Unequal Relations

A Critical Introduction to Race, Ethnic, and Aboriginal Dynamics in Canada

Eighth Edition

Augie Fleras

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A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION TO RACE, ETHNIC, AND ABORIGINAL DYNAMICS IN CANADA

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Preface

Canada is a society of paradox. Paradoxes prevail in a Canada that is rapidly changing and increasingly diverse, yet seemingly gridlocked into preferences and perceptions from the past without a definitive blueprint for forging ahead. This assessment is particularly relevant when applied to the domain of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations. To one side, Canada remains a remarkably open society with a commitment to justice, inclusiveness, and tolerance that is widely admired and occasionally copied (Adams, 2007; Reputation Institute, 2015). This commitment is no mean feat, of course, since few other countries must address such a dazzling array of deeply divided and multilayered diversities, including Aboriginal peoples, national-minorities, and immigrant and racialized groups. But rather than imploding from within as one might expect from such an ethnic tinderbox, Canada is reaping a host of society-building dividends because of its multicultural commitments. It may be a bit of a stretch to equate Canada's official Multiculturalism with one of history's revolutionary ideals for reorganizing society; namely, the American, French, and Russian revolutions (Sandercock, 2006). Nevertheless, Canada's success in integrating immigrants is virtually unparalleled by international standards, with its official policy of Multiculturalism attracting widespread kudos for facilitating successful newcomer outcomes (Kymlicka, 2010).

To the other side, however, racial politics and ethnic confrontations continue to perplex and provoke (Johnson & Enomoto, 2007). Canada's status as a rich and fertile ground for living together with differences notwithstanding, the challenges of a cooperative coexistence are proving more complex than many had imagined. Every enlightened move forward is matched by a corresponding slip backward, with the result that debates over diversity transcend the simplistic categories of "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," hovering uneasily between these oppositional poles. The prospect of an uncontested coexistence is compromised by the proliferation of increasingly politicized faith-based communities and ethno-religious identity politics. Aboriginal (or Indigenous) peoples confront socio-economic conditions that, frankly, embarrass Canada's lofty reputation as a beacon of enlightenment (Anaya, 2014). The so-called "visible" (or more accurately, "racialized") minorities continue to endure discriminatory treatment, despite assurances and accommodations to the contrary (McDougall, 2009; Satzewich, 2011). Even the widely praised hallmarks of Canada's diversity agenda—immigration and multiculturalism—have drawn criticism as "too much" or "not enough" (Graves, 2015; Grubel, 2009; Mansur, 2011). Not surprisingly, paradoxes flourish precisely because of a growing reality gap between government promises and the lived realities of migrants and minorities at odds with widespread perceptions of Canada as a global pacesetter in the art of positively managing diversity. The fact that Canada's proposed principles do not always match people's lived-experience is the catalyst

that drives the dynamics of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations—as the following contradictions demonstrate:

- That race once mattered is beyond dispute. That race continues to matter at a time when most Canadians think it shouldn't or couldn't is proving a point of contention and confusion (Wallis & Fleras, 2008).
- Racism is widely perceived as a major problem in Canada (Fleras, 2014a). To the dismay of many, its existence has proven much more pervasive and tenacious than predicted, especially with the emergence of new and virulent forms of multi-racisms that are increasingly difficult to detect or eradicate (Agnew, 2007; Bishop, 2005; Henry & Tator, 2010; Hier & Bolaria, 2007).
- References to ethnicity increasingly pivot around the dynamics of competition and conflict rather than cuddly attachments for display in festivals and food courts (Howard-Hassmann, 1999; Maybury-Lewis, 2003). Moreover, concerns mount as ethnic identities and differences become increasingly politicized and pose a governance challenge in proposing to render Canada safe from ethnicity, yet safe for ethnicity.
- No amount of multicultural gloss can mask the obvious: Racialized women and men continue to experience inequities in power, income, and privilege (Block, 2010; Galabuzi, 2006; Jedwab & Satzewich, 2015; Pendakur & Pendakur, 2010; Teelucksingh & Galabuzi, 2005). That a growing legion of foreign-trained professionals are driving taxis or delivering pizzas points to Canada's mishandling of its immigration "advantage" by transforming a potential "brain gain" into a "brain drain" (Fleras, 2014b).
- Multiple narratives inform the aboriginal experience in Canada (Long & Dickason, 2011). One situates Aboriginal peoples at the forefront of economic and political developments, including a right to confer with first ministers at constitutional talks (Belanger, 2008; Coates, 2015; Frideres, 2011). Another acknowledges how poverty and disempowerment of aboriginal communities remain Canada's foremost human rights stain (Anaya, 2014; Frideres & Gadacz, 2012). Still another points to a growing militancy among aboriginal activists impatient with the snail-like progress of repairing a still-broken relationship with Canada (Kino nda niimi Collective, 2014).
- Constitutional guarantees for gender equality are commendable, but minority women (including Aboriginal women, women of colour, and immigrant/refugee women) continue to experience concurrent patterns of exclusion and discrimination, especially when gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and class to amplify patterns of exploitation or exclusion (McMullin, 2010; Zawilski, 2010).
- Many regard Canada's immigration policy and programs as one of the world's more progressive models (Satzewich, 2015; Simmons, 2010). Canada is one of the few countries in the world that can claim to be both an immigration society and a society of immigrants. Yet the system is increasingly criticized as "broken" and in need of a major overhaul (Bissett, 2008; Hawthorne, 2008; Moens & Collacott, 2008). Yet reforms by the then Conservative government (from tightening up the temporary foreign worker program to creating a new Express Entry pipeline to replace the old points system) have drawn both criticism and praise (Fleras, 2014b). Of particular note are continuing concerns over devising a refugee determination process capable of fast-tracking those in need of Canada's protection while staunching the flow of those who manipulate the system for expedited entry.

