Chapter Seven

Making Multicultural Community at the Institute

In 1961, Director Nell West boasted that the members who participated in the house programs of the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto represented sixty different ethnic nationalities.[1] Most of those members were from Europe, though the subsequent arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean, East and South Asia, Latin America, and elsewhere did further diversify, albeit modestly, a multicultural community space whose non-white members initially consisted mainly of a small number of Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians. The staff of the Institute's Department of Group Services worked with the membership to run a daily roster of social, recreational, and educational programs intended to encourage identification with the Institute and its pluralist goals, promote intercultural dialogue, and foster a sense of collective belonging.

The sponsored clubs and recreational activities were meant to encourage collaborative and democratic modes of organizing as well as to facilitate cross-cultural friendships and forge self-regulated citizens. In this respect, the Toronto Institute was, to quote Bettina Bradbury and Tamara Myers, an "intermediate" space located at what Leonore Davidoff famously called "the ragged frontiers between the public and private." It was a site where everyday interactions occurred among a culturally diverse collection of social workers, newcomers, and Torontonians. A focus on the members' activities and their interactions with the staff permits an examination of the processes of group-identity formation and collective belonging, as well as matters involving personal agency and resistance to the regulatory features of social work practice.[2]

The membership differed with respect to class, education, age, marital status, and gender, though the majority of members, like most staffers, fit an urban middle-class profile. Eastern European men of professional origins were among the Institute's most active members and its loudest critics. Insofar as member/staff interactions involved differently located actors negotiating hierarchal relations shaped by the agency's rules and broader social welfare policies, the

Toronto Institute was also a contact zone marked by unequal power relations.[3] But we should not exaggerate the degree to which front-line group workers, many of whom were immigrants or refugees with little professional training, could wield Foucault's (in)famous "techniques of power" so as to both discipline members and teach them self-discipline.[4]

Focused on what the Institutes called the lighter, but no less important, techniques of integration, this chapter explores how through sports, games, discussion, dance, trips, storytelling, and humour as well as organized dissent, a collection of women and men engaged in a major but flawed experiment to enact a pluralism rooted in everyday social interactions. The mix of newcomers and Canadians who participated in the member-run recreational activities such as bridge and camping, the staff-run and often citizenship-themed speakers' series and film nights, and the midweek and Sunday socials made the Toronto Institute a lively if neither egalitarian nor racially inclusive pluralist social space. The evidence of conviviality, collaboration, friendships, and (heterosexual) romance suggests a degree of community-building. In defying the social work interventions and protesting the bureaucratic rules that limited their decision-making, the members also asserted their autonomy. Ultimately, however, the potential for building a more racially inclusive and progressive community did not materialize.

In contrast to research that pegs the Institutes as either integrationists or delayed assimilationists – an observation that also applies to the historical literature on the settlement house movement[5] – my analysis of the Toronto Institute's community-building efforts considers the possibilities, limits, and paradoxical features involved. As debates over multiculturalism, hyphenated identities, and accommodation continue unabated in Canada and elsewhere, I consider how, in one urban space, identities based on difference were negotiated and forged on a community scale in a particularly formative period in the creation of an official, if now besieged, category of national belonging.[6] Institute-style pluralism combined more bottom-up approaches rooted in community-based mobilizations with top-down methods of social work regulation. Attention to historical specificity also means focusing on the social site itself, for identities are constructed on different spatial scales, from the body, home, and neighbourhood to the workplace, metropolis, nation-state, and global arena.[7] In probing the community-building efforts that occurred within a culturally pluralist organization that was also a social welfare agency, I am mindful, too, of the critique offered by feminist political theorist Iris Young. While acknowledging the value of mutual friendships and cooperation in localized city spaces, Young considered a vision of face-to-face decentralized units an unrealistic model on which to develop a transformative politics in mass urban society, precisely because "communities" invariably privilege unity over difference, leading people to suppress their differences or to exclude others.[8]

Group Methods and Programs

The Toronto Institute, like its US counterparts, combined the settlement house concept of a neighbourhood place with that of a community centre drawing people from across a metropolitan area. It was envisioned as a place where newcomers and hosts learned through group activities to understand, respect, and trust each other. Distinguishing its work from that of the counsellors focused on individual adjustment, the group work staff said it focused on "the total community" and helped to bridge the gap between newcomers and Canadians in several ways. First, the opportunity to pursue interests with others in a friendly but organized environment fostered friendships that increased an immigrant's personal happiness. Developing programs together and meeting one's responsibilities to one's group also helped to develop "the civic skills necessary for community living." The social contacts made would in turn create opportunities that enabled the newcomer to participate in "social and cultural activity in the broader [Canadian] community" and eventually assume the responsibilities of citizenship.[9] Or, as one staffer put it, "organized or group activity" offered an effective technique by which the immigrant was "re-channeled into the mainstream of the life of his new social environment."[10]

Second, Institute group workers claimed their programs would inculcate the democratic values of an essentially liberal nation into the hearts and minds of the immigrants, thereby encouraging their transformation into productive citizens. The club and group elections would nurture leadership skills and political engagement by enabling members to vote and serve as officers; participation in issue-oriented groups would encourage analysis of domestic and international events and civic engagement.[11] The related claim that cultural diversity fortified liberal capitalist democracies – the citizenship forums, classes on modern life, and fundraising campaigns reinvigorating the host nation's inherently liberal democratic character – fit as well the era's liberal internationalism and Cold War consensus in both Canada and the United States.[12]

Third, the host citizen seeking greater degrees of personal and civic integrity would also benefit from these collaborations. Initially, the Canadian host acted as "a demonstrator … a catalyzer" whose positive actions signalled society's acceptance of the newcomer, a critical "psychological" prerequisite for their readiness to integrate. Then, both hosts and newcomers would take the key lesson of integration – that it can only be achieved by "mutual acceptance and participation" – back to their respective communities, creating a domino effect. Finally, as more Canadians, "native-born" and naturalized, learned and practised these lessons, they would become enlightened citizens of the nation and wider world.[13] Institute folks believed that collective engagement in a "two-way" process of voluntary integration involving unequal "partners" could usher in a pluralist democracy in which all enjoyed equal respect and rights.

In order to promote cross-cultural as well as cross-class relationships (or, as staff put it, relations between "professionals and workers"), the staff combined the group work method with other types of social work intervention. Drawing on insights regarding the role of groups as sites of socialization which also provide settings where people can problem-solve together, the group method aims to enrich people's lives through interpersonal experiences among peers that are structured around group-defined goals and shared decision-making. The recreational programs, argued Institute staff, introduced newcomers "to the recreation common in Canada." By enabling their participation in activities of their own choosing, these programs both exposed them to "new ways" and provided a bridge by which they would "become integrated into their new community."[14] Historically, the group method reflected more reformist impulses than the casework method, with its focus on individual problems and treatments. The Institutes' liberal, as opposed to radical, social work activism also meant a preoccupation with ensuring social equilibrium through the attainment of socially functioning groups.[15]

As social work practitioners, the Toronto Institute group work staff, like their US counterparts, drew on psychoanalytical and social scientific as well as social-cultural perspectives. Social-cultural advocates recognized that group dynamics are shaped by the cultural backgrounds of its members. The key lesson drawn was the need for sensitivity to both the individual and the social factors that affected immigrant life.[16] As for the community-organization approach – which ranges widely from efforts to combine social service provision and local group mobilizations to radical social justice campaigns that mobilize at the local, regional, and global levels – the Institute stood clearly in the reform stream.[17] As liberal advocates of improved immigrant rights and promoters of cultural diversity, its group workers considered themselves members of a progressive social movement. But as part of a community chest–funded volunteer agency that also received support from all levels of government, Institute personnel rarely criticized the state or addressed underlying causes of inequity.[18] There was also significant overlap between the agenda of political elites to ensure the loyalty of an increasingly diverse population to the nation (or city or province) and the Institute's vision of an orderly and well-functioning multicultural society.

Well aware that the number, size, and shape of the rooms in their building mattered to the success of their house programs, Institute personnel were delighted with the move in fall 1959 to the double building on College Street, though its acquisition and renovation were costly. The Toronto Junior League, an Institute co-sponsor, and the member clubs and groups helped to furnish the rooms and decorate the auditorium and cabaret space. An increase in community chest funds paid for more group work and secretarial staff. A decade later, the Institute would move again, to a building at 321 Davenport Road.[19]

All members bought memberships,[20] but there were three main types of member groups. First, the sponsored clubs and recreational groups were expected to bring together Canadian and "foreign-born" members to pursue shared interests (bridge, camping) and "build relationships" through team activities. They were also obliged to organize or sponsor income-generating events (tournaments, lectures, and dances) to help support the Institute financially and "encourage identification" with its wider goals. These groups enjoyed democratic representation and involvement in programming through the Members Council (or Membership Council). Established in 1960, the Members Council was an elected body of eighteen to twenty members that represented the clubs and groups, and three members each from the members-at-large and the staff. It met monthly and issued recommendations to the Programme Committee, a board-appointed body with final say over programming. Two representatives of the Members Council also sat on the Programme Committee.

