions.

The Toronto area is dotted with ethnic residential enclaves, for example:

- Bathurst and Lawrence West is a main Jewish enclave;
- Dundas West is the spine of the Portuguese community;
- Malton, near the airport, and in Brampton are Skih enclaves.

Stage 3: Consolidation and Persistence of an Ethnic Community – Consolidation takes a few years. The time varies with an ethnic group’s population size, rate of immigration, economic status, and community organization. Once a community is formed it becomes a segmented (sub) housing market sustained by real estate agents, lawyers, dentists, doctors, and community and religious leaders.

They facilitate the movement of ethnic households in to and out of a community. They also maintain the community’s continuity and represent the achievement of a mature level of institutional development. The population may turn over, but the ethnic character of the community continues.

Typically, the concentration of an ethnic group in a particular area is the cumulative outcome of its households’ choices, as framed by their income and class. It is not dictated, planned, or coordinated by any authority or agency. Rather, it arises from housing-market transactions, one-by-one, culminating in a sizable concentration of an ethnic group in a given area. Author

These ethnic concentrations coincide with poverty and the poor quality of housing (Kazempur & Halli, 2000). They are maintained by the demand for affordable housing by new poor immigrants.

Studies show that members of some ethnic groups choose to live among their own co-ethnics, even though they have the incomes to live elsewhere (Fong, 1966; Myles, 2002). Affluent Chinese, Italians, Jews, Sikhs, Muslims, Eastern Europeans have, by choice, reconstituted subdivisions and neighbourhoods in their respective ethnic and/or religious idioms.

Thus, territorialization of ethnic communities may not simply be a transitory phase of immigrant settlement. It appears to have become a mode of spatial organization for some groups in the Toronto region.

All in all, the CMA’s social landscape is a mosaic of both affluent and poor ethnic
communities, interspersed with large swaths of mixed neighbourhoods. Conversely, there are not many exclusive white Anglo areas. However, elite neighbourhoods (Forest Hill, Rosedale, for example) come close to being overwhelmingly white, if not always predominantly Christian.

**Issue 2: Ethnic enclaves are not classical “ghettos”**

Toronto’s housing stock is generally good and “relatively few dwellings in Toronto are in need of major repairs” (Murdie & Teixeira, 2000: 46). Immigrants, who are the primary residents in ethnic enclaves, share Toronto’s good quality of housing. Their housing conditions are slightly better, on the whole, that those experienced by the Canadian born.

This is likely because many immigrants settle in the recently-built housing in the suburbs, though some pockets of ill-kept rental apartment complexes have turned into ethnic neighbourhoods (Murdie & Teixeira, 2000: 46).

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... spatial segregation is not invariably related to poor living conditions. Local housing markets and public policies have had a determining influence on the quality of life of all its residents, somewhat independently of whether their communities are segregated or mixed. Author

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In terms of occupancy rate, immigrants fare equally well or better than those born in Canada. However, affordability of housing is more of a problem for immigrants. Despite this, the GTA’s relatively good housing stock provides for tolerable living conditions in most ethnic enclaves.

One point about ethnic segregation is that often in private rental buildings the immigrants are all from the same ethnic group. This is in contrast to public housing or rent-geared-to-income cooperatives, which tend to have immigrants from different ethnic groups.

The conclusion is that spatial segregation is not invariably related to poor living conditions. Local housing markets and public policies have had a determining influence on the quality of life of all residents, independently of whether their communities are segregated or mixed.

In Toronto, ethnic enclaves appear to be largely expressions of preferences, common interests, social networks, and the cultural and/or religious needs of their residents. They provide familiarity and security to new immigrants, and serve as the basis for their integration into the Canadian economy and society.

**Issue 3: Ethnic enclaves can be isolating**

Ethnic enclaves can inhibit immigrants’ acculturation to both the Canadian job market and Canada’s social mores. The risk of being left out is especially high if ethnic segregation combines with low incomes and poverty. Class trumps community in these cases.

Ethnic enclaves can be a barrier to their residents meeting and networking in the mainstream society and economy. However, ethnic enclaves are not instruments or products of overt discrimination. These disadvantages remain potentials, which depend on the circumstances of a particular group.