- Canada may be one of the few countries in the world with a formal policy of Multiculturalism. Nevertheless, the domain of multiculturalism remains one of the more politically charged battlegrounds of our era (Ryan, 2010), as demonstrated by debates over the politics of reasonable accommodation when applied to religious differences and faith-based communities (Fleras, 2009a; Stein et al., 2007). Concern is also growing that, in a globalized age of transmigration and diaspora, the relevance of multiculturalism as a place-based governance model is in doubt since immigrant identities and belonging are increasingly disconnected from place and origins (Fleras, 2011b).
- Canada's commitment to institutional inclusiveness is widely proclaimed and actively pursued. But difficulties undercut this commitment to accommodate by way of workplaces that reflect, represent, and respond to difference, while providing services that are available, accessible, and appropriate. Particularly worrying are institutional structures and unconscious mindsets that remain unmistakably "pale male" in composition, process, and outcomes (Jiwani, 2006; Kobayashi, 2005).
- Canada's Difference Model is attracting attention as a principled blueprint for living together with differences. At the core of this governance model is the principle of differential accommodation, namely, accommodating different ways of accommodating diversities (Jenson & Papillon, 2001). But diversity has become much more complex because of transmigration, identity politics, and emergent multiversal realities, in effect pointing to the necessity of governance models that are inclusive of diversities-within-diversities (Fleras, 2015).
- Debates over differences continue to question and contest. How much and what kind of differences can be tolerated by society? Conversely, how much imposed unity can it bear? Properly managed, a commitment to accommodate diversity may enhance creativity and connections. Without an overarching vision, however, the clash of differences can torpedo a commitment to community, cohesion, and identity (see Putnam, 2007).

Canada is indeed a paradox insofar as it extols respect for diversity, yet works as one of the world's premier integration systems (Rao, 2010). The very dynamic that triggers Canada's strength and pride—its management of diversities—may dissolve into weaknesses; conversely, weaknesses, such as Canada's thin nationalism, may morph into strengths in a globalized world of coming and going. In theory, Canada's track record on race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations should be getting better (whatever that might mean); in reality, it is not (however difficult that might be to measure). Instead of answers, Canadians are swamped with more questions. In lieu of certainty and resolution, confusion prevails. Canadians express dismay over the proliferation of aboriginal protests and occupations, legal challenges to the status quo, and the mounting anger of a disenfranchised population. English-speaking Canadians are perplexed by Quebec's seemingly insatiable demands for special status, while the Québécois are equally puzzled by Anglo intransigence over letting go. No less confusing are the increasingly forceful demands of ethnic and racialized minorities who want recognition and respect without sacrificing equality. Finally, newcomers to Canada are experiencing significant difficulties in "making a go of it" despite Canada's *bona fides* as an immigrant society of immigration (Fleras, 2014b). However important these issues, nobody can claim to have all the answers. That shouldn't be a problem; after all, too much reliance on answers assumes a discoverable objective reality that unlocks its "truth" to the privileged observer. But in a mind-dependent world that rejects the existence of objective truth except as discourses within contexts of power, the asking of questions may be just as important as the reassurance of finding answers.

To be sure, Canadians have become increasingly adept at "talking the talk" about living together with differences. Canada's diversity landscape is peppered with sometimes sanctimonious bromides about "tolerance," "a post-racial world," or "celebrating differences" that rarely say what they mean or mean what they say. Yet many Canadians are less enthralled with the idea of "walking the walk"—of putting their principles into practice. Keywords from "inclusion" and "integration" to "racism" and "diversity" are stretched to mean everything yet nothing, without much concern for precision and clarity. Concepts and theories intended to enlighten and clarify are ideologically loaded to the point of ambiguity and misuse, while the persistence of outdated frameworks bears mute testimony to an intellectual inertia best described as a "paralysis by analysis." The prospects of navigating this conceptual minefield are daunting and people end up "talking past" each other.

This eighth edition of *Unequal Relations* hopes to avoid the perils of sloppy reasoning, mindless clichés, lazy oversimplifications, and common-sense assumptions at odds with a balanced analysis. Every effort has been made to ground these free-floating concepts in ways that inform rather than inflame, enlighten rather than confuse, and empower rather than disengage. The end result is a critically informed introduction that frames the politics of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations as fundamentally unequal relations against the backdrop of a complex, diverse, and changing Canada. Three dimensions of this Canada-building dynamic are emphasized: *constructed dimensions*, *contested dimensions*, and *community dimensions*, as follows:

