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Hélène Pellerin

*University of Ottawa*

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# Indigenous Peoples in Canadian Migration Narratives: A Story of Marginalization<sup>1</sup>

Hélène Pellerin  
University of Ottawa

**Abstract:** *An increasing number of migration scholars have been critical of the narrative of Canada's successful immigration history, because of its neglect of colonial and discriminatory practices against Indigenous peoples and racialized minorities. This paper seeks to engage critically with this scholarship by insisting on the distinct places Indigenous peoples have in Canada's immigration history and migration narratives. By comparing various administrative programs and policies on immigration, the paper identifies the continuous marginalization and invisibility of Indigenous peoples over time. A closer look at the contemporary employment conditions of both groups highlights the administrative process of making Indigenous peoples invisible and disconnected from the wage economy, unlike migrants who are explicitly constructed as connected to it. The paper concludes with a call for further critical migration scholarship, with the examination of the history of Indigenous-settler-immigrant entanglements over time.*

## Introduction

In June 2017, comments made by then-Governor General of Canada David Johnston in a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio interview about Indigenous peoples being “immigrants as well” gave rise to strong criticism on social media.<sup>2</sup> As the negative reactions to Johnston's statement indicated, conflating the history of Indigenous peoples with that of immigration can be insulting, as it ignores a large part of the physical and cultural violence Indigenous people were subjected to in the process of colonization. Moreover, blending Indigenous experience with immigration tends to erase some of the structural challenges Indigenous peoples have confronted over time. While these reactions forced the Governor General to clarify his position a few days later, they also reveal the complexity of conversations that mix issues of immigration with Indigenous peoples.

This example also reveals a pressing need to delve into the place of Indigenous peoples in the history of immigration to this country. While many decolonizing narratives that

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers for their very constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview that aired on June 17, 2017, the Governor General was describing Canada through its welcoming and generous traditions, and added that it is a country based on immigration “going right back to quote indigenous peoples unquote who were immigrants as well, going back 10, 12, 14,000 years ago.” The statement was criticized for adding a “quote unquote” to the expression Indigenous peoples, as if the latter do not have a special status due to their being the first inhabitants of this land. Johnston apologized two days later, in a statement in which he affirmed Indigenous Peoples to be the original people of this land.

have appeared over the last 20 years propose to reformulate the history of Canada by making visible the role of Indigenous peoples (Miller 2009; Dickason with McNab 2009; Macklin 2011),<sup>3</sup> very little of this critical historiography has permeated the study of migration. In Bauder's terms, a "parallax gap" (2011) exists between scholarly work on immigration and on Indigenous issues, which are treated as separate fields of research, with distinct analytical tools.

Postcolonial critiques of migration have attempted to merge the two issues, notably by pointing out the similar treatment of racialized populations and Indigenous peoples by the dominant White narrative of nation-building (Sharma 2011). But as Tuck and Yang argue, one needs to do more than simply add Indigenous peoples to a list of considerations for social justice scholarship (2012). In order to overcome the separation of immigration and Indigenous studies scholarship, one needs to make Indigenous peoples visible in the Canadian narrative about immigration. One step in that direction is to challenge the production of a positive narrative of Canada's history as a land of immigration, devoid of the negative impacts the various waves of settlement past and present constituted for Indigenous peoples (Bertram 2013).

In a gesture toward "decolonizing"<sup>4</sup> migration research, this paper attempts to recentre Indigenous concerns in migration narratives. Concretely, this involves approaching the subject by searching for interactions between immigration and Indigenous experiences and policies. It involves exploring the effects of state policies and programs that are part of migration narratives on the economic and social conditions of Indigenous people. One such condition, the economic effects of the "prevailing economic frame" (Elliott 2018, 77) of the recent Canadian immigration narrative, will be the focus of this paper. Following a conceptual discussion on approaches to immigration research, the paper examines dynamics of historical settlement and immigration programs for their effects on Indigenous people. The paper then explores the more recent period characterized by a neoliberal view of migration and its effects on Indigenous people.

## **I. Thinking about immigration-Indigenous people relations**

Research on immigration and Indigenous people is hard to find. The few authors addressing this topic always start by acknowledging the existence of two separate fields of research: one on immigration, and another on Indigenous studies (Bell 2012; Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009; Bauder 2011; Coleman et al. 2012; Kymlicka 2010). Largely defined around the question of immigration policy development (Hawkins 1972; Murray 2010; Triadafilopoulos 2012), migration scholarship mainly focuses on the institutional, legal, and political deter-

<sup>3</sup> Although this paper focuses mostly on First Nations, and partly on the Métis population, it uses the term "Indigenous peoples" to refer to both. This term is preferred to that of "Aboriginals," in line with internationally recognized rights, and reflective of the 2015 Canadian government's new title for the department of Indigenous Affairs and Northern Development.

