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Encounters, Contests, and Communities: New Histories of Race and Ethnicity in the Canadian City, Part 2

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biographie historique du personnage complexe et polyvalent qui se dévoile ici pudiquement (p. 121). Pour l'heure, cet ouvrage restera, au mieux, un bon complément à la notice de Jean-Claude Robert, dans le *Dictionnaire biographique du Canada*.

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Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen's synthetic treatment of immigrants in twentieth century prairie cities promises a "story about people meeting people" that takes seriously the strategies and understandings of immigrants as well as the shifting interactions between newcomers and the society to which they arrived (5). Dividing the century into three periods and their book into three corresponding parts, the authors argue that the prairie mainstream was remade by immigrants to the region. In the early century, from 1900–1930, boundaries separating continental European immigrants from the British majority were held high, yet diverse newcomers succeeded in using their internal networks as "staging grounds" (32) for entry into the wider society. In the mid-century, from the 1940s to the 1960s, migrants displaced from rural Canada and the continuing stream of continental Europeans integrated more readily into burgeoning prairie cities, often able to take advantage of integrated suburban residence and the aid of "well meaning British Canadians imbued with a newly developed pluralist idealism" (97). Finally, in the late century, from 1970s–1990s, skilled and "socially confident" (103) immigrants from the "Global South" largely forsook ethnic enclaves, relying upon one another for cultural rather than material needs and integrating rapidly into a prairie urban society that, while not without racism, ultimately embraced diversity and "offered a ray of hope for all plural societies at the turn of the twenty-first century" (155). Urban historians will be encouraged to learn that this is a book that takes the urban setting seriously. Throughout, Friesen and Loewen seek to establish that immigration to prairie cities, while sharing much with a wider national history, had a distinctive regional flavour. "Immigrant-host interaction," the authors maintain, "is as much a local as a national phenomenon" (9).

The second and third parts of this narrative, which carry prairie cities from the Second World War to the end of the twentieth century, are the most provocative and compelling. Here the authors provide persuasive grounds for a regional focus. With the exception of Winnipeg, to which the authors devote three exclusive chapters, prairie cities grew rapidly in the postwar era even as they diversified. Immigrant incorporation was not prefigured by industrial era patterns or pre-existing ethnic enclaves; instead, the postwar immigrants arrived to cities that were just taking form. Particularly in Alberta, where Calgary and Edmonton doubled in size in the 1950s and continued to grow at astounding rates in the decade that followed (58–59), postwar immigrants were integral to the very formation of prairie cities. Indeed, the confident western regionalism of the postwar era was, according to the authors, "created by immigrants

for immigrants" (74). These developments, the authors suggest, paved the way for the increasingly diverse newcomers who arrived after the introduction of the "points system." Skilled and confident late century immigrants were well suited to the kind of cities that had emerged on the prairies in the previous decades. These immigrants created institutions and organizations that acted as "virtual ethnic webs," bringing together "immigrants spread over the large areas" of sprawling prairie cities, while using new technologies to retain close ties to their places of origin (108, 157–173). Although they generated somewhat ambivalent response from their prairie neighbours (111–118, 139–155), the new immigrants found a home within a "common cultural citizenship" (101).

The book seems likely to generate interesting discussions among historians of immigration and urban life in Canada. Notably, the authors argue, most forcefully in the chapters devoted to Winnipeg, that immigrant reception in the prairie cities differed from that described in Franca Iacovetta's recent analysis of "gatekeepers," which was mostly rooted in postwar Toronto. According to Loewen and Friesen, Iacovetta's "emphasis of the social control exercised by the hosts" does not describe the prairie cities in the same era, where immigrants assumed control of the agencies responsible for their reception and hosts and newcomers alike shared a "determined commitment to bridge . . . barriers in order that all people might live comfortably" within urban society (78, 93–94, 96–97). Was the reception of immigrants in the prairies guided by a different ethic than that of older sites of reception such as Toronto, or have Loewen and Friesen simply differed from Iacovetta in their points of emphasis? Second, the somewhat equivocal position of Winnipeg as an independent case study within the larger story of the region should prompt discussion of the utility of the regional frame. Although the authors argue that Winnipeg conforms to a wider regional pattern, their most compelling claims for a distinctive urban region emerge from the cities that remained small and homogeneous until the post-WWII era. Might the timing of urban growth, rather than geographic region, sort cities into useful analytic categories? Were the burgeoning cities in the prairies after WWII more similar to distant sites with similar patterns of growth than to Winnipeg? Similarly, historians of ethnicity may question the claim that the prairie cities moved in a fairly linear fashion towards greater integration over time. Jewish residents of prairie cities, for example, remained residentially segregated throughout the postwar era. In Calgary and Edmonton, Jewish residential segregation climbed notably from 1961 to 2001, reaching levels similar to those of older centers in the east. Finally, while the authors gesture toward a history of inter-ethnic relations, the existing research upon which they rely provides an inadequate frame for detailed analysis of this theme. If the authors are right to suggest that prairie urbanism in particular has been characterized by integration and "hybridity," then the prairies cry out for research into the relations among diverse Canadians, rather than the relation of each individual ethnic group to the "host" society. In all, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities* performs key tasks of a synthetic work of this kind, providing a sense of where research has arrived to date and pointing to directions that it might yet take.

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