1. A focus on the *constructed dimensions* reveals how the contours of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations neither originate in a social vacuum nor unfold outside a wider context. Nor is there anything natural or inevitable about the dynamics of intergroup relations in society. Rather, they constitute socially constructed relationships of inequality within contexts of power, privilege, and property relations. That makes it doubly important to deconstruct the processes by which these fundamentally unequal relations are created, expressed, and maintained, as well as challenged and transformed by way of minority protest, government policy, ideological shifts, and institutional reform.
2. A focus on the *contested dimensions* envisages Canada as a conflicted site of competitively different groups in competition for scarce resources. Attention is drawn to the competitive struggles of Canada's three major Diversities (Aboriginal peoples, French and English "charter" groups, and ethnic and racialized migrants and minorities) as they jockey to define priorities, secure interests, coax alliances, and impose agendas. The centrality of power is shown to be critical in driving the dynamics of diversity. Certain groups dominate, not because of genetic superiority but because the powerful can invariably define options and control outcomes. Subdominant groups are subordinate, not because of racial inferiority, but because they lack access to equal opportunity and institutionalized power.
3. A focus on the *community dimensions* addresses the challenges of constructing a national community of commitment, cohesion, and consensus from a diverse and divided Canada. A principled framework is proposed for living together with differences by advancing the notion of an inclusive Canada that is safe *for* differences, yet safe *from* differences.

The content and organization of *Unequal Relations* subscribes to the adage of "continuity in change." The first edition of the book was published 25 years ago with the aim of providing a critical introduction to the dynamics of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations in Canada. Instead of looking at race, ethnicity, or aboriginality as exotic cultures within Canada's multicultural mosaic, the book was designed to synthesize existing theoretical knowledge with current information to deconstruct the politics of diversity in an increasingly diverse, complex, and changing Canada. Admittedly, much in Canada has changed in the interim. But the book's animating logic remains unchanged; that is, the importance of analyzing race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations as essentially unequal relations with respect to how patterns of power, privilege, and property (wealth and income) are played out. Clearly, then, race, ethnicity, and aboriginality are not just physical attributes or social categories; more accurately, they constitute distinctive ways of seeing (and of being seen) and understanding (and being understood) the world within a broader context of inequality and injustice. And as long as these predominantly inequitable relations continue to puzzle and provoke, the politics of race, ethnicity, and aboriginality will remain a lively dynamic and contested domain.

Much is retained in this edition, including the basic chapter outline (despite the convergence of several chapters), the content in terms of concepts and applications to Canadian society, and the framing of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations as socially constructed and fundamentally unequal. The book remains faithful to its core mission. *Unequal Relations* is neither a description of minority groups nor a catalogue of Canadian ethnic lifestyles. It rarely provides a literary platform for minority "voices" or stories by minority authors, although there is much to gain from such an approach (see Fong Bates, 2005, 2010). To the extent that historical fact is employed, it is history that influences the present rather than a chronology of the past—about the "is" rather than the "was" (Walker, 2001b). Priority is assigned to a macro-sociological study of institutional dynamics, intergroup relations, and power politics rather than micro-models of individual behaviour, personal attitudes, or life experiences. References to diverse ethnocultural groups reflect a focus on relations—from accommodations to conflicts—within a context of inequality and exclusions, thereby drawing attention to the centrality of power to complement that of identity and recognition (Fleras, 2014a). A deconstruction of the logic behind the politics of government policy, institutional reform, and minority resistance is evident throughout, yet the text tries to avoid regurgitating both blatant government propaganda, institutional spin, and ethnic posturing without dismissing the rationale that propelled these dynamics in the first place. Lastly, the text encourages students to critically engage with the paradoxes of diversity politics and the politics of difference—not by examining the issues and debates in the abstract—but through the activism of "painting themselves into the picture" (James, 1998).

Of course, the eighth edition of this text is not without changes—as might be expected in a domain in which the mix of social change with conventional wisdom is rarely constant, often contested, and subject to changes. The usual amendments are in evidence, including revisions, updates, deletions, and additions where necessary. Additional tables and diagrams have been introduced. Diversity data from the 2011 National Household Survey are incorporated whenever possible. A number of Debate boxes and Insight boxes have replaced those of earlier editions in the anticipation of keeping the material fresh and relevant. The text introduces newer concepts and vocabulary such as "multiversal," "microaggression," "complex (or hyper-) diversities," "racialization," "racism 3.0," "governance,"

"infrastructural racism," "transmigrants and transnationalism," "differential accommodation," and "postmulticulturalism"—not because they are fashionable, but because they promote innovative ways of thinking about the politics and dynamics of race, ethnicity, and aboriginality.