<sup>4</sup> This author does not seek to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples; this text should be construed as an effort to force a decolonization of scholarly work on migration issues.

minants of migration policies and their evolution over the years. Its focus is therefore on the relationship between immigrants and state institutions. From this scholarship came the official periodization of Canadian immigration: a nation-building project in the early 20th century; a liberalized process after the federal policy reforms of 1967; the adoption of the point system of 1976; the influence of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Triadafilopoulos 2012); and, since the 1990s, an economically oriented program for economic prosperity (Banting & Kymlicka 2010).

The last 10 years have witnessed a growing interest in the gaps in migration scholarship when it comes to addressing Indigenous issues. Will Kymlicka (2010), for one, has insisted on the need to assess links between Indigenous peoples and immigrants, particularly in the areas of multiculturalism and integration. Others have underlined the intersectionality of experiences of exclusion for immigrants, refugees, and Indigenous peoples in several Canadian cities (Coleman et al. 2012; Chung 2012; Mawani 2009). These efforts reflect a growing interest in academia in more conceptual and empirically based research on Indigenous-immigration interactions.

Some analyses have sought to bring to light the colonial system of thought, in which immigration policies were developed in the postwar period. This scholarship critically engages the dominant discourse about the linear and positive process of nation-building in Canada by underlining the colonial tone and the exclusivist dynamics of identity formation in the process of the nation-building of a white Canada (Sharma 2011). Underlining the presence of a dominant Eurocentric narrative about nation-building, many scholars have commented on its negative impact on racialized populations, such as Indigenous peoples and immigrants (Keal 2003; Curry 2004; Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995; Sharma 2011). The original contribution of this critical approach consists in enabling a conceptualization of common forms of oppression for immigrants and Indigenous peoples. As Stanley (2013) put it, the dominant discourse on nation-building fixes Indigenous peoples as a minority group, as it does every other non-white migrant group.

This interpretation of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and immigration has been criticized for its implicit distinction between a white European conquering immigration of the 16th to 19th centuries and the “non-conquering” (Veracini 2010; Sharma 2011), racialized, colonialized immigration of the 20th century. As Bertram argues (2013), this distinction in effect skims over the possible negative effects that postcolonial immigration could and did have on Indigenous populations, particularly on their rights to land. From the point of view of Indigenous peoples, the struggle for their land is a constant feature of their interactions with non-Indigenous peoples (Wolfe 2006; Gettler 2016). Conflating the experiences of dispossession of Indigenous peoples with the experience of 20th-century waves of immigrants tends in effect to portray all racialized groups as co-victims, and may erase the distinctiveness of Indigenous peoples’ claims (Bertram 2013; Lawrence and Dua 2005). As Elliott (2018) explains, “Despite over four decades of ostensible advancements towards acknowledging and addressing colonial injustice, the present era marks, it is argued, a general continuance of the underlying structural imperatives of settler colonialism” (64).

A more balanced approach consists of recognizing the evolving nature of the relationship between immigration and Indigenous peoples, and of each component of this relationship. Reference to the land constitutes an important historical dimension of the interactions between Indigenous peoples and immigration. It started with the aggressive land dispossession and conquests of earlier centuries (Wolfe 2006; Dickason with McNabb 2009) and continued with the administrative/legal land dispossession dynamics of numerous treaty negotiations in the 19th century (Gettler 2016; Lutz 2008). In addition, socially based opposition, in the form of racism and fear of social mixing on the part of the white population, conditioned Indigenous modes of life as well as interactions with immigration authorities to some extent over the twentieth century (Gettler 2016; Edmonds 2010).

Analyzing immigration and Indigenous peoples' issues together is an invitation to explore with new tools the mainstream history of immigration. The concept of migration narrative can be a useful tool for analyzing these shifting relationships between Indigenous peoples and immigration dynamics. In her study of the many challenges and power dimensions facing immigrants seeking to integrate into Canadian society, Pozniak (2009) underlines the influence of dominant ideas about the role of immigration in a society. Calling this set of ideas a migration narrative, Pozniak insists on the subjectivities and representations it produces that in turn influence the relationships between a settler society and migrants. Understood as the set of ideas and imaginaries in which policies and opinions unfold, a migration narrative is therefore more than a view about immigrants. It emphasizes the role of ideas and policies in constructing subjects and rules (Béland and Cox 2011).