Second, the staff ran activities that were open to the public, with non-members paying a little more than members to attend. These included speaker series (on such topics as practical psychology and libraries as democratic institutions) and group discussions (on law, citizenship, medicare) meant to encourage a "lively exchange of ideas" and a "meeting of minds."[21] There were also instructional classes in dance (folk, ballroom, and, later, modern), budgeting, and arts and crafts, and a mothers' club. The film series included international films on specific countries with invited speakers, Hollywood films,[22] and documentaries made by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). The educational NFB films dealt with various Canadian institutions (including *Stampede,* 1963) and immigrant adjustment *(The Immigrant Meets the School,* 1959). The few films on Indigenous peoples included *No Longer Vanishing* (1955), which delivered the Canadian government's position in favour of "residential schooling" and "the desirability and inevitability of assimilation." In an upbeat spin on a now officially acknowledged program of cultural genocide, the film features various scenes showing Indigenous people moving off the reserve and working alongside "Canadians" in such occupations as teaching, nursing, and military service.[23]

The more casual activities included "lounging" (the lounge had a multilingual collection of magazines and journals), record hours, and socials with games and a dance. (The orchestra-led dances were more popular than the recorded music events.). The staff also organized excursions, including spring bus trips to Ottawa for the tulip festival, fall trips to Muskoka for the autumn colours and to Stratford for the theatre, and summer trips to Niagara Falls and Algonquin Park.[24] On offer were educational outings ranging from a walking trip to an exhibit on the history of nineteenth-century Blacks in Ontario held at a Toronto Public Library to the tours of the Martyrs' Shrine at Midland, Ontario, with its narrative of heroic Jesuits bringing Christianity to the heathens.

Institute staff and volunteers enjoy a coffee break while creating posters of scheduled house events. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

But the Institute hardly challenged the supremacy of Anglo-Canadian Protestant culture. Indeed, an Institute review of a 1963 library exhibit on Blacks in Ontario suggested that nineteenth-century Canadians meted out acts of racism and generosity in equal measure.[25] A few charter flights were booked for European cities like Amsterdam. Staff valued the less-structured activities because they drew more participants than the regular meetings, thus enlarging the pool of people who could spread the Institute message.[26]

Third, there were independent community (Canadian) and ethnic organizations that took out group memberships with the Institute. These affiliated groups were highly welcomed because they provided a source of funds, their meetings "added" more diversity to the evening activities, and they helped to mount the special multi-ethnic cultural events (see part 4). Partially funded by local businesses, the Institute newsletter, the *Intercom*, aimed to facilitate "intercommunication" between the different groups and support the agency through subscriptions. By the mid-1960s, it had evolved from a homemade-looking

newsletter with stick figures to a news magazine that covered political and social affairs and featured cover art and sketches by member artists.[27]

There was some overlap between the groups and programs. The chess, bridge, and tennis clubs ran instruction classes as well as tournaments while the dance committee organized the holiday dances and parties as well as its regular classes. Plenty of members belonged to more than one club and any given club might also organize a lecture, course, or dance for others to attend. While the group services staff was primarily responsible for the house programs, a few of the counsellors also became involved. The adult students enrolled in the government-run English classes at the Institute could also obtain additional civic and citizenship information from the documentaries, speakers, and discussion nights. The volunteers, including the English teachers, donated items for fundraising bazaars and helped with posters and holiday decorations.

Multicultural and Intercultural Space

Some urban geographers invoke the term intercultural to define space where cross-cultural dialogue occurs, as distinguished from the term multicultural, which emphasizes cultural difference and an element of containment, or cosmopolitan, which assumes a gradual erosion of cultural difference through inter-ethnic mixture and hybridization.[28] The Institutes, which since the 1920s have called themselves intercultural agencies, similarly understood the term intercultural as denoting an emphasis on facilitating cross-cultural learning and dialogue and cross-cultural collaborations and relationships.[29] According to more recent definitions, multiculturalism describes a society that contains several different cultural or ethnic groups whereas intercultural refers to communities in which there is "a deep understanding and respect for all cultures." Intercultural communication in this context aims for the mutual exchange of ideas and cultural norms and the forging of meaningful relationships.[30]

Taken together, the staff, administrators, members, and others who participated in the house programs made the Institute a multicultural if heavily European and hierarchical gathering place. In 1960, at the start of its most active decade, the professional, semi-professional, and volunteer group work staff together spoke fourteen different, though mostly European, languages. As with the counselling department, women, including the volunteers, outnumbered men overall. The core staff comprised about half a dozen people, though there were sometimes only two full-time group workers. As the Institute's first director, and then as director of services, West was directly involved in shaping the group programs, initially because of the absence of a departmental supervisor and then because of the high turnover rate among supervisors. In 1962, Robert Kreem, an Estonian refugee with a law degree from the American Extension School of Law and two social work degrees from Canadian universities – his

University of Toronto master's thesis was entitled "Aging Problems in Ethnic Groups" – became director of services. He left the Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto (CAS) to join the Institute, where he had earlier worked on a part-time basis, but resigned after one year over conflicts with the board. The board then eliminated the position, and devolved responsibilities to the supervisor of the group services and counselling departments, respectively.[31]

More men than women figured among the half-dozen people who subsequently held the position of group services supervisor, which also required a social work degree, and involved administering the budget, supervising staff and volunteers, and conducting some community outreach. Apart from Kay Brown, one of the two women to hold the post, no one stayed in the job beyond two years. The men included Richard Kolm, a Detroit Institute alumnus who later returned home, and David Stewart, who also delivered lectures on such topics as personal growth and democracy for the discussion nights. Brown, who held the position in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was the only supervisor to come through the ranks, having first been hired as West's secretary. Besides earlier stints coordinating the volunteers and, later, power-sewing classes for women (see chapter 8), she also edited the *Intercom* in the late 1960s. Maya Tulin, a Russian-born nurse with an English education, filled the supervisory role for one year in the mid-1960s, but was otherwise a group worker.[32]

The front-line group workers, who were mainly women, required a social work degree or equivalent, meaning practical fieldwork experience.[33] One of the first Canadians hired was Violet Head, a graduate of the University of Toronto School of Social Work whose placement with the Institute influenced her post-graduate research. After writing a master's thesis on the Hungarian refugees of 1956, she earned a specialization in recreational social work through the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto (SPC), an Institute co-sponsor, and the Toronto YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) before pursuing a doctorate at the University of Chicago. Upon completing it, Head was hired by the Toronto Psychiatric Hospital.[34]

With a few exceptions, the primarily European refugee and immigrant women who served as group workers in the 1960s had incomplete credentials. They included the multilingual Tulin, though she had practical experience, having organized health and welfare programs in the displaced persons camps. Olga Stoian, who organized the bus trips among other duties, and Ida De Voin, a teacher who coordinated the English program, had more varied backgrounds. The exceptions included Margaret Maas (later Hanen), a Dutch immigrant with social work training from the Netherlands, and, in the early 1970s, Catherine Lee. The only racialized group worker, the Seoul-born Lee was multilingual (Korean, Japanese, and English) and had a social work degree from Wayne State University. A former supervisor with Seoul-based agencies handling the international adoption of Korean War orphans, she combined her group work

duties with counselling mainly Korean clients. Later, Lee, who also taught English to Korean seniors, became supervisor of the group services department.[35]

The Anglo-Canadian female group workers included Helen Steele, a graduate of the University of Toronto's master's program in Slavic studies who had no social work training, but was multilingual (Russian, French, English) and had lived and worked in Europe. (She had also been a Girl Guide leader.) Those with some social work credentials included Joan Buyers, a former small businessperson with SPC experience who, as a widow, took social work courses at the University Toronto and worked with the CAS, and Lucy Gitow, a social work graduate with CAS fieldwork experience. Buyers' correspondence details the hectic schedule of a group worker tasked with managing volunteers and interpreters, organizing dances and open houses, and attending planning meetings with ethnic and city organizations for the multicultural festivals and concerts. Assessments made of Gitow offer some insight into the struggles of a group worker to maintain an empathetic stance on the job. As her supervisor, Lee praised Gitow's efforts to learn "to help the members objectively without involving her own emotional sympathy." It echoed Gitow's self-assessment about having worked hard to "try to surpass" feeling "emotionally upset" by a low turnout for an event or the difficulty of analysing and interpreting the different "behavior modes" observed, and instead to adopt "a positive and empathetic approach."[36]

The male group workers included Tore Maagaard, a graduate of the new social work program at Toronto's Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, and Torontonian Lloyd Kinnee, who also voiced his environmental and nationalist views in the *Intercom*.[37]

The group services department also housed and administered the government-supported English-language program, which received financial support through a federal-provincial agreement.[38] The majority of the certified teachers hired were women. The often short-staffed department relied on mainly female (and some male) volunteers and student placements to run its English tutorials. They usually received some in-service training with regard to Institute mandates and programs. The multilingual secretaries occasionally carried out group work duties as well.