The tone of this textbook is constructively yet unapologetically critical, if only to counteract those discourses that uncritically depict Canada as fair, humane, and tolerant (Cannon, 2012; Hedican, 2013). Settler societies such as Canada or Australia routinely rely on national mythologies (or narratives) to paper over ("whitewash") contradictions of origins and history (Razack, 2002). These self-serving narratives offer explanations that not only justify the colonial project but also rationalize its most destructive aspects, including the displacement and dispossession of Aboriginal peoples by European settlers, the importation of cheap migrant labour for nation-building, and the marginalization of racialized minorities within a white society. Canada is portrayed as an empty land (*terra nullius* doctrine) that was peacefully settled in ways consistent with the rights of discovery, notions of Eurocentric progress, and the principles of Christian civilization. To the extent that these narratives focus on the innocence and heroism of Western settlement and white entitlement, they reflect a very one-sided view of what really happened (Schick, 2008). Yet most Canadians have been taught to think of Canada as a kind, gentle society of good and just people instead of a "telling it like is," namely, a colonization project of conquest, expulsion, and exploitation (Cannon, 2012). Fewer still are equipped to grapple with the "mythconceptions" of a Canada that conveniently cloak a white supremacist history behind the soothing balm of "happy face" multiculturalism (Razack, 2004; Thobani, 2007; see also Leonardo, 2004). Even fewer still are capable of seeing how the privileging of whiteness in defining who gets what reinforces the dis-privileging of Aboriginal peoples and the disempowering of racialized minorities. A commitment to unsettling ("deconstructing") Canada as privileged "white space" makes it doubly important to deconstruct the politics of obfuscation by seeing Canada from the perspectives of those dispossessed and marginalized. It also raises the disturbing possibility that a white Canada is just as capable as any other regime of racially oppressive acts when the situation suits (Hedican, 2013).

To be sure, analyzing these highly politicized topics is neither for the timid nor the politically correct. The interplay of challenge with change invariably inflames passions that puncture people's complacency over identity and self-esteem, core cultural values, the legitimacy of conventional authority, and taken-for-granted privileges. Nevertheless, a commitment to a critically informed analysis is crucial in adjusting to the realities of a post-modern world, namely, to expect the unexpected, to think the unthinkable, and to cope with the uncontrollable. Ours is the age of diversities and difference, not simply in the descriptive or celebratory sense, but because an increasingly politicized diversity is capable of flexing its muscles in the competition for valued resources. The boundaries of "being Canadian" are challenged by the deep differences and radical ethnicities of a society in the throes of transformative change, with the result being that traditional images and conventional assumptions about Canada are no longer applicable (Fleras, 2015). Moreover, it's not enough to simply understand the issues associated with the politics of diversity and difference, even when filtered through the prism (lens) of a diverse, changing, and unequal Canada. Emphasis must also focus on putting this knowledge into practice—either supporting or reinforcing a racialized status quo by doing nothing or, alternatively, by advancing a just and inclusive Canada through critically informed activism. To their credit,

Canadians are slowly rising to the challenge of repairing the largely dysfunctional relationship that informs Canada's dystopian relation to Aboriginal peoples (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 2015). Canada is also proving a pacesetter in balancing the concurrent demands and oppositional tensions of a multicultural governance that abides by the principles of inclusiveness. This *principled* approach to the constructive governance of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations secures a rationale for living together with differences, respectfully and equitably. It also elevates Canada to the global forefront of countries that are attempting to manage the diversity dividend in ways necessary, fair, and just.

SUPPLEMENTS

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PART 1

Conceptualizing the Politics of Race, Ethnic, and Aboriginal Relations

It's been said that this "adventure" called Canada resembles an "enigma wrapped around a mystery inside a riddle." This confused entanglement of unknowables provides an intriguing twist to the turns in Canada's race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations. Put bluntly, Canada has no business even existing, given the implausibilities of its geography, history, and demographics. How can a deeply divided and multilayered Canada continue to survive and flourish under conditions that would otherwise topple other societies? And yet it now stands as one of the world's oldest federal systems (alongside Switzerland and the United States). Its lofty status as a society-building success has elicited playful inversions about Canada as "a solution in search of a problem" (as a Mexican ambassador once aptly put it). Translation: Canada remains one of the world's best places to live—a society so blessed with physical resources and human resourcefulness that it must "invent" problems that less-advantaged countries might dismiss or ignore. That Canadians continue to dwell on the negative at the expense of the positive, even though they have much to be thankful for, may say more about their being pampered than about having problems.

The prospect of "living together with differences" remains a perplexing and provocative challenge. The world we inhabit is rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, and sharply contested, with the result being that confusion and uncertainty often prove the rule rather than the exception. Just as scholars have had to rethink those social moorings that conventionally secured Canada, so too must Canadians grapple with a host of difference issues beyond their comprehension or control. Consider the following challenges:

1. Aboriginal peoples claim to be relatively autonomous political communities with collective and inherent rights to aboriginal models of self-determining autonomy over land, identity, and political voice (Maaka & Fleras, 2005). Is it possible to construct a national governance framework to accommodate these **postcolonial** claims for a renewed relationship involving the principles of partnership, power sharing, and peoplehood (Belanger, 2008)? Or is such an arrangement likely to create a "Swiss cheese" Canada—so full of holes that there is nothing to keep it together?
2. National minorities such as the Québécois are seeking to transform Canada's constitutional arrangements in hopes of constructing a new social compact based on the notion of Quebec as a nation rather than simply a province. The implications of this nationalism—in addition to that of the First Nations—underscore the challenges of forging unity from diversity.
3. Racialized minorities have become increasingly politicized in advancing a more inclusive Canada, one that is respectful of, reflective upon, and responsive to minority needs and demands. To the extent that doubts remain over the quality of institutional responses to the inclusiveness challenge, debates over reasonable accommodation are unlikely to subside (Fleras, 2014a).
4. New Canadians are experiencing a mixed reception. To one side, newcomers to Canada are embraced as integral in advancing its interests at local, national, and international levels. To the other side, both immigrants and asylum seekers may be perceived as troublesome constituents or "problem people"—an outlook seemingly at odds with Canada's much ballyhooed status as an immigration society (Graves, 2015).
5. A governance paradox is emerging. In a transnational world of transmigrants whose identities and affiliations span borders, does it still make sense to talk about integration or inclusion, multiculturalism or citizenship, as place-based governances when immigrants are increasingly uncoupled from a sense of singular belonging and unitary space (Fleras, 2014b)?