The above discussion suggests ways to examine the place of Indigenous peoples in various immigration moments and policies, and to assess the degree of continuance of migration narratives since the early settlement movements. Whether it is about the 19th century process of territorial dispossession or recent "benevolent (neo)liberalism" (Stanley 2013), such an approach should explore the administrative and policy tools that have shaped and regulated Indigenous-immigrant relations.

## **2. Migration narratives and entanglements between Indigenous peoples and immigrants in Canadian history**

Many scholars have identified the direct effect of territorial dispossession generated by early encounters between Europeans and Indigenous peoples. For Wolfe (2006), the early phases of colonization by European settlers required "the practical elimination of the natives in order to establish [settlers] on their territory" (389). As many historians have argued, the encounters need not all have been violent and warlike to have contributed to land dispossession, because the gradual settlement and the establishment of British North America in the 18th century altered Indigenous ways of life in some areas to near extinction (Miller 2009; Frideres, Kalbach and Kalbach 2004; Dickason with McNab 2009). Land dispossession continued over the 19th century through trade expansion into the West, the East, and later the North, and with a treaty process that resulted in Indigenous peoples negotiating land distribution with European settlers. In this context of direct land dispossession, the more

European immigrants there were, the more pressures were exerted on Indigenous peoples to negotiate treaties they did not want (Citizens Plus 2011). The signing of treaties signified both the enclosure of Indigenous communities (Miller 2009; Beaulieu 2013) and the distribution of the most desirable land to new settlers (Pearson 2002; Torgerson 1988/1989).

These developments took place in the absence of a formal immigration policy or administration. And yet the adopted strategies of recruitment contained a certain vision of what immigrants should be and do. Europeans were recruited for settlement, with the promises of land ownership (Hall 2008). The migration narrative being developed thus connected immigration opportunities in Canada with access to land, as if they were the only occupants of this land. Ahluwalia's reference to the Canadian national anthem illustrates this perception. The "O Canada, our home and native land" asserts settler majorities' appropriation of the land and history of this country, making Indigenous peoples non-native (Ahluwalia 2012). The adoption of the Indian Act in 1876 strengthened this, with the institutionalization of limits to the rights to land of Indigenous peoples. The Act gave Canada's federal government exclusive authority to legislate in relation to Indians and lands reserved for them. The reform to the Indian Act in the early 20th century gave more means to Canadian authorities to move Indigenous communities physically for the purpose of protecting residents of newly built cities (Public Works and Government Services Canada 2000), and to lease Indian land for the purpose of its exploitation (Tobias 1976, 22).

It should be noted that "non-conquering immigrants" (Veracini 2010) participated in this narrative. "Block settlements" were granted to foreign communities wishing to colonize the West (Bertram 2011). Their settlement projects were predicated on the appropriation of the land, to the detriment of Indigenous peoples' presence and use of this land. Good (2000) highlights one particular instance in which Mennonite settlers in the Waterloo region of Upper Canada in the second half of the 19th century, fleeing persecution in Europe, came to a land already used and harvested by some Indigenous tribes. While relations were cordial at the start, a few years later the Mennonites confronted the Indigenous peoples more aggressively over the occupation, under the pretext that the latter constituted a "living impediment to agricultural progress" (Good 2000, 165).

The migration narrative in those years portrayed Indigenous peoples as a threat or a hindrance to the modern economy and society being established. Settlers even preferred migrants to Indigenous peoples to work in the new industries associated with the gold rush of the 1880s. With the growing number of Chinese immigrants searching for paid work in British Columbia, a certain conception of Indigenous people as "lazy" came to characterize the approach of employers, at least in times of labour surplus (Lutz 2008). For employers, the "true landless proletariat" status of Chinese immigrants made them preferable to the Indigenous peoples, who still considered paid work as "a supplement to a rich subsistence base" (Lutz 2008, 38). In Victoria, British Columbia, Indigenous peoples were also socially restricted to living in "designated areas" (Edmond 2010). Authorities imposed curfews and other limits on the circulation of Indigenous peoples in the name of social order and public health (Edmonds 2010).

