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Review of *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity
in Twentieth-Century Canada*. By Royden Loewen
and Gerald Friesen.

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Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada. By Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. viii + 257 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$60.00 cloth, \$27.95 paper.

It is remarkable how the adage “the more things change, the more they stay the same” still applies. This was one of my initial thoughts while reading chapter 1 of *Immigrants in Prairie Cities*. Loewen and Friesen trace the origins of public concern about the adverse influence of immigrants in terms of increased competition for jobs, threats to social cohesion, questioning the loyalties of newcomers at the beginning of the 20th century—issues remarkably similar to the mythology describing immigrants in western societies today. Readers may be tempted to ask, “If the situation in the 1900s is so similar to today’s, why read this book?” Not only will readers get a sense of the longevity of these and other myths surrounding migration, they will learn about the creation of ethnic culture in the prairies and leave with a better understanding of immigration in Canada that is germane

to comprehending current migrant issues. It is a book that all scholars of Canadian migration history should read.

Loewen and Friesen chronicle the growth of ethnic diversity in several prairie communities, but focus most of their analyses on an in-depth examination of Calgary, Edmonton, and Winnipeg, the region's three largest urban centers. Using the concepts of ethnic webs, hybrid cultures, imagined boundary zones, and third spaces, popularized by Clifford Geertz, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frederick Barth, and others, the authors show how new ethnic groups grew and changed the region's urban landscapes. Theirs is not a chronological journey but a thematic one, examining family experience, racism, globalization, gender issues, ethnic associations, religious institutions, and ethnic identities.

The chapters are written in an engaging manner, and even experts on migration history will gain some valuable knowledge. Given *Immigrants in Prairie Cities's* attention to statistical detail, particularly in the early chapters, it would have been useful had the authors included thorough tables outlining the growth of ethnic populations in each center, thereby helping readers understand ethnic contexts and visualize the region's great ethnic diversity with greater clarity. Although refugees are discussed, there is little attempt to examine this group's unique space. Refugees to the prairie region make up a significant portion of the population, and a more sustained attention to their experiences would have strengthened the book's utility.

Finally, the authors may overemphasize the Winnipeg experience, particularly to the detriment of more sustained examinations of Saskatoon, Regina, and even Edmonton. I realize that both Loewen and Friesen reside in Winnipeg, both have considerable expertise in this region, and the city was the region's historical hub, but the attention to this city tends to dominate the text. This, however, is a minor quibble that ought not to detract from the significant contribution their volume makes.

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