The prospect of coping with each of these dynamics—and doing so in a principled way—poses a challenge for Canadian society as we know it. But these challenges also represent a splendid opportunity for Canada-building along twenty-first-century lines. Part 1 of *Unequal Relations* addresses these challenges by providing a conceptual map for theorizing the politics of Canada's race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations. Chapter 1 begins by exploring the concept of intergroup dynamics as they apply to race, ethnicity, and aboriginality. Chapter 2 addresses the politics of race in contemporary society. Chapter 3 is concerned with unmasking the many faces of racism in Canada. Chapter 4 examines ethnicity as a powerful force—both beneficial and costly—in Canadian society, with particular emphasis on the politics of Quebecois nationalism. Chapter 5 looks at social inequality as it affects racialized minorities. Chapter 6 focuses on the increasingly contested domain of gendered inequality as it applies to minority and migrant women. Together, these six chapters provide an introduction to the complex, unequal, and changing domain of race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations.

CHAPTER 1

Race, Ethnic, and Aboriginal Relations: Patterns, Paradoxes, Perspectives

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate how Canada's official multiculturalism can be differently interpreted, depending on the sociological model of society employed.
2. Understand why, when it comes to assessing Canada's track record on race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations, the expression, "the good, the bad, and the in-between" rings true.
3. Describe the differences that characterize the five governance models for managing race, ethnic, and aboriginal relations.
4. Appreciate the value of sociological models of society for analyzing race, ethnic, and aboriginal dynamics.
5. Discuss Canada's diversities in terms of Aboriginal peoples, newcomers to Canada, and racialized minorities.

DEBATE

Framing Canada's Multiculturalism

To define Canada as multicultural is typically considered an understatement. References to **multiculturalism** in Canada range from the descriptive to the prescriptive, with the politics of policy in-between. Canada's population is known to be multiculturally diverse, Canadians generally subscribe to the multicultural values of openness and tolerance, and both minority and political elites are known to play multicultural politics to advance vested interests (Lupul, 2005). Canada is also multicultural because of its commitment to an official Multiculturalism (note the use of an uppercase "*M*" to denote official government policy; otherwise it is lowercase). Entrenchment of Multiculturalism in the *Constitution Act* of 1982, followed by the passage of the world's first and only *Multiculturalism Act* in 1988, has further secured Canada's status as a trailblazer in multicultural governance (Fleras, 2009b).

(Continued)

Many support an official Multiculturalism as a principled approach for living together with **differences** (Dasko, 2005; Environics Institute, 2015; Soroka & Roberton, 2010). Those familiar with the policy—and surveys suggest that the *majority* of Canadians are *unfamiliar* with what Multiculturalism is doing—express pride in a homegrown initiative that many regard as Canada's foremost contribution to global harmony (Adams, 2007). Canada's official Multiculturalism is viewed as "quietly" revolutionary—comparable in stature to the animating ideals of the French, American, and Russian revolutions as a governance framework (Sandercock, 2006). Others are openly critical of its weaknesses or usefulness (Paquet, 2008). They pounce on Multiculturalism as a good idea gone bad or, alternatively, a bad idea unfolding precisely to plan (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Bannerji, 2000; Gregg, 2006; Mansur, 2010). Still others are unsure how to respond. Multiculturalism is "okay" in principle, but not if it (1) imposes inconveniences or costs, (2) makes excessive and illiberal demands, (3) shears apart Canada's social fabric, or (4) challenges core constitutional values. Yet others still acknowledge its paradoxical nature. On the one hand, Multiculturalism rarely means what it says or says what it means, with the result that it can mean everything—or nothing—depending on intentions or context (Fleras, 2014a). On the other hand, Multiculturalism has a tendency to deny what it sets out to affirm—differences—while reinforcing what it hopes to eliminate—inequality—neither embracing differences for fear of disunity nor denying them because of political correctness (Kivisto & Ng, 2005).

Clearly, then, Canadians express a love–hate relationship with Multiculturalism. Those who embrace Multiculturalism as the solution to Canada's **diversity** challenges are themselves dismissive of those who dismiss it as a governance headache. Conversely, those who denounce Multiculturalism as an evil incarnate are no less contemptuous of those who worship at the altar of diversity. In light of its paradoxical status, questions abound over the role of Multiculturalism in contributing to Canada-building. Is Multiculturalism a good thing or a bad thing for Canada? Hoax or help? Progress or regress? Benefit or cost? Living together or drifting apart? To what extent does any reference to the "good" or the "bad" say more about the evaluator's agenda than anything about what is being evaluated or assessed (with the result that any assessment is contingent on whether Multiculturalism advances a particular vision of Canada as modern or postnational [see Chapter 10])? What is the role of an official Multiculturalism in creating and sustaining patterns of inequality (i.e., as a problem) as well as challenging and changing these inequalities of exclusion (i.e., as a solution)? How does applying sociological models of society to Canadian Multiculturalism provide an insightful response to this complex question? The Debate Revisited box at the end of this chapter will explore a principled basis for making any such assessment.