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**Policy Implications**

Ethnic enclaves are expressions of spatial and social segregation by choice. This ‘choice’ is exercised within the “opportunity area” defined by a local housing market, transactional institutions, and public policies.

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Although ethnic enclaves are rich in social capital, mutual support networks, and community organizations, paradoxically, they can also be a barrier to residents meeting and networking in the mainstream society and economy. Author

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In the Toronto area, discrimination is not a systemic factor affecting immigrants’ housing choices, except for the poor and those on public welfare. Some practices of landlords and home sellers may disadvantage immigrants (security deposit, credit history for example), particularly those with a low income or newly arrived. These should be seen as economic barriers, and not acts of systemic discrimination.

Residential segregation by ethnicity is not an outcome of immigrants’ exclusion from some parts of the city. It is largely a reflection of the segmentation of the housing market by consumers’ preferences and incomes.
Ethnic spatial segregation arises from the convergence of immigrants’ residential preferences and opportunities on specific sites. It is an expression of their attempts to create a community of common values and interests.

Ethnic enclaves are not “ghettos” of exclusion and certainly not in the Toronto region by and large.

Social segregation, including its spatial manifestations, has a different meaning in these times than in the early and mid 20th century. Social identity, personal roots, and cultural differences are being valued, and diversity is regarded as an asset for a city and nation.

The limitations and biases of the job market have greater influence on immigrants’ housing opportunities, and the quality of life, than any discriminatory practices. The point is that the residential segregation by ethnicity is not an outcome of immigrants’ exclusion from some parts of the city, but, largely, a reflection of the segmentation of the housing market by consumers’ preferences and income. Author

Cities are not only being carved into ethnic enclaves, but also gay neighbourhoods and women-friendly districts, if not by public policy, then by community initiatives.

Social integration has a new meaning: constructing a “common ground” of institutions and services for civic engagement of the members of diverse communities. The challenge of incorporating ethnic enclaves lies in the forging of this common ground, rather than in repressing their growth.

Extending equal citizenship to diverse communities, and not aiming to homogenize their differences, is in the public interest. In the spatial arena, it means pursuing policies for adequate and affordable housing for all, as well as providing the necessary urban infrastructure and services for viable community life.

Multiculturalism is the social ideology of the times. Transnational citizenship and globalization are over-riding notions of national homogeneity. … Viewed in this social context, residential segregation, by sustaining diverse communities and preserving a variety of (sub)cultures, has a positive function. Author

These policies form the common ground for the social integration of diverse communities. Good city planning and equitable community development are the instruments for constructing this common ground. On this common ground, ethnic enclaves may thrive as long as they are open, and not exclusionary.

Residential space is one of many sites for social integration. Others include school, workplaces, recreation and sports facilities, and political participation.

Policies for equitable participation in these arenas are, perhaps, more important for weaving communities together than are those which focus only on residential segregation.

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Immigrant Settlement and Social Inclusion in Canada

By Ratna Omidvar and Ted Richmond

Summary

This paper describes how Canada's immigrant settlement policies are failing recent immigrants and refugees, most of whom are visible minorities.

The crisis in immigrant settlement policy in Canada is due to the lack of an integrated, long-term perspective that recognizes that settlement involves a lifetime of adjustment, with effects that extend into the next generation.

This calls for a new vision of immigrant settlement focused on social inclusion. Social inclusion involves the basic notions of belonging, acceptance, and recognition. Thus, social inclusion for immigrants and refugees can be seen as the dismantling of barriers that lead to exclusion.

Several practical policy reforms are suggested. But it is not just the settlement system that requires an overhaul. True social inclusion requires the creation of new common ground for civic engagement in an inclusive and diverse society.

To link to the original report Working Paper Series on Social Inclusion http://206.191.51.193/page_1066.cfm

Policy Matters is a series of reports focusing on key policy issues affecting immigration and settlement in Canada. The goal is to provide accessible, concise information on current immigration research and its implications for policy development. Policy Matters is produced by the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement - Toronto (CERIS).

Introduction
Growing Social Exclusion

Central to any meaningful development of the notion of social inclusion is the role of Canada's newcomers. Canada has one of the highest proportions of immigrants to total resident population of any country in the world. For immigrants and refugees, social inclusion requires the realization of full and equal participation in their new country.

