

CanadaWatch

PRACTICAL AND AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSIS OF KEY NATIONAL ISSUES

DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

The gap between borders and identity

The 2016 Robarts Centre Graduate Student Conference, "Canada: Homeland or Hostile Land?," anticipated the country's 150th anniversary in 2017 with an outpouring of critically engaged considerations on the status of our nation-state. The success of the conference is a testament to the professionalism of our graduate students and their colleagues across the country. This next generation of activist scholars speak from the gap between borders and identity, between diversity and a new globality. In so doing, this issue of *Canada Watch* bears witness to the productive

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tensions of Canadian Studies embraced by the Robarts Centre.

Since its founding in 1984, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies at

York University has sought to support increasingly interdisciplinary research pertinent to the study of Canada and "Canada in the world." Our greatest measure of success is the students we gather and mentor and from whom we appreciate contemporary concerns.

I would like to thank two exceptional doctoral students for their organization of the 2016 conference and this issue of *Canada Watch*: Jennifer Mussell and Erin Yunes. Thanks are also due to our Centre Coordinator, Laura Taman, and to all of the contributors to this issue for their keen engagement with social justice. 🍁

CO-ORGANIZERS' INTRODUCTION

Canada: Homeland or hostile land?

In April 2016, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies at York University hosted its third annual graduate student conference, entitled "Canada: Homeland or Hostile Land?" Over the course of the two-day conference, more than 50 students from universities across the country presented their work and engaged in critical exploration of inequalities in Canadian society. Panels and papers ranged in subject from Canadian settler colonialism and its legacies, to multiculturalism, to state policy and its impacts on minorities. Despite the diversity of topics and range of perspectives, all the discussions that ensued featured a common conclusion: that Canada has both a history and a present characterized by deeply entrenched

BY JENNIFER MUSSELL AND ERIN YUNES

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social and economic inequalities along lines of gender, race, indigeneity, ability, region, socio-economic status, and migration status, among others. As Canada approaches its 150th birthday celebrations, there is no better time to reflect on the fact that, for some, Canada is more hostile land than homeland.

This issue includes 11 essays, each of which was developed from a presentation given at the conference. The first

section, "A Legacy of State Oppression," examines events in Canada's past and present in which the Canadian state has perpetrated acts of oppression against its citizens. The essays by Peltier and FitzGerald examine the legacy of settler colonialism and the contemporarily relevant issue of Indigenous people's human rights and security. Gibbs's essay focuses on the use of language in the construction of narratives

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