INTRODUCTION: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE IN-BETWEEN

Canada is globally admired for its resources and resilience in securing a true north strong and free (Reputation Institute, 2015). Overseas observers are astonished by Canada's resourcefulness in weaving a remarkably cohesive unity from the strands of diversity (Adams, 2007). They are also intrigued by how Canada manages to keep a lid on those ethnic tensions that have splintered other societies into warring factions. Questions invariably arise: Why does the commitment to an official Multiculturalism persist in Canada, whereas it's experiencing a backlash in European countries and elsewhere? How does one account for the relatively smooth transformation of once-stodgy provincial capitals such as Toronto and Vancouver into cosmopolitan complexes? What is the secret behind Canada's ability to balance the often-competing demands of Aboriginal peoples with those of the Québécois and racialized minorities without experiencing paralyzing strife? To be sure, the potential for unravelling Canadian society is always present. But while other countries are groping for solutions to accommodate difference, Canada is embarking on a promising if unprecedented quest for cooperative coexistence along principled lines (Kymlicka, 2007). Or, to put a slightly different spin to it, Canada constitutes a multicultural role model in the art of living together with differences equitably and in dignity (Fleras, 2009a).

How does this assessment stand up to scrutiny? Any response must begin with a sense of perspective. First, compared to its historical past, Canada's engagement with race, ethnicity, and aboriginality is showing signs of maturity. There is no shortage of cringe-inducing episodes and patterns that historically have scarred Canada's record. Canada originated in the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples and their lands, leaving behind a legacy that continues to diminish and demean. Canada-building was predicated on policies, programs, and practices that routinely exploited racialized minorities, including the exploitation of the Chinese during construction of the more dangerous sections of the trans-Canada railway (Li, 2003); the internment and dispossession of Japanese-Canadians during World War II (Kogawa, 1994); the enslavement of blacks and their segregation from mainstream institutions until the 1950s (Backhouse, 1999; Walker, 1997); and the pervasive anti-Semitism of the 1920s and 1930s, which culminated in the rejection of Jewish emigrants from Nazi Germany (Penslar, 2005). The extent to which this exclusion went beyond the perversions of a few misguided bigots and pervaded both societal structures and government policies says a lot about the politics of power (Wallis & Fleras, 2008).

Times appear to have changed. Evidence of Canada's historical advancement can be gleaned from a list of global firsts in the diversity sweepstakes. Canada's ***Citizenship Act*** of 1947 ignored the distinction between **immigrants** and native-born persons as grounds for citizenship. The *Immigration Act* of 1967 was one of the first pieces of legislation to abolish all quotas or preferences on the basis of race or ethnicity, with the result that Canada's colour-blind immigration policies may well prove to be this country's proudest achievement (Ibbitson, 2005). Canada is the only country in the world to have received the United Nations-sponsored Nansen Medal (awarded in 1986) for its humanitarian response to the global refugee problem. And with the provision of Section 35 of the 1982 *Constitution Act*, Canada became the world's first and only country to constitutionally enshrine aboriginal and treaty rights. The launch of the Residential School Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008 made Canada one of the first countries to establish such an official commission

of inquiry (the final report was published in mid-2015) (Henderson & Wakeham, 2013). Similarly, passage of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* in 1988 solidified Canada's status as the world's first country to institutionalize an official Multiculturalism as a principled framework for positively managing diversity. Its glowing reputation is further secured by Canada's consistent high placement in quality-of-life surveys, including its ranking for eight consecutive years (between 1993 and 2000) as the world's best place to live, according to a human development index.

Second, consider global comparisons. Compared to other societies that routinely violate **human rights**, with abuses ranging from ethnic cleansing and mass expulsion to forced exploitation and coercive assimilation, Canada possesses an enviable reputation as a paragon of virtue, tolerance, and compassion (Global Creativity Index Report, 2015). Escalating numbers of mixed union couples from different ethnic and racialized backgrounds, including a 33 percent spurt between 2001 and 2006, attest to this openness (Agrell, 2010; also Mahtani, 2014). Canada's commitment to the promotion of aboriginal and minority rights is second to none, with both constitutional and statutory guarantees in place at the federal and provincial levels, although there is some evidence of backsliding at present (Maaka & Fleras, 2008). Canada's lofty status is further solidified with endorsement of human rights protection, ranging from passage of the *Bill of Rights* in 1960 to the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982. Paradoxically, however, it's precisely this exalted status that exposes Canada to criticism. Even the smallest of infractions tend to be amplified in Canada because of its exacting standards, whereas such indiscretions would receive barely a mention in many foreign countries (Levitt, 1997). Not surprisingly, Canadians appear perplexed and angry when international bodies chastise Canada for relatively "minor" human rights violations, including its use of the term "visible minorities" as a descriptive label for racialized minorities (Fleras, 2008), yet rogue societies are allowed to get away with "bloody murder" without much condemnation.