Canada's immigration policy is one of the most open and welcoming in the world. As an officially multicultural and anti-racist society, Canada's inclusive policies of citizenship encourage newcomers to become citizens after three years. For about 40 years after the Second World War, Canada was largely successful in promoting economic integration as the key to successful newcomer settlement.

Today, however, we see a contradiction between official inclusion policies and the growing social exclusion for Canada's newcomers in the economic sphere and in public life generally. Studies show there is an emerging immigrant underclass, made-up of mainly visible minorities, in Canada's major cities.

During the last two decades, immigrants and refugees who have arrived to Canada are experiencing severe difficulties in the Canadian labour market. For many, it has been a life of underemployment or unemployment, low income or poverty and lost hope.

In the 1980s and 1990s, those coming to Canada were mainly non-European visible minorities. Although between 1991 and 1996 poverty levels increased for all immigrants, visible minorities were most disadvantaged.

In Toronto, the destination of almost one-half of all newcomers, visible minorities showed the largest increase in poverty levels in that period from 20.9% to 32.5%. They are also at higher risk for long-term, persistent poverty (Harvey & Siu, 2001).

Are recent immigrants having difficulty in the labour market because they are less qualified? In fact, recent immigrants are more highly educated and skilled compared to their predecessors and...
Rates of unemployment and underemployment are increasing for individual immigrants, as are rates of poverty for immigrant families. As well, there is a substantial body of evidence indicating income discrimination against visible minority workers (both immigrant and Canadian-born) as well as gender-based wage discrimination for female immigrants. Authors

Furthermore, immigrants are selected by Canada on the basis of occupational qualifications or investment potential. However, when newcomers look for employment here, the occupational qualifications that gained them admittance to Canada often are not recognized by employers and professional bodies. The cause of low earnings among immigrants is overwhelmingly pay inequity, with some underutilization of skills. Employers often do not recognize foreign education and experience (Reitz, 2001).

There are other groups of newcomers who are worse off. For example, temporary immigrants who work in agriculture under harsh conditions have minimal legal rights. For people claiming refugee status, there are usually years of legal limbo, with significant barriers to employment and social services.

Newcomers without full status have lack of access to employment and training programs, adequate housing, and health care services.

Immigrant and refugee children and youth are also another vulnerable group of newcomers. Many young people feel torn between irreconcilable values and a desire to fit in (Kilbride et al., 2000). When these conflicts are combined with poverty, there is a danger of fostering alienation among youth who do not feel connected to their parents, country of origin, or the host society (Mwarigha M.S., 2002).

Analysis
Crisis in the Settlement System
The crisis in immigrant settlement policy in Canada is due to the lack of an integrated, long-term perspective that recognizes that settlement involves a lifetime of adjustment, with effects that extend into the next generation.

Settlement policies focus mainly on immediate needs, such as language training. In the medium term, newcomers may need assistance with employment, housing, and legal aid. Later on immigrants and refugees strive to become equal participants in all aspects of life in their new home.

Changes in government funding have weakened the delivery system for immigrant settlement services. Service delivery is provided mainly by non-governmental, community-based immigrant service agencies that are funded by the different levels of government, charities, and private foundations.

However, cutbacks in government funding and imposed restructuring have impacted these agencies negatively. Most government funders no longer provide core funding and instead contract with agencies for program delivery.

The smaller agencies do not have the administrative resources to manage these contractual arrangements. Consequently, they have had to curtail their services or close their doors. Moreover, the new contractual service terms require closer administrative control, which jeopardizes the autonomy of independent community agencies.

An immigrant settlement system that cannot meet the needs of newcomers has potentially serious consequences.

One problem with the system is the inability to combat the increasing growth of an immigrant underclass, concentrated mainly in the poorer neighbourhoods of Toronto (Mwarigha M.S., 2002).

... larger urban centres – Montreal, Winnipeg, Quebec City, Toronto, Saskatoon, Regina, and Vancouver – had large concentrations of visible minority immigrants in neighbourhoods with a poverty rate of 40 per cent and higher (Kazemipur & Hall, 2000).