The adult-focused recreational programs attracted mainly single adults between 25 and 40 years of age, but married couples also participated. The annual membership numbers ranged from a low of about 600 to almost 2,000. The successful Saturday night dances and Sunday socials drew a few hundred people. The majority of the participants were European males. Eastern Europeans outnumbered their Northern and Southern counterparts, but there was also a strong Dutch and German presence, especially early on.[39] All together, the members and participants were more racially as well as ethnically diverse than the group work staff. The clubs and house programs

attracted a relatively small number of racialized Canadians and newcomers. A few of the English teachers were Black.[40] After 1967, the English classes became more racially diverse. Since an estimated one-quarter of these adult students became Institute members or participants in house activities, the English program provided a modest but important source of racial diversity during the late sixties and early seventies. Reports indicate that "Canadians" ("native-born" and naturalized) comprised about one-quarter of the membership, though more of them occasionally participated in house activities, and many more attended the special cultural events. Still, given the weighty role accorded to Canadians in Institute strategy, this was a disappointing figure. Another source of perennial frustration was the gender imbalance: newcomer women represented perhaps less than one-quarter of the members, though more of them came to the socials and open houses. The single Anglo-Canadian female volunteers improved the gender imbalance somewhat by attending dances and participating in social and recreational activities, as did smaller numbers of ethno-Canadian women volunteers of European and, in still smaller numbers, Asian origins.

The membership also fluctuated. Certain groups (ski and lawn tennis) were seasonal. Some clubs did well over the holidays while others did not. The recreational clubs varied in size from a handful to 100 members, but the tournaments drew between 200 and 300 participants, as did the chess club's international exhibitions.[41] Apart from the golden age group, which was composed of older German women, the sponsored groups were mixed-gender as well as culturally diverse, though, again, men usually outnumbered women. The all-male winning members at a 1966 table tennis tournament held at the Institute included Wah Shinchiu (Chinese), Herik Gotman (Polish), and A. Ashraf (Pakistani). A dance report illustrated the point about dance bringing people together: As "Leo (Wah Chong) Hong and Margaret Smith representing the 'old' and 'new' Canadian" learn the rhumba, they "are slowly and surely fulfilling" the integration mandate. The others named included participants of Irish, Latvian, Indian, Italian, Korean, and Greek origin.[42]

European groups dominated the independent ethnic and community (Canadian) organizations that took out group memberships, but they also included Anglo-Canadians, Asian Canadians, Black Canadians, and Caribbean immigrants. Photographs of the group activities show some East Asian, South Asian, and Caribbean participants.[43] A mix of Anglo-Canadians and British and European newcomers dominated the *Intercom*'s editorial committee, though a Japanese Canadian and Egyptian appear on the roster. Raymond Greiner was a long-serving editor, but counsellor George Nagy and group workers Brown and Kinnee also took turns as editor. The male members who did nighttime reception duties included Ali El-Laboudy (the Egyptian who worked on the *Intercom*), Otto Koepke (German), and Subramanian Varadaraja, a Tamil

immigrant described by Kinnee as an "honest, reliable, good worker who gets along with others."[44]

Overall, women dominated the volunteer pool, lending a female presence to the Institute despite low female memberships.[45] In 1965, male and female volunteers with names like Kapsa, Levy, Branand, Sauve, and Chopra taught the English tutorials for professional and skilled newcomers preparing for certification exams.[46] Immigrant women mainly taught the Italian-, Portuguese-, and Greek-language classes for social welfare personnel, and conversational classes in Italian and French. (A man taught Spanish.) Among the women volunteers who offered classes was a former physical education teacher from Greece who taught outdoor tennis in the late 1960s.[47] By contrast, the Trade English instructors, both Canadian and immigrant, were primarily men of Southern European origin, and the immigrant students were mostly men learning the male trades, though the hairdressing courses brought in women (see chapter 8).

Pluralist Community-Building

The Institute was a multicultural place, but was it an intercultural one? Is there evidence of bonds having forged across ethnicity, race, gender, class, politics, and other social categories of difference? To address the question, I draw on both top-down sources like the minutes of board meetings and staff reports, and more bottom-up ones like the club correspondents' reports, members' announcements in the *Intercom*, and the minutes of the Members Council meetings.

Club leaders were enthusiastic Institute members and their reports sometimes explicitly addressed the agency's pluralist vision. As bridge club chair, German-born Stase Bunker declared that, in the place of outmoded "German-style Deutschland-uber-alles-style nationalism," the Institute brought together people of different cultural backgrounds through enjoyable pursuits to create a different kind of society. He reported on the "remarkable" growth of the bridge club from the handful of players in the 1957 season to the more than 200 people who participated in the games and tournaments at the College Street centre during 1962. Attesting to its wholesomeness, he described bridge as a "clever" and "companionable" game where "boys meet girls at a proper distance" and "many lasting friendships" and "mutually helpful relationships" are "sustained."[48] The shout-outs to team members similarly indicate the formation of cross-cultural relationships. The 1969 outdoor tennis club leader Nick Basco, for instance, praised Ali Zahid (Pakistani) as well as fellow Italian Corrado Bordonaro for their support. A 1960 bridge club announcement that Tony Syckorski (Polish) had won the Olive Macdonald tournament cup, named in honour of the club's first female chair, suggests, too, a

Playing cards (likely duplicate bridge) at the International Institute, c. 1960. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

certain respect between men and women. The fundraising by club leaders to assist members who became ill – as for refugee artist (and sometime receptionist) Fred Berkenmayer in 1960 – offers evidence, too, of collective loyalties beyond those of family, nationality, or ethnicity.[49] While it slipped into cliché, so, too, did the 1966 report of the International Group's correspondent, who referred to the busload of weekend travellers to Niagara Falls as an "international family" that talked, laughed, sang (sometimes too enthusiastically), and formed "solid friendships."[50]

The Canadian and newcomer club leaders tended to be men of professional or skilled background, though a few women and working-class men also held these posts. While allowing for the embellishment that accompanied recruitment efforts, we need not dismiss as mere rhetoric their depictions of friendly competitions and enjoyable socials. After all, the leaders openly scolded members for failing to vote in a club election or show up for a game. Or for talking instead of concentrating on their game, though the

Outdoor group members enjoy a Sunday swim and picnic at Rice Lake, 10 July 1960. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

conversations themselves indicate friendly relations. At one point, the bridge club chair, Mark Patamia (Slovakian), admonished the "girls" to stop discussing "hats and hairdo's" at the bridge table, and the "boys" to remember that they were "supposed to be the strong, silent sex." As golden age group chair, Hilda Albrecht scolded the members who did not attend a birthday party held for a long-time member who had travelled by bike, bus, and streetcar to be there.[51] The most consistently positive reports came from the outdoor group and focused on the members' shared love of the outdoors. In any given season, there might be a dozen or so core members, but the weekend outings to picturesque Ontario places (Haliburton Highlands, Georgian Bay) might draw thirty or more people.[52]

The club and group reports offer glimpses into relationships forged through participation in organized activities. The outdoor group correspondents noted the collective excitement of viewing "the northern lights in all of their radiant glory," the "exquisite" group meals made out of basic food supplies,[53] and

the heart-warming singalongs accompanied by flute, accordion, or harmonica. A report on a weekend spent at Nell West's guesthouse in Muskoka called it a "luxury" compared to an earlier washed-out camping trip when heavy rain forced people to sleep on the floor of a deserted house. The descriptions of the weekend bridge games and the "amiable" kitchen relations between the group chef, Jos Ansems (Belgian), and the supper club members suggest successful inter-group events.[54] Some of the historical lessons drawn from trips could be problematic, however. A report on a trip to the rugged country surrounding Lake Muskoka concluded that it "must be mainly the same in appearance as when the Indians had this continent to themselves."[55] The photographs of the various outings show that women, some of whom were married to club members, often comprised half of the group.