Third, while Canada glitters in comparison to its past and with others, it also falls short of established benchmarks. Canadians are adept at "talking the walk" with respect to the ideals of tolerance, openness, and inclusiveness; however, they are less inclined to "walk the talk" by putting these ideals into practice. Canada's ongoing mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples is routinely criticized by the UN and UN observers as this country's most egregious human rights violation (Anaya, 2014). Relations between racialized minorities and the rest of Canada tend to waver uneasily between grudging acceptance and thinly veiled rejection, with the spectre of public backlash ever present. Discrimination and racism are not simply relics from the past; to the contrary, they are so deeply ingrained and structurally embedded that any possibility of their removal from Canadian society is remote (Fleras, 2014a; Jiwani, 2006; Razack, 2004; Thobani, 2007). Anti-Semitism persists, albeit in different guises (Schoenfeld, 2004; Weinfeld, 2005); white supremacist groups are proliferating through digital technology; racialized minorities (and aboriginal men and women) continue to be disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system; and recently arrived new Canadians find themselves increasingly marginalized in terms of income earnings and poverty levels. The fact that highly skilled newcomers cannot secure appropriate employment prospects consistent with their credentials and experiences exposes a gap between the immigrant ideals and the realities of an immigration society (Bauder & Shields, 2015). Clearly, all is not well, and yet these inconvenient blemishes on Canada's reputation are routinely papered over with polite fictions of tolerance, fairness, and generosity that ultimately do a disservice to Canada and Canadians.

MISMANAGING RACE, ETHNIC, AND ABORIGINAL RELATIONS: POLITE FICTIONS *VERSUS* INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

Nearly 45 years of study devoted to the inequalities of race, ethnicity, and aboriginality have made it abundantly clear: The Canada that is often acclaimed as a beacon of enlightenment in managing diversity is not necessarily the same Canada experienced by the disenfranchised such as Aboriginal peoples, racialized minorities, and the newest Canadians (also Cannon, 2012). Consider the following disjunctures that fracture Canada's national image of itself: Race matters, even though it shouldn't; racism is not a relic from the past but insidious and ever-present; racialized men and women remain stratified along Canada's vertical mosaic; recent immigrants are doing more poorly than ever in the labour market, despite Canada's designation as an immigration society; Aboriginal peoples continue to live in conditions that would embarrass many third world countries; and our vaunted standard of living is crafted on the appropriation of aboriginal land and the exploitation of cheap migrant labour for Canada-building. This gap between normative ideals and lived experiences generates a profound distaste (and occasionally denial or anger) in those for whom these revelations border on incredulous or bewildering. "How can this be?" they ask, in a post-racial and pro-multicultural Canada with its abundant resources, resourcefulness of its people, array of generous social programs, and a principled commitment to the colour-blind principle of judging and rewarding individuals on the basis of merit rather than melanin (see also Johnson, 2015, for similar comments from the United States).

Most of us have been taught to think of Canada as a kinder, gentler society of good and just people who disapprove of racism and racially based exploitation. But contrary to what they have been led to believe, Canadians live in a Canada that is not always what it says it is or seems to be, despite Canada's *bona fides* as the world's premier multicultural society. The inequalities of exclusion that blight the lives and imperil the life chances of Aboriginal peoples, minorities, and migrants are real, difficult to dislodge, and pack a wallop (Alfred, 2011; Regan, 2011). Of course, most grudgingly acknowledge the existence of isolated pockets of inequality, albeit as little more than aberrations ("glitches") in otherwise egalitarian Canada (Henderson & Wakeham, 2013). They may be willing to concede the possibility of some unsavory episodes that mar the myth of a cooperative Canada-building venture by plucky settlers and honest politicians, although even this slight concession comes with strings attached. It is commonly believed that the advent of modern democracy and the enshrinement of human rights have addressed the legitimate grievances of Indigenous peoples and aggrieved minority groups. Accordingly, it's assumed that all Canadians are equal before the law, since everyone plays on the same "level playing field" regardless of race, ethnicity, or aboriginality. In other words, if indigenous and minority folk fail, it's their fault. This is hardly a surprising assessment: Both Americans and Canadians tend to equate poverty and inequality with moral failures rooted in individual psyches and personality flaws rather than to see them as reflective of structures or political economy (Royce, 2015). Pointing the finger of blame to personal incompetence plays into the spirit of then Prime Minister Harper's whitewash of Canada when claiming at a G-20 gathering in September 2009, "Canada has no history of colonialism." In Harper's defense, he may have conflated the concept of colonialism with territorial ownership of overseas ("salt water") colonies, rather than seeing it as a system of internal oppression for subjugating the peoples

within. But this historical amnesia is rightly pilloried by Madelaine Drohan (2011:2) who skewers this myth conception:

> The skewed version of history in which Canada sprang fully formed as an international good guy, without any tawdry colonial past, is firmly embedded in the minds of many non-aboriginal Canadians today. They do not see themselves as the descendants or beneficiaries of European colonizers who used the same tactics to accumulate wealth and power in North America as they had successfully used in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Nor would they recognize the remnants of that inequitable system that remain in place today.