This brief overview of early entanglements around immigration and Indigenous peoples highlights a process of territorial dispossession involving physical conquest, as well as other forms of territorial and social marginalization. Immigration narratives, albeit still inchoate, privileged European settlers, then Asian migrant workers, over Indigenous peoples for work. It was also during these years that the State adopted the Indian Act and implemented the residential schools programs, thus undermining for the long term the social and cultural reproduction of Indigenous peoples (Taylor et al. 2019).

The postwar period presents a different set of Indigenous-immigration entanglements and frameworks, because of active immigration-recruiting policies on the one hand and a deliberate effort to create a Canadian identity on the other. In a growing effort toward social inclusion, this period witnessed the presence of not one but two distinct migration narratives. One was based on the image of nation-building, calling on the incorporation of all inhabitants into a common fold. The second narrative focused on the economic benefits of recruiting foreign manpower, with fewer concerns about a white Anglo-Saxon identity and more about the shortages that foreign labour could fill. Despite some differences, these narratives shared the same disregard for Indigenous peoples and their experiences.

The nation-building migration narrative developed during the booming economy after the Second World War. For both Indigenous peoples and immigrants, this involved a coerced inclusion in Canadian identity (Blackburn 2009). Such an assimilationist approach was grounded in a narrative of the good Canadian and the need to adapt to this young nation. Producing Canadians involved removing the “Indianness of First Nations peoples” (Voyageur and Calliou 2000/2001, 110), and assimilating all non-British people into a common identity (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009). The Citizenship Act of 1947 provided a legal framework for this narrative by connecting entitlements with citizenship status (Young 1995, quoted in Blackburn 2009). Non-European settlers, Indigenous peoples and immigrant minorities were forcibly included in the new citizenship in order to foster their integration into the newly Canadian nation (Bohaker and Iacovetta 2009). Paradoxically, in this period of forced civic inclusion, Indigenous peoples were being increasingly left out of the wage economy as a result of greater legal separations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples’ rights. Indeed, above and beyond the Indian Act, several legal restrictions in access to public employment, land, games, fishing and agricultural activities contributed to further marginalizing Indigenous peoples from the capitalist economy in the 20th century (Lutz 2008).

The assimilationist approach coincided with the “opening” of immigration policies to source countries beyond the United Kingdom in the late 1960s (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010), and with the adoption of a multicultural policy in 1971 (Triadafilopoulos 2012). The adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 completed this tendency by introducing a rights-based approach in public policy toward all groups, including multicultural communities and Indigenous peoples (Triadafilopoulos 2012; Murphy 2008). Indigenous peoples resisted these instruments because they, like the 1969 White Paper, threatened both the special legal relationship between Indigenous peoples and the federal state and Indigenous entitlements under the Indian Act.

With such resistance, and with the development of a new set of economic objectives in the 1970s, immigration and Indigenous issues came to be increasingly exclusive and separated policy fields. This silo approach (Kymlicka 2007) led to the creation of distinct ministries: the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which was responsible for administering Indigenous issues on integration, and the Ministry of Immigration. Each entity operated with distinct guiding concepts. As Kymlicka notes, Indigenous claims were dealt with through legal concepts enshrined in treaty rights, Aboriginal rights, common law title, self-government, and self-determination, to name the most important ones, while immigration policies regarding integration were shaped by the multiculturalism framework (2007, 2).

Economic objectives fed the second narrative, focused on importing foreign labour for the growing needs of Canadian industries. Reforms of the immigration system ended official racial discrimination in 1962, and the adoption of a point system policy in 1967 erected a selection system focused on the economic promise represented by immigrants, particularly regarding their skills and professional experience. This close connection between immigration and labour markets was consecrated by the merging of these two policy domains into the newly created Ministry of Manpower and Immigration in the 1960s (Sautter 1982). Also adopted at that time were various iterations of Temporary Foreign Workers Programs to respond to specific labour shortages in key sectors. The migration narrative being developed then, and which has continued in more recent periods, focused on the economic qualities of immigrants and temporary migrant workers to the exclusion of Indigenous peoples.

This brief overview of different migration narratives since colonization shows that the relationship with Indigenous peoples has changed over time. Some continuation exists in the marginalization of their identity and economic place, through various policies, programs, and imaginaries about settlement and immigration. This marginalization has continued in the more recent period, with the emergence of a narrative founded on the economic value of immigration.

### **3. Migration narrative and Indigenous peoples in the neoliberal era**

The relationship between Indigenous peoples and immigration issues increasingly covers a broad range of policy domains, from citizenship and belonging (Wood 2003; Blackburn 2009) to access to land and resources in the development of the North (Gordon 2006). But it is around issues of access to services, wealth, and employment where