Purposeful Humour

Emotions and laughter profoundly affect our psychological and physical well-being. As scholars tell us, there is a demonstrable correlation between humour, laughing, learning, and emotional health, and in the formation of positive relations and community-building. When used appropriately, and not to disparage others, humour, including self-effacing humour, can smooth potentially awkward interactions, enhance participation, and initiate social conversations with others in a positive way. Provided, of course, that everyone gets the joke. Clinical research shows that humour can help people cope with adversity and loss, and that it can be leveraged to make others feel good, to gain intimacy, or to help buffer stress. Together with gratitude, hope, and other positive emotions, humour can also help humans forge connections to the world and provide meaning to life. Finally, historical accounts of the use of humour as a weapon of subversion, as in poking fun at those in authority, have found confirmation in contemporary clinical research.[56]

The group reports and *Intercom* columns reveal the frequent, and purposeful, use of jokes and humorous stories to recruit members, encourage conviviality, and foster group identity. One bridge club joke warned of the danger of possible "addiction" and then assured potential recruits that bridge players were "largely successful" people in their home and work life, and that the proceeds from the 50-cent entry fee went to the Institute.[57] The outdoor group's currency was stories of misadventure, such as making do in a rural hostel without cutlery or enough blankets and pillows, and a boat capsizing in the middle of the lake, forcing everyone to swim ashore.[58]

Significantly, given the ubiquity of sexist humour in this era, much of the humour was not sexist, though it often fit the corny category. Non-sexist limericks on the difficulty of learning the English language because of the many different

pronunciations ("sounds like corpse, corps, horse and worse") used humour to put people at ease.[59] Humour was used by an English teacher who shared the incorrect answers that appeared on a recent citizenship exam, though one wonders whether, in this case, everyone understood the joke. Asked to name three Canadian generals, the applicant listed the following US companies: General Electric, General Motors, and General Foods; when asked to name two of the Great Lakes: Lake Superior and Lake Inferior.[60]

A British immigrant volunteer who with his wife taught evening English tutorials at the Institute offered a humorous but mainly heart-warming account of their experiences teaching people who, he said, appreciated being corrected in a friendly manner. He thanked the Institute for its "friendly spirit, its friendly staff, its freedom from red tape," and "practical enthusiasm," and expressed the hope that more "old" Canadians would join the efforts to build "a strong and united community."[61] In one of the few student letters to appear in the *Intercom*, Portuguese immigrant Raul Benerides spoke warmly about the teachers' "kindness and affection" towards each student regardless of colour or politics. As a student who became an Institute member, he also attested to the value of using dance, movies, sports, and group discussions with "people from around the world" to promote integration.[62]

Some of the humour was (mildly) sexist, however. Recruiting efforts aimed at women promised the opportunity to meet young attractive men. A self-described "D.P." told one of the recurring fishing jokes. He mischievously asked who was the Glasgow member who told his wife he spent all summer fishing and caught nothing but fish? Some female club leaders also indulged in the humour. In her 1962 bridge report, Margaret Franzen said the men were "happy" with the addition of several "attractive" women players at recent tournaments held in St Catharines and Buffalo, adding, "I noticed appreciative glances last Monday!"[63]

A number of the punchlines of the jokes published in the *Intercom* derived their humour from the sexism implied in an immigrant's imperfect English. A 1966 entry surely submitted by staff noted a hotel clerk who smiled when the husband asked "whether they had a room where he could put up with his wife," though the humour was likely lost on those with rudimentary English. An exchange reportedly overheard at the Institute between a Hungarian and a Turk over the latter's intention to marry a Hungarian woman with whom he had never spoken may have reinforced stereotypes of "foreign" marriages being shaped by male interests.[64]

The sexist jokes that referenced popular culture included one about a couple ordering dinner in a restaurant. The husband asks his wife "what's the name of that Italian dish I'm so crazy about?" and she answers "Gina Lollobrigida." When it appeared in the *Intercom* in 1962, Lollobrigida was, along with Sophia Loren, one of the highest-profile European actresses with a string of Italian

and French films, and an international sex symbol who starred in US films with leading Hollywood men like Errol Flynn and Rock Hudson. At this time, she was living in Toronto, having moved to Canada with her husband and son in 1960 to take advantage of lower taxes and obtain legal status for her Slovenian husband (a refugee from Yugoslavia). The joke, like the comment in the US-based *Life* magazine, which covered Lollobrigida's move to Toronto, that she was "the most fetching argument ever advanced for liberal immigration policies," was a classic case of compliment via objectification. Lollobrigida later returned to Italy and divorced. She made headlines again in 1970, but as a photojournalist who landed an exclusive interview with Fidel Castro.[65]

A "sexpot" narrative submitted by a female counsellor described an actual case in which a "young girl" landed a stenographer's position with neither shorthand nor typing skills because the boss loved her "Marilyn Monroe" looks. "We were afraid to discuss [the case] too widely for fear it would become a common practice" is the punchline. This is not to suggest a total disregard for women contending with aggressive male bosses and co-workers.[66] Another publicity narrative constructed from a case file for potential use in Institute reports featured a similarly unqualified but stunning German "girl," age 18, who received job offers from three top department stores in one afternoon. The final line about life getting "quite complicated with the swarms of young men around" suggests some sensitivity to the issue of sexual harassment.[67]

Intimacy, Marriage, and Old Friends

The marriages that came out of the Institute speak to its character as a site of emotional intimacy and offer examples of cross-cultural unions.[68] Social scientists and philosophers alike generally view the presence of exogamous marriages between different ethnic groups, and those between immigrants and "native-born" hosts, as both a mechanism for and an indicator of integration. They also view increasing rates of "mixed" unions as a measure of social inclusion. Today, "mixed" unions (marital or common-law) usually refer to those in which one or both partners are "visible minorities."[69] In the context of the heterogeneous but mainly white and European population of sixties Toronto, the fact that close to half of the twenty-three Institute marriages uncovered involved couples who wed outside their ethnic group is significant.[70] To be sure, these cross-cultural unions occurred primarily between Europeans. Like Armin Viereck (German) and Tiny Burgersdijk (Dutch), who were married at Toronto's St John's Lutheran Church in 1960, most of the couples did not even cross the West/East divide of European geopolitics. In the two (European) cases where religious affiliation was identified, the couple shared the same (Protestant and Catholic) religion, thus conforming to a contemporary pattern, though my evidence is merely anecdotal.[71]

The evidence also sheds some light on the Institute as a site of romance and courtship. The couples who married usually met initially through the same club or group, and became better acquainted through other house activities (dances, games, discussions). Put another way, their romance played out in the intermediate space of a socially patrolled community centre and through regularly scheduled occasions that were "public" enough to be respectable, but "private" enough for romantic intimacy. The Institute's own stress on ensuring wholesome fun meant that staffers and volunteers doubled as chaperones, especially at the dances. But young people could find in a space like the College Street building plenty of potential sites for romantic encounters, whether it involved a chaste kiss or hand-holding or heavy petting and more. It could be a dark corner of the cabaret space or auditorium during a dance, an empty meeting room, the stairs, a cloakroom, the washrooms, spaces just outside the building, or a parked car.[72]

The two mixed-ethnic weddings that came out of a 1962 ballroom dance course included that of Dutch-born William Lambermont and Dorothy Pattinson of Southhampton, England.[73] The Institute's supervised dance courses offered particularly the women a comparatively safe space in which to engage in short, structured interactions with men. By observing the behaviour of a potential love interest (was he courteous and generous or domineering and aggressive on the dance floor and off?) and how others responded to him, they could use dance classes to decide on compatibility.[74] As dancers, the newly married Lambermonts shared an activity that encouraged socializing as a couple, whether at an outside venue or at home with friends and family. Like some other Institute newlyweds, this couple moved to the suburbs (Don Mills), making them part of a growing movement of earlier British and European immigrants to leave the downtown immigrant core. That some newlyweds remained active members following their move to suburbia also speaks to the Institute's modest success at being more than a strictly neighbourhood meeting place.[75]

In light of the restrictions imposed on young Southern European women by their parents' rigid cultural codes (see chapter 6), the 1966 marriage between an Italian woman and a "Persian" (Iranian) man (no names given) is particularly noteworthy.[76] Some would have disapproved of such a "mixed" union, but group worker Stoian considered it a sign of the success of the international club she had created. She spoke in vivid, if also self-serving, terms about the young members' participation in the weekly schedule of games, movies, discussions, and dance, making the Institute a "colourful and lively" meeting place where those of diverse origins could "meet new friends and compare notes about life."[77] The young Italian bride's decision to marry "out" fits with a pattern identified by gender-and-migration historians, namely that migration often accentuates and confounds what the nation-state and ethnic communities try to fix as appropriate behaviour for women, such as meeting a future husband in extended-family venues chaperoned

by women. In (presumably) coming to view as outmoded her parents' sense of "good" behaviour, her decision to marry "out" reflected a young immigrant woman's negotiation with urban modernity and even cosmopolitanism. As for negative repercussions, such as abandonment by the family, she took a greater risk than her husband, though he, too, may have faced family disapproval of the match.[78]

The cross-cultural marriage between an Asian Indian man and a German woman also crossed racial lines. It was also exceptional in a more specific sense: South Asian immigrants record the lowest rates of exogamous marriages in many countries. The collective sentiment expressed by the friends of Ravi Sadana and Johanna Lauber in their announcement of the pending nuptials speaks to the progressive possibilities of pluralism. Unlike Institute counsellors, who generally discouraged mixed-race marriages on the grounds that they would falter in the face of cultural differences and racial prejudice, they celebrated the union as "one instance where love has conquered national barriers."[79]

Finally, there were also some marriages involving staff. Two of the three group workers who married were women and both married within their ethnic group, though one of them, Margaret Maas, married an Institute member, Ted Hanen. Staffer Helen Steele left work immediately upon marrying a local artist, moving with him to the United States, but Margaret Hanen remained on staff for a year before returning with her husband, Ted, to Holland.[80]