In short, Canada was not a barren and unpopulated land mass that magically sprung into existence like mushrooms in the damp. Canada-building was forged in the crucible of colonial violence whose aftermath continues to reverberate throughout this "Indian" country. To the extent that these narratives focus on the innocence and heroism of western settlement at the expense of those victimized by this expansion, they reflect a very one-sided view of what really happened (Schick, 2008). To unlearn this version of Canadian history requires that the story be retold from a different perspective. That alone—a commitment to unsettling these notions of Canada as privileged "white space"—makes it doubly important to deconstruct the politics of power from the perspectives of those who were (and continue to be) dispossessed, marginalized, or exploited.

Those who persist in pursuing a narrative of "Canada the good" are in for a rude awakening. Settler societies such as Canada or Australia routinely rely on national mythologies (or narratives) to paper over ("whitewash") contradictions of origins and history (Razack, 2002). These self-serving narratives offer explanations that not only justify the colonial project but also rationalize its most destructive aspects in the hopes of whitewashing those profoundly awkward projects inconsistent with projected images of a morally progressive country. Imagine the shock of disillusionment to learn that Canada's squeaky clean image is manufactured and misleading rather than naturally occurring or honestly acquired. A profound sense of dismay settles in when discovering that Canada's constitutional commitment to "peace, order, and good government" is largely a polite fiction that glosses over some astonishingly ugly truths that invoke the worst of humanity's inhumanities, including genocide, slavery, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, forced internment, white supremacy, suppression of cultures, and a host of crimes against humanity. More specifically:

- Instead of "telling it like it is," Canada is portrayed as an empty land (*terra nullius* doctrine) that was peacefully discovered, explored, and domesticated in ways consistent with the rights of discovery, notions of Eurocentric progress, and the principles of Christian civilization. In reality, the settlement of Canadian society entailed a brutal colonization of Canada through conquest, expulsion, and exploitation of the inferiorized "other," that ruthlessly removed all barriers to expansion and settlement (Neu & Therrien, 2003; Cannon & Sunseri, 2011; Regan, 2011). In that Canada has never proved its legal jurisdiction over Aboriginal peoples' territory, it is relying on the racist doctrine of discovery to justify its legitimacy and authority (Editorial, International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs, 2015). Aboriginal peoples were imperiously pushed aside in the drive to domesticate Canada—a kind of Canadian-style ethnic cleansing that bullied or starved recalcitrant "natives" into submission (Carter, 1990; Daschuk, 2013; Woolford, 2013). Aboriginal children and adults during the 1940s and 1950s were unwittingly duped as guinea pigs for nutritional experiments (from halving

milk rations for residential school children to withholding dental services; Moseby, 2013); aboriginal women endured forced sterilization under the guise of eugenics ("selective reproduction"; Stote, 2015); thousands of children from 1955 to 1985 were removed from their homes by child welfare authorities (without parental consent) and adopted out to non-aboriginal families or foster homes (the so-called Sixties Scoop; Alston-O'Connor, 2010); and aboriginal children were earmarked for residential schools that proved genocidal in consequence ("systemic") if not in intent (Fontaine & Farber, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, 2015). The legacy of colonialism and genocide bites deeply into the present: That Canada ranks eighth in the world according to a UN Development ranking, whereas Aboriginal peoples rank 63rd if they are disaggregated from Canada and treated as an independent entity—it is an indication of the skeletons that continue to rattle about in the Canadian closet.

- Canada's colour-coded bar was just as real and as fiercely defended as was Jim Crow segregation in the United States (minus the lynching). Slavery and the buying, selling, and owning of slaves (both blacks and Aboriginal peoples—albeit more as status symbols than as enslaved hands) was part of colonial Canada for two centuries (Cooper, 2006; Trudel, 2014). What dismay to discover that apartheid in Canada was openly condoned and enforced well into the 1950s before public opinion and anti-discrimination laws curbed flagrant expressions of racism and segregation. For example, black separate schools were not taken off the books in Ontario until 1964 (and Nova Scotia in 1983). To add insult to injury, it's quite possible that Canada's *Indian Act* and reserve system not only served as a template for South Africa's system of Bantustans ("separate homelands"), but also exemplify a made-in-Canada apartheid in progress—at least in form if not necessarily in function.
- Until recently, Canada self-defined itself as a staunchly "white man's" society (Thobani, 2007). Removal of this stigma from polite discourse notwithstanding, patterns of white privilege continue to prevail in what amounts to a white supremacist Canada (used in a way that differs from usual usage). The systemic whiteness of a white supremacist regime does not necessarily mean a belief in the superiority and domination of some races over inferior others, although most Canadians were openly and defiantly racist well into the 1960s before it became *déclassé* to be racist—at least in public if not in private. More accurately, a systemic white supremacism is located in those founding assumptions and foundational principles that underpin Canada's unwritten constitutional order, while justifying the routine exercise of "white privilege" (which could not possibly exist outside a white supremacist system). A systemic white supremacy also asserts the superiority of those cultural, social, moral, and psychological characteristics associated with whiteness in defining civilization, progress, and intelligence. Patterns of privilege and power are further sublimated in peoples' unconscious biases—in effect, conceding that subliminal prejudicial attitudes are more common in Canada than otherwise implied by references to Canadians as a polite, informed, and civil people.
- Appearances can be deceiving when matching progress with regress. The very things that make Canadians proud of "our home and *their* native land"—multiculturalism, inclusiveness, tolerance, or equal opportunity—are not what they seem to be. These ostensibly progressive initiatives obscure an openly white supremacist history behind