

## INTERNATIONAL CANADIAN STUDIES ON THE MOVE: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

# Introduction

BY MARCEL MARTEL AND JEAN MICHEL MONTSION

---

**Marcel Martel is a professor of Canadian history and holds the Avie Bennett Historica Canada Chair in Canadian History at York University. Jean Michel Montsion is a professor in the Department of Global and Social Studies at Glendon College, and director of the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies (2021–2026).**

---

In June 2024, the International Canadian Studies Summit was held at York University. Organized by the International Council for Canadian Studies, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, and the Avie Bennett Historica Canada Chair in Canadian History at York University, the Summit was an opportunity for domestic and international Canadianists to discuss the state of the study of Canada from abroad, a decade after the federal government ended the Understanding Canada program, its flagship cultural diplomacy mechanism anchored in academic networks. Held online and offered as a summer school, the Summit convened emerging scholars and graduate students on the various facets of the critical study of Canada, to support a new generation of Canadianists in gaining academic experiences despite the lack of state-funded opportunities.

The Summit was held with the support of many other institutions, including the Canadian Studies Network, the Centre for Canadian Studies at Brock University, the Frost Centre for Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies at Trent University, the Laurier Centre for the Study of Canada, and the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. It was financially supported by the Avie Bennett Historica Canada Chair in Canadian History, the International Council for Canadian Studies, the Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through a Partnership Development Grant entitled *(Re)Searching for Canadian Studies*, known as the CanSearch project.

This special issue of *Canada Watch* gathers key observations and insights from the Summit, reflections from attendees and speakers, and testimonies on the ongoing challenges, initiatives, and research conducted in support of international Canadian Studies. In the first section, the contributors provide an overview of the current state of discussions within and outside government on support for international Canadian Studies. Remarks from the Honourable Yuen Pau Woo and Nik Nanos give a good sense of the improbable path ahead for reinstating the Understanding Canada program, and offer some lenses through which the field of international Canadian Studies is perceived. These observations and insights are followed by reports by Prof. Jean Michel Montsion and Dominik Formanowicz on the state of Canadian Studies, and by Prof. Kerstin Knopf on its contribution to Canada through the notion of knowledge democracy.

The second section offers a variety of perspectives on the Summit. It opens with Prof. Montsion's compilation of insights from working groups reflecting on the views of Summit speakers. The section continues with the observations of Prof. Jane Koustas, the president of the International Council for Canadian Studies, and the perspective of Prof. Christophe Premat, a Summit attendee and director of a research centre on Canada in Sweden. The section ends with the insights of Prof. Élisabeth Abergel, who held a teaching session during the Summit's summer school.

In the third section, authors comment on their own experiences in conducting research or teaching about Canada from abroad or with Canadian partners. They document both their challenges and their successful collaborations, which may be key to creating a path forward in supporting international Canadian Studies. Prof. Anna Branach-Kallas helps us understand the role that Canadian institutions and academic culture can play in parallel or in collaboration with organizations abroad; Prof. Christoph Vatter presents the historical context and contemporary challenges and opportunities for the study of Canada in German-speaking countries; and Prof. Norie Yazu shares the experiences of facilitating the study of Canada from Japan through award-winning pedagogical initiatives. Finally, Lucy Luccisano, Bina Mehta, and Prof. Kevin Spooner offer concrete recommendations, based on their experiences in facilitating American–Canadian initiatives, on planning for such collaborations.

In the fourth and final section, members of the CanSearch project present their reflections on key insights drawn from the surveys and interviews conducted by the team. Prof. Carolyn Podruchny shares the difficulties and possibilities of teaching about Indigenous histories in the North American context, specifically in Canada, and Prof. Tameka Samuels-Jones resituates the study of Canada through the actions of Canadian corporations abroad—in this case, in bauxite mining in Jamaica. These commentaries are followed by the reflections of Prof. Paul Morris on the importance of multiculturalism as a key theme of interest in the field of international Canadian Studies and as a scholarly connector to ongoing discussions and critiques of the concept in Canada and abroad. Finally, Profs. Eve Haque and Marcel Martel discuss languages in the study of Canada, not necessarily as a theme of direct interest but one through which other Canadian realities and processes are examined, such as multiculturalism and racialization.

We hope that this issue of *Canada Watch* offers readers in Canada and abroad a good sense of the dynamic field of international Canadian Studies, and of its importance to Canada, both as a form of knowledge democracy and as a cultural diplomacy tool. We thank all participants in the 2024 International Canadian Studies Summit and we hope to witness an increasing number of collaborations and initiatives in support of the field in the coming years. ■

## REFERENCE

Montsion, J. M., & Formanowicz, D. (2023). *(Re)searching for Canadian Studies* (CanSearch) [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Development Grant No. 890-2021-0076]. <https://www.yorku.ca/research/robarts/cansearch/>