If the cross-cultural marriages speak to the social-change potential of pluralism, the descriptions of the weddings and festivities suggest significant alignment with conventional heterosexual norms. The reception for the wedding of two Dutch Catholics who were also Institute charter members – Hank Byllaardt, the agency's "handyman" and a group leader who also served on the Members Council, and Elisa de Langlen – was a breakfast party organized by their friends at the Institute. They had one of the longest engagements, having first met six years previously on the dance committee. The bride's attendant was another Dutch female member. The presence of Institute members at the weddings suggests that bonds of friendship and a sense of community emerged among the young adults. We also find conventional depictions of the bride as lovely, demure. Or, as in the case of Hannelore Duringer, the German bride of Slovakian Patamia, the "charming young lady he met at the I.I." The joking references of some brides losing their freedom or their partner's attention upon marriage struck a bittersweet chord. Canadian member Joan Henderson told her wedding guests that she already missed "buzzing around" in the family car doing Institute business. As she dished out cake, the (unnamed) wife of chess club member Hank Spaans told the Institute friends who attended their wedding party bearing a group gift of a pair of lamps that she refused to become "a bridge widow." To which the correspondent replied, "we shall see."[81]

The occasional birth announcements in the *Intercom* suggest the continuance of some friendships, or at least an interest in keeping in touch with "old

A crowded dance floor in the Cabaret Theatre on College Street, c. 1961. The photographer was evidently taken with the white woman in the striped dress and beret. The one Black woman may be a volunteer teacher at the Institute. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

friends," to use a phrase that peppers the correspondents' reports.[82] That such sentiments were expressed towards Egyptian Ali El-Laboudy (most likely Muslim Egyptian) and his probably Anglo-Canadian wife Claire (an English tutor) is noteworthy given how few Muslims belonged to the Institute. Before their departure for the United States several years after meeting in the outdoor group, the couple were fixtures at the Institute. Ali served as an evening receptionist and promotional director for the *Intercom* while Claire did duty as a daytime receptionist and secretary to the Members Council. Photographs show them at Institute Christmas events and socializing with Institute "friends" in a member's modest living room. The *Intercom* announced the early birth of their first "lovely baby boy, Gamal Abdel" (likely named after Egyptian President Nasser) while on holiday in Toledo, Ohio, in 1961, and, that of their second son a year later in San Francisco. There is little on another Arab couple, described as

The original caption for this photograph, which appeared in the *Intercom* newsletter in September 1960, refers to "well known Institute personalities … enjoying themselves at a recent party in 'Uncle Fred' Berkenmayer's apartment." Left to right: Barbara Hancock, Margaret Hanen, Berkenmayer, Vi Head, Ali El-Laboudy, and Claire El-Laboudy. Archives of Ontario, F884-2-9, B427166.

"Wednesday night record man" George and "his charming wife Marry," but the announcement of a daughter noted her "very romantic Arabic name – Lila."[83]

A long-distance friendship between former group worker Margaret Hanen and member Henrietta Van Haften, also Dutch, allowed others to follow Hanen's life after she returned to Holland. In a 1962 letter to Van Haften that appeared in the *Intercom*, a wistful Hanen described her "quiet" life as a stay-at-home mother of three in a small rural community. She recalled with fondness her "hectic" life in Toronto and the "nice" Canadian summers and outdoor trips. Her parting comments, that "I am often thinking of [the Institute friends] and missing the work I loved so much," convey the frustration, even sadness, of a professional woman compelled by marriage and motherhood to abandon her career. In a Christmas letter sent to the Institute in 1963, Hanen was more upbeat about her

move to Australia, noting that they had quickly bought a house with an ocean view, and had been joined by her brother-in-law's family. She added that she was still receiving her *Intercom* and invited people to write her at her home address.[84]

Like any community newsletter, the *Intercom*'s updates on former staff and members point to friendly ties between certain front-line staff, volunteers, and members. Former staffer Head visited the Institute during her trips home to Toronto while she was a PhD candidate in Chicago. A feature on Mme A. Fortier described her as a "popular" and "enthusiastic" French teacher whose pre-migration experiences in France, Algiers, and Bisra "read like an adventure story."[85] The note of congratulations issued to Kees Vandergraaf, a Dutch chef and restaurant owner who helped with Institute dinners, on the purchase of a tourist lodge on the Trent River near Campbellford, Ontario, expressed appreciation for his generosity. One of the reports on people travelling to see family or enjoy a holiday noted that two female social work students embarking on a backpacking tour of Europe had accepted the offer of a Danish male member returning to Denmark for a lengthy visit to escort them on the first leg of their journey. (No sexist jokes here.)

The few death notices expressed an appreciation for former friends. Golden age group member Albrecht was remembered as an energetic participant who also belonged to the stamp club and who proved "a friendly reliable hostess." (The inclusion of some older women on the hostess roster also lent greater credence to the Institute's portrayal of them as cultural ambassadors.) Stamp club leader Randy Randeriis (Danish) was described as a "cheerful" and "greatly respected" member who was always ready to lend a hand.[86]

Tensions and Conflicts

The process of building an international, or pluralist, community at the Toronto Institute was subject to various challenges and limitations. One key source of tensions was the set of rules governing the relationship of the sponsored groups to the Institute. The Institute goal of promoting a culturally diverse and democratic community rooted in relationships of respect, trust, and collective decision-making bumped up against its obligations as a community chest–funded social welfare agency whose activities and services had to align with its incorporated purpose as well as professional social work practices. Institute personnel did not view these principles as mutually exclusive, but in practice, the paradox of trying to build a community that was not only multicultural in composition but also intercultural in intent and practice within a hierarchal structure proved deeply problematic.

The contradiction in goals was reflected in the constitutional rules regulating the sponsored groups' relationship to the Institute. In line with democratic organizing principles, each group created a mandate and set of bylaws, held

regular elections for its usually three-person executive, and arrived at decisions collectively through consensus or a vote. As previously noted, each group also had representation on the elected Members Council. At the same time, each group was assigned a staff (or volunteer) adviser who was given direct authority over the group executive. The adviser was to approve all candidates for election, approve and attend all group meetings, designate the use of equipment, co-sign group mail using Institute stationery, and approve outside publicity for group events. The adviser could also refer new members to a group without consulting the group leaders. Still more authority resided with the group services supervisor, who, for instance, could reject a club executive's request to dissolve their group and instead recruit new members for it. In addition, each club or group was obliged to provide the Institute with financial support, mainly through annual contributions of "surplus" funds earned from membership fees or events.[87]

The Institute's need to generate independent funds to help cover various costs meant frequent membership drives and inspection of individual memberships, both of which annoyed members. Staff concerns about the members' "lack of interest" in the Institute beyond their respective group(s) meant leadership workshops that drilled group leaders on their responsibility to ensure greater identification among their members with the Institute and its goals. Many members resented the pressure to canvass for the annual community chest campaigns. One exception was German member Wolfgang Moritz, who credited the United Appeal and the Institute with his ability to retrain as a bookkeeper following a crippling mining accident.[88]

Institute efforts to enforce the requirement that groups identify with the Institute similarly engendered resentment. The stamp club's international exhibits fit well the Institute's brand of liberal internationalism (see chapter 11), but the group services supervisor castigated the executive for initially publicizing itself as "The United Nations Stamp Club of the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto Inc." because it sounded too independent. Club leaders removed the UN reference following the dressing-down, but the incident rankled. As did the squabbles over securing funds for the stamp fairs, which drew large crowds.[89]

Similar tensions led to the withdrawal of the highly successful outdoor group from the Institute in 1964. Staff criticized the members for using Institute resources such as camping supplies while refusing to support the Institute through contributions. They also accused the group leaders of breaking the rules by making changes to their bylaws or holding meetings without first securing the adviser's consent. The group leaders retaliated with charges of hypocrisy and accused staff of trampling on their democratic rights by denying them access to their equipment and funds. The group leaders, many of whom were professional Eastern European men quick to denounce any action that smacked of patronizing or authoritarian practices, did play a role in the escalation of tensions.

Insofar as the disputes often occurred between middle-class male members frustrated with their subordinate position and middle-class personnel, some of whom were themselves newcomers, the dynamics differed from the inter-class tensions common to social welfare organizations (which occurred between middle-class social workers and working-class or poor clients). But it still spoke to the inequities and contradictions imbedded in Institute practice. The staff announcement of the outdoor group's departure said it had withdrawn from the Institute, but angry members claimed it had been "pushed out."[90]

The tensions created by front-line staff rivalries over securing members and resources for their respective programs, and the resentment felt by underpaid staff, also hurt the community-building enterprise. Since front-line staff were often female and supervisors mostly male, these were also gendered conflicts. Group worker Buyers responded to her dismissal on grounds of insubordination (specifically, of "selfishly over-identifying" with her programs and neglecting other duties) by accusing her male superiors of trying to harass her into quitting. Following a staff assessment that praised Buyers' co-worker Stoian for effectively navigating "the frustrating conditions created by Mrs. Buyers," the board simply upheld her firing.[91]

The gendered character of members' complaints about controlling or arrogant group workers – the complainants were all men, the targets of their criticism mostly women – reflects both the heavily male membership and the prevailing gender norms that made it easier for men than women to speak out. But explicit sexism also played a role. For example, when member Mike Sosaszny, who was at one point suspended for being rude towards board members, accused Tulin of unfairly removing him from his night receptionist job, he drew up a ten-point list of infractions (which included being unfriendly, unorganized, and manipulative), demanded an immediate enquiry into the charges, and insisted on firm disciplinary action. Her administrators had some concerns about Tulin's less-than-stellar qualifications, but she was vindicated and Sosaszny's vitriolic charges dismissed.[92]

The heavily female staff dealt as well with the sexual tensions that played out at the evening dances between single immigrant men and Canadian women volunteers. Their efforts to educate the men who felt entitled to act aggressively towards unaccompanied single women – on the not entirely accurate cultural grounds that, in their homeland, such women were prostitutes or sexually available – on the inappropriateness of such behaviour in Canada were not especially effective. Nor were their attempts to convince the upset women to return. Without letting the men off the hook, it bears noting that they might have resented the superior tone of voice with which staff declared such behaviour un-Canadian, as though Canadian men never harassed women.[93] Nor should we minimize the admittedly few recorded allegations of staff racism, which Institute administrators also handled badly. One such complaint was issued by

Ahmed Shanty, an Arab immigrant member, who informed the board that a group worker had withdrawn her offer of an evening receptionist job after West had allegedly said "Let's have no more Arabs working here." In response, Director H.C. Forbell expressed "disappointment" in Shanty's accusatory stance but agreed to a meeting, though nothing evidently came of it.[94]

By spring 1964, the build-up of anger and resentment led the Members Council to issue a scathing report of the Programme Committee along with a list of recommendations for change. Charging the Programme Committee (and, hence, the board too) of "not performing effectively," the report highlighted contradictions between the Institute's premise that the integration of Canadians and future Canadians of different cultural backgrounds required "a common interest among people" and its practices, and expressed resentment over their treatment as second-class citizens. It argued that the staff's propensity for likening the relationship within the groups to that of a club (warm), but insisting that the group's relationship to the Institute be "businesslike" (financial), ignored the fact that integration "cannot take place on a business-like basis," but instead requires "harmonious" relations between groups and staff.

In response to what it called the staff's propensity to regard everyone as "irresponsible," the report asserted that, while there are "misfits" in any group, most members were "responsible citizens with a variety of interests and a good education," and that the staff's actions were "detrimental" to the Institute's "reputation." In exchange for the funds and volunteer hours they contributed to the Institute, the members, it added, had a right to expect the Programme Committee and staff to take greater care in carrying out its duties and to show more interest in the groups' activities. Instead, staff "apathy" was pushing members away and making it difficult to attract new members; meanwhile the Programme Committee undermined the Members Council's suggestions and efforts to improve the situation.[95]

The submissions by individual members that accompanied the report reiterated the complaints about the Institute's undemocratic and even dictatorial ways and the demand that member groups be given more control over their funds and activities. An attentiveness to the importance of the social space was evident in the calls to improve the "atmosphere" at the Institute by acting on the repeated requests to paint the "disgrace[ful]" rooms and basement, with their peeling paint and rough floors, to repair the lighting, and to improve the upkeep of the washrooms, particularly in the cabaret space. Still others wrote that simply allowing the lounge radio to be on all week instead of only on Sundays, keeping the record player in good repair, and buying up-to-date records would "encourage [a] feeling of warmth." As would permitting the clubs more time to complete games. There were also suggestions for adding new courses dealing with Canadian life. And for improving the "uninspired and uninspiring"

Intercom by adding a sports and a women's page and columns devoted to the personal experiences of immigrants.[96]

In insisting upon their right to decent surroundings and greater autonomy, and in drawing a connection between the "atmosphere" of a social space and group morale and belonging, Institute members were articulating a version of what has been called "moral geographies." They were negotiating a collective ethics of mutual respect that was rooted in meaningful cross-cultural encounters that occurred at the spatial scale of a community "meeting place" of ethnically diverse people.[97] It was not proximity alone that led certain individuals and groups to mediate differences among previous strangers and develop a sense of group identity, but rather that, as members engaged in purposeful activity, the Members Council constituted what Ash Amin has called a "micropublic of everyday social contact and encounter." Whether theatres, sports clubs, or community groups, micropublics, argues Amin, are more effective at negotiating difference and engendering new ways of being and doing than mounting public festivals. We also see in the members' protest a form of oppositional culture familiar to social historians, wherein the targets of moral regulators both absorb some of the intended values, such as democracy, and seek to shame the regulators for violating their own ideology.[98]

The points about intercultural dialogue and collective belonging should not be exaggerated, however, given the persistence of social inequities and the presence of a clique of professional Eastern European men on the Members Council. The fact that its composition during the revolt was more ethnically diverse, and included more women, than in previous years, does suggest, though, that the principle of respect – not just ethnic male posturing – mattered to the wider membership.[99] The protest led to some reforms, including improvements to the physical space, but little came of the promise of democratic reforms in the governing structure.

Sharing Immigrant Tales

The Members Council's revolt also led to the creation of a column in the *Intercom*, "Tales of an Immigrant," where people shared their personal stories. The predominance of European middle-class authors in the column underscored the heavily white and European character of Institute pluralism. The group of ten men and two women reflected another limitation: women's underrepresentation among Institute members. The authors came from both sides of the Iron Curtain, but most were Eastern Europeans. There were two Southern Europeans of rural origins and one former Dutch (female) farmer. Most everyone expressed a mix of emotions, but concluded with positive assessments of Canada and its opportunities, and in the case of the Eastern Europeans, the political freedoms gained. The essays reflect the willingness of members who

have achieved a degree of success in Canada to share their stories. Some embraced their role as pioneer and a few evidently harboured political ambitions. Together, the articles arguably convey something of what emotion theorist Sara Ahmed has called "multicultural love." That is, the immigrants' willingness to validate a national discourse of multiculturalism (as an open and diverse nation) by meeting a key requirement of that nation's "conditional love" – to take on the new nation as a "love object" through allegiance to its ideals and adherence to its norms – is rewarded with the nation's love in the form of tolerance of their cultural difference.[100]

Most of the essays began with familiar anecdotes about leaving home or arriving in Halifax, the insipid cake-like Canadian white bread, and the anxiety they felt – all themes that likely resonated with readers. Apart from the two men who claimed to have immediately fallen in love with Canada, the authors emphasized that initial struggles meant it took some time to truly appreciate Canada. Dutch-born Martin Weiland explained that while he was lucky enough to have found a warehouse job early on, it was learning English at the Institute that eventually led to a bank job that changed "everything" for him. So that six years after arriving in Canada as a wary immigrant intimidated by Toronto, "I felt that I belonged" and became a "happy citizen." He described his integration in Institute-like terms, as a "subtle process" that did not require "forsaking" his ethnic background. Now an accountant, he added that, having recently bought a house outside Toronto on the "beautiful" Credit River, he had joined the many Canadians who commuted to work by train.[101]

Otto Koepke, a former teacher/interpreter who established a photo and print business in Toronto, similarly expressed "no regrets" about coming to Canada. Identifying himself as a German expellee (refugee) from Eastern Europe, he concludes: "I lost my home province to the East and won a better homeland in the west!" Koepke also recounted his bewilderment as a newcomer in Montreal, when people he addressed in English or French replied to him in German, until someone told him that "my hair and my briefcase" gave him away. An enthusiastic YMCA member, he became involved in the Institute's recreational programs.[102]

The most critical writer was a German-born professional, Wilhelm Pilz, who recalled the despair he felt over living in a dark and dirty Toronto hotel worsening after his first interview in an employment centre. In his version of an oft-told tale, he noted that the promised friendly encounter turned out to be "a game of 'let's push him around.'" He recalled the "poor creatures, cheap alcohol on breath, hanging outside the building, begging for a dime or a cigarette in this 'prosperous land,'" and the many rejection letters that embittered him. His only solace, he wrote, was the English classes at the Institute, which became "my second home." Pilz praised the excellent teachers for going "one step further" by inviting students to house parties, where they could enjoy a beer, meet others, and become more involved in the "North American way of life." Although

more wistful in tone that others, Pilz also concluded on a positive note, saying that, with his wife's support, he had returned to university, started a new career, and become accustomed to Canada – and "maybe even grown to like it a little bit."[103]