The urbanization of immigration and lack of effective immigrant settlement policies is resulting in the racialization of urban poverty (Shields, 2002). The racialization of poverty warns of a looming crisis of social instability and political legitimacy for Canadian
society (Galabuzi, 2001). The term “democratic racism” describes the deep tension between the reality of racism and the ideology of democratic liberalism (Henry & Tator, 2000).

A social inclusion framework must incorporate an anti-racist perspective (Saloojee, 2003), taking into account the limits of official multiculturalism and the realities of systemic racism in Canada today. Beyond that, we must explore how to build a common ground of institutions and services for civic engagement of diverse communities.

Social exclusion is a way of understanding the impact of existing social economic systems on marginalized groups, while social inclusion is about finding out what works and mobilizing resources to resolve the problems brought about through social exclusion. Authors

Social Inclusion Perspective
Social inclusion involves the basic notions of belonging, acceptance, and recognition. For immigrants and refugees, social inclusion would be represented by the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions of life in their new country. Therefore, social inclusion for immigrants and refugees can be seen as the dismantling of barriers that lead to the exclusion of all these domains.

The goals of social inclusion are based on the following key principles:

- Structuring policy around a life cycle approach, where necessary to meet individual needs;
- Tackling failing communities and the needs of other excluded groups;
- Mobilizing all relevant actors in a joint multi-agency response;
- Tackling discrimination in all its forms; and
- Ensuring all policy recommendations are evidence-based.

The application of a social inclusion perspective to the challenges of newcomer settlement in Canada reveals three essential elements that must be pursued:

- Restore government responsibility for universal social programs as a pre-condition for inclusion of both newcomers and Canadian-born;
- Target social programs to the most disadvantaged, including immigrants and refugees excluded from equitable participation in the labour market and other aspects of civic life; and
- Ensure a rights-based approach to deal with the reality of differential legal and practical rights for newcomers based on immigration status.

The relevance of these ideas of social inclusion ultimately lies in their ability to shape progressive

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Policy Recommendations
Within a social inclusion framework, practical policy alternatives include:

Access to Trades and Professions: Implement a series of complex and detailed policy reforms involving multiple stakeholders to make proper use of foreign-based experience, education, and skills (Alboim & The Maytree Foundation, 2002).

Local Autonomy and Immigrant Settlement: Encourage greater involvement by municipal governments and mobilized newcomer communities in the settlement process and consultations on immigration policy and urban reform.

Immigrant Dispersion Policy: Replace proposals for restricted mobility rights for new immigrants with incentives to achieve dispersion to smaller communities on a voluntary basis.
Public Defense of Refugee Rights: Defend the basic human and legal rights of refugees, who are more vulnerable than ever to undue restrictions under the pretext of security.

Newcomer Children and Youth in Schools: Use schools as sites for integrated, supportive settlement programs and anti-racist curriculum for children and youth, and outreach to help parents understand the school system.

Student Loans and Exclusion of Newcomers: Make student loans more accessible by, for example, removing the one-year residency requirement before landed immigrants can apply.

These policy recommendations can be implemented incrementally, building public acceptance along the way. But piecemeal reform is not the aim.

The over-arching recommendation is for an:

Integrated Settlement Policy
Develop an integrated, pan-Canadian, adequately resourced, multi-faceted, multi-agency, publicly accountable immigrant settlement system based on a new vision.

The new vision must redefine immigrant settlement, recognizing it is a journey of a lifetime that extends into the next generation. It must identify mutual obligations and benefits for newcomers and society.

All levels of government must tackle the challenges and be accountable for the results of newcomer settlement. All stakeholders must be included in the development of new policies. Funding must be restored for settlement services, and the autonomy of community-based agencies must be protected.

True inclusion means a radical reform of Canada’s approach to newcomer settlement. It must ensure that immigrants and refugees are full participants in the development of economic, political, social, and cultural mechanisms, practices and institutions.

The ultimate test of the social inclusion framework, however, rests in its usefulness in framing practical policy alternatives to the growing reality of exclusion for Canada’s newcomers. Authors

The vision begins with an anti-exclusion, anti-discrimination, anti-racist framework and progresses towards new concepts of the value of diversity and the potential for new forms of citizen participation and engagement.

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