Ilmar Külvet, an Estonian journalist and writer who had worked with the US radio program "Voice of America" in Soviet-occupied Estonia, and who now edited the Toronto-based Estonian newspaper *Vaba Eestlane* (*Free Estonian,* est. 1952), fit the profile of an ethnic elite.[104] His story about the "somewhat cynical" immigration official he met in Halifax also drew on his skills as a playwright. The official told him he had an honest face, but also that he was "a sucker for honest faces," meaning the honest-looking might yet prove dishonest. He then advised Külvet to elevate his former status as a journalist to that of editor-in-chief in order to land a reporter's job because prospective employers, anticipating exaggeration, "will automatically deduct 25% from your claim." He also warned him that Toronto was "a human jungle" where "only those equipped with claws and sharp teeth have a chance to get ahead." Noting that he was able to resume a career as an (ethnic) journalist in Canada after spending several years as a shipping clerk and a barbed-wire wrapper, Külvet ended on a rueful note. He wrote that while he no longer felt that he lived in a jungle "perhaps because I've … developed the claws and teeth needed to survive it," it had been a long time since someone told him that he had an honest face. The accompanying sketch by artist Joann Saarniit, another Estonian refugee and Institute member, of an anxious man in the big city, underscored the essay's rueful tone.[105]

The essays penned by the women, Czech refugee Nadine Hradsky, a doctor, and Dutch immigrant Madzi Brender a Brandis, a farmer who obtained a university degree in Canada, were both similar to and different from those of the men. Again, there are stories about early bewilderment and struggle. Brender a Brandis wrote about arriving by train at a small town in northern British Columbia on a frosty cold night in 1947 with a baby and two kids tugging at her skirt, and the family's failure at farming. Hradsky recalled her fear of losing her first (night) job in a candy factory because she could not roll the cellophane wrapper around the candy canes as fast as "the Canadian girls," and waiting for her imprisoned husband to join her in Toronto. The women, too, were ultimately positive about Canada, though Hradsky was more emphatic about loving "this country with a passion that embarrasses our Canadian friends." She thanked the co-workers at the candy factory who shared their lunch and taught her English. For Brender a Brandis, life turned around at the University of British Columbia, where she and her husband felt accepted by professors and students alike, creating "very happy memories."

Both women also provided intimate family details. Brender a Brandis, who moved to Toronto after university, recounted feeling homesick and isolated at

home while her school-age children and husband had "Canadian" experiences, and feeling overwhelmed by the latest housekeeping regimes, but also how the Institute night classes, clubs, and outings helped her to understand the Canadian way of life. Indeed, she seems the model immigrant mother, explaining that, having weighed the pros and cons of the "strict" European parenting style with those of "the more permissive society," she realized that, for her children to be happy, their parents had to try to raise them as Canadians. Her occasional slip into the "old fashioned" parenting, she joked, brought some "spice" to their lives. Brender a Brandis was clearly an intelligent and resourceful woman, but, in keeping with contemporary gender norms, she gave her husband the main credit for her successful integration. She signed off by advising other husbands to encourage their wives to join the Institute's English, recreational, and arts and craft classes.

Hradsky's essay included a religiously themed account of the first Christmas Eve spent with her children at Union Station, taking in the "towering trees filled with coloured lights" and praying under the vaulted ceilings for her husband's safe arrival. (He arrived several months later.) It was a well-crafted tale about what became an annual family Christmas ritual, one that Hradsky now included in her talks on the Institute delivered to women's volunteer groups. While Institute staff may have helped to write it, this was a female refugee–shaped narrative that became a publicity narrative used in part to recruit volunteers.[106]

Only Sicilian-born Corrado relayed his story through an interview. Institute volunteer Isabel Jemsen described his life as one "of thought, endurance and will, perseverance, skill and luck." Corrado was far less educated than the other authors, though having trained as a welder, and then having become one of the bilingual welding teachers in the Trade English Programme held at the Institute, he enjoyed a status above that of most Italian immigrants. His story spoke of loneliness and unemployment, but also of his feelings of gratitude towards the Institute. The Institute counsellors, he noted, enabled him, first to secure a Canadian certificate in welding, then to land the teaching contract, and, finally, to attend college and obtain a teacher's certificate. Convinced by a trip home that he had become a Canadian, he obtained Canadian citizenship. In another heartfelt plug for the Institute, he said that his active participation in the clubs and activities was not only about repaying the Institute for its support, but also about "making up" for the many deprivations suffered as a very poor child in Sicily.[107]

Semantics or Slippage?

While the "Tales of an Immigrant" column offers some evidence of community-building through collective storytelling, the scathing critique of the house programs by the supervisor of the Group Services Department indicate continuing staff-member tensions and more. Five years after the members' revolt, and

three years after the Institute's move to Davenport Road, Kay Brown excoriated the programs and advocated a new path for the Institute. The Institute's inconvenient location, she argued in a 1969 report, meant they needed high-quality programs to attract newcomers, but the (reduced) recreational programs were "an unmitigated disaster." The current membership numbers (evidently in the low 600s) were deceptive, she claimed, because some programs were being "artificially held together" by certain staff, and the Saturday night dances no longer attracted enough people. The "fairly" successful weekend summer trips had seen "a blaze of glory" in 1967 because of Expo and "the general Centennial fever," but had since petered out. Indeed, they were barely breaking even in terms of cost only because the staffer (not named) spent hours on the phone "cajoling and frequently bullying members to participate." She also accused the international club of using the Institute as a private club.[108]

Brown did not suggest eliminating all programs, but she did recommend the adoption of a "Canadianization" policy while denying its assimilationist overtones. In regard to house activities, she favoured continuing with the chess, bridge, and table tennis nights and the film series as they drew good audiences. She recommended closing the building on weekends in order to reduce staff "waste" over "unnecessary" programs, but allowing the outdoor activities to continue. She wanted the bus trips put on a one-year trial basis. As for overall goals, however, Brown rejected the Institute's long-term dual strategy of combining activities that encouraged Canadianization (such as English and mother's classes and discussion groups) with events (ethnic weeks, folk festivals) that promoted cultural preservation and involved close cooperation with the ethnic organizations. Instead, she argued, the focus should be solely on Canadianization programs. .

Brown justified her controversial recommendation largely by addressing the Institute's difficulty in attracting many new members to its house programs despite the recent increase in the professional immigrants that comprised its main target group. Drawing on the recent findings of several social agencies, she argued that the low rates of ethnic-group affiliation registered among residents in Metropolitan Toronto (8 per cent) despite the recent increase of young (age 20–29) urban immigrants in the "professional and managerial" categories indicated that these newcomers were "not particularly interested" in cultural activities designed to preserve old-country values. Instead, she added, they "cheerfully" join programs offered by Canadian agencies and enjoy "commercial entertainment," and attributed both to the advances in modern communication and the increasing Americanization of Europe, which bred a growing familiarity, at least among urban educated immigrants, with contemporary Western culture (the "same" modern plays, dances, movies) and politics. This exposure, she claimed, lessened the culture shock immigrants felt upon arrival in Canada and thus the need for programs that helped to cushion it by respecting and

preserving ethnic (folk) cultures while facilitating adjustment to the new culture. As for the "less educated" and family-sponsored immigrants, she thought them unlikely – except for single men – to seek outside entertainment, and that a continuing failure to attract enough single women to the socials meant that many single men did not return to the Institute.

In defence of her position, Brown claimed that the Institute was already undergoing a change in purpose, from the era of West's "very close relationship" with the ethnic groups to one more focused on delivering social services most relevant to the newcomer's Canadianization. That shift, she argued, made eminent sense for three main reasons: the popularity of the English program (which drew an average of 350 students each season), the recent failure of the house programs to return any profit to the Institute, and the fact that public agencies like the Canadian Folk Arts Council as well as the federal and provincial departments of citizenship and immigration were now actively involved in ethnic culture preservation. Consequently, she concluded, the Institute should focus on "the indoctrination of Canadian values and cultural attributes." Her new emphasis on effectively accelerating the process of Canadianization would inform the expert opinion she relayed a year later to the journalist Sidney Katz about the psychological harm being done to teenagers by rural Southern European parents who sacrificed their children's education and future in order to meet their own goal of home ownership.[109]

Brown's 1969 report also reveals some major contradictions. For example, she claimed the Institute could fulfil its new purpose by severing its ties to the ethnic groups interested in cultural preservation and by forging links with the social service groups within growing immigrant communities like the Southern European and Yugoslavian ones, and with long-standing service agencies like the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society. Yet, one could hardly make incursions into any immigrant community without first developing some association, and building trust, with a range of organizations. Equally problematic was the suggestion that the Institute assume the role of coordinating and assessing social service agencies across the immigrant communities. Brown also dismissed the Institute's once close relationship, again through West, with the ethnic press editors because they never adequately covered its programs, but evidently thought they could easily forge links with the ethnic language radio and television media in order to secure better publicity.[110]

Brown clearly anticipated criticism of her recommendations. She thus tried to deflect attention to the matter by claiming that one could "avoid the problem of being tied up in the semantics of integration, assimilation, melting pots and mosaics" simply by viewing the Institute as a teacher whose role is to equip students with the tools and knowledge necessary for them to make their own decisions. Her attempts to navigate a semantic minefield through resort to a slippery logic was not an isolated act, but rather emulated the US

institute movement's paradoxical thinking on these questions. As advocates of a liberal creed that claimed enlightened superiority over historically dominant assimilationist movements, Institute personnel adopted a slippery logic – or paradox – whereby the desire to encourage integration, so as to preserve ethnic cultures and promote a robust pluralist nation, existed in tandem with the perceived necessity to ensure newcomers' "absorption" of "American ideals" (see chapter 3).

Although less tangible than charges of undemocratic behaviour, the confusion caused by the slippage between understandings of integration and assimilation posed a challenge as well to community-building efforts in Toronto. It thus requires further comment. Research into a dozen US Institutes and the central body in New York City reveals differing formulations of the movement's mission. Certainly, most Institute folks subscribed to the integrative approach endorsed by Willette Pierce of the Milwaukee Institute, who claimed that balancing migrants' enriching traditions and "aesthetic values" with exposure to and adoption of American values would allow them and their children to "become Americans without throwing off their past."[111] Others appeared equally comfortable describing their mission as assimilationist even as they understood the term to involve respect for immigrant cultures and for cultural diversity. The same Institutes that spoke of "two-way change" in both American and newcomer, such as the Toledo Institute, talked, too, of ensuring immigrants' "induction into American life and concepts, attitudes," with its necessary "personal and group adjustments" and the "assimilation of the foreign-born into the native population." Related remarks, including by movement founder Edith Terry Bremer, about "the Americanization process" progressing at different speeds for different ethnic groups similarly implied that the Institutes' aim was Americanization.[112]

Toronto Institute personnel used the term integration quite consistently to explain their mission, but, here, too, we find instances of this slippery logic. When group work supervisor Kolm warned of the dangers of remaining in the cramped quarters of the St Andrew's building, he used the word "absorption" to underscore the need for a facility that could support "active" house programs that would bring in "constructive and stable persons." "A substantial number" of desirable middle-class Canadians, he noted, was necessary to ensure that the "rough" and "unstable" types "become absorbed" into a Canadian way of life.[113]

Certain *Intercom* columns used the terms assimilation or integration in ways that may have confused some readers. A 1960 editorial on the Institute's mandate to help newcomers "feeling strange and lost in this huge metropolis" to meet a "friendly voice," receive "helpful advice," and achieve that human "thirst for friendship" claimed that the immigrants' first goal was "to be assimilated quickly." Similarly, an article on the psychological aspects of immigration by a French Canadian priest used "integration" to explain the importance of

immigrant reception work, but his depiction of immigrants as mainly uprooted people who had to be transformed into Canadians implied assimilation. As did his language. The immigrants, he wrote, need not sever all ties with their homeland, but they must understand that the "complete integration" of an immigrant family will occur within one or two generations. Further, his depiction of the process – namely, that the children, by attending Canadian schools, catechism classes, apprenticeship workshops, youth activities, and camps, will plant roots in the new soil and absorb the adoptive country's culture to the point that "they are attached to their former country … only through the memory of stories told at home" – implied assimilation. Such arguments might have conveyed the sense that Institute folks were really "delayed assimilationists."[114] In the end, Brown's report reflected her own rather than the Institute's shift from a sometime contradictory pluralist position to an avowedly assimilationist stance, but its slippery logic was not out of the ordinary.

Missed Opportunities

The records of the Institute's house programs point to missed opportunities to develop a more progressive and inclusive category of belonging based on respect for racial difference and progressive politics as well as gender. One example of how the presence of affiliated ethno-Canadian groups outside the European mainstream could have exerted a positive impact was the presence of Japanese Canadian organizations like the retired members of the Japanese Labourers' Union (est. 1920). An *Intercom* article on the contribution of Japanese Canadian mill workers to the Canadian labour movement featured labour leader Etsu Suzuki and other "pioneers" who fought to raise the consciousness of the mainstream unions with respect to the citizenship rights of all Canadians. They did so, it added, first by obtaining a charter as Local 31 of the Camp and Mill Workers Federal Labour Union (1927), and then by securing the support of the Trades and Labour Congress for a 1931 resolution in favour of enfranchisement. This simplified story of a more complex history was part of the coverage given to a reunion of Local 31 members at Toronto's Nikko Garden, thus also offering a reminder of the Canadian state's wartime internment and postwar dispersal of Japanese Canadians across Canada.[115] In symbolic appreciation of the city's acceptance of relocated Japanese Canadians after the war, the Sakura (Cherry Blossom) Club, also an Institute member, helped with a fundraising campaign to realize the wish of the Japanese Consul to Canada to plant a Japanese garden in High Park, Toronto's biggest public park. Overall, however, the Institute's Japanese Canadian programming largely consisted of a few concerts and some Japanese tea ceremonies, including one held on the University of Toronto campus in 1960 with two Japanese Canadian Institute hostesses. Sponsored by the Society for Oriental Study, the event had both an

orientalist and Cold War air about it. The Japanese consul spoke on the topic of "the development of democracy in Japan."[116]

The affiliation of progressive groups among the Portuguese and Caribbean immigrants also held out the possibility of building a more inclusive and activist community. The Portuguese Canadian Democratic Association (PCDA, est. 1959) opposed Portugal's Estado Novo dictatorship and sought to prepare Portuguese immigrants in Canada for their transition to democracy. The PCDA was a heavily working-class organization, though its founding president, Fernando Ciriaco da Cunha, was an agricultural scientist and former civil servant, and other members were either political activists in exile or liberal professionals. The Institute and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (DCI) collaborated with the PCDA on a community project to encourage Portuguese immigrants in Toronto (and Montreal) to pursue Canadian naturalization. But there was no further collaboration, no doubt because of the PCDA's leftist orientation. That politics was on public display during the so-called Bay Street riot of 1961, when pro- and anti-Salazar immigrants clashed in front of the Portuguese consulate. A *Toronto Star* reporter covering the event quoted a DCI officer who touted the Institute line about immigrants needing to abandon Old World conflicts, adding, "We try to stress Canada is their home during occasional lectures at the International Institute." The pro-Salazarists among Portuguese immigrants would probably have challenged an alliance with the PCDA, but the Institute never really entertained the idea.[117]

The Caribbean presence at the Institute, which included the in some cases overlapping memberships of the West Indian Student Association, the West Indies Independence Committee, and Calypso bands created an opportunity for developing cross-racial bonds. Here, a key figure was Charles Roach, who with his "incomparable" Rio Blanco Trio and other bands headlined the Calypso Nights, delivering "haunting calypso tunes" and some "western music" for 200 and 250 people.[118] Born in Belmont, Trinidad and Tobago, to a trade union organizer father, Roach came to Canada in 1955 to pursue a university education. After graduating from the University of Toronto's law school, he worked as a staff lawyer for the City of Toronto until opening his own practice in 1968. He also owned and operated the Little Trinidad, one of the after-hours clubs that emerged in the sixties to serve the small but growing Caribbean community with calypso and other musical genres from home and provide a space for folk art, drama, and dance.[119]

Some young Caribbean immigrants joined the mainly white audience at the Institute's sixties-era Calypso Nights, and Roach, who later co-founded with other Caribbean businessmen the Caribana festival in 1967, might have played the role of intermediary between at least East Caribbean immigrants and the Institute.[120] There was even some overlap between his views and that of the Institute on promoting cultural diversity (see chapter 10). Yet, with the

partial exception of the meetings held to discuss human rights issues (see chapter 11), Institute staff did little to develop more racially inclusive house programs. Admittedly, a closer relationship with the Caribbean or Portuguese groups may not have fully redressed the gender imbalance. In the early 1970s, Royston C. Jones, the Institute's Caribbean counsellor and one-time consultant on Caribana, was featured in an article in the *Toronto Star* discussing the polite racism of Canadians towards Black immigrants.[121]

Conclusion

Despite the Institute's perennial financial problems and ongoing tensions, a culturally diverse group of women and men sought to enact a community-based pluralism rooted in everyday interactions and collaborations – and friendly competition. In contrast to the more explicitly hierarchical nature of the social worker–client interactions that occurred in its counselling department, the Institute's house programs involved more egalitarian relationships among members, and even more collaborative relations between members and staff, though a fully formed democracy proved an elusive goal. Humour, sharing stories, and heterosexual marriage, among other factors, helped to develop a sense of community particularly among the members.

As a social welfare organization, the Institute also faced the challenge of attaining that delicate balance between intervention and empowering people, as well as that between integration and assimilation. The concept of two-way integration gave certain Canadians, especially Anglo-Canadians, the upper hand, but also placed the onus as much on them as the immigrants to make the experiment work. The participation of racialized Canadians and newcomers raised the possibility of building a more racially inclusive community that extended beyond the numerically dominant European groups. In the end, however, the possibilities presented by this pluralist experiment were outweighed by its limitations. The latter ranged from the fundamental contradictions within Institute-style liberal pluralism, which tried to square bottom-up principles of community-organization with top-down principles of social work regulation, to the paralysis that set in as the Institute faced its impending extinction. Finally, my focus here was on one locale in a nation that would adopt official multiculturalism, but the analysis is no less relevant for nation-states that had not historically defined themselves as paradigmatic "nations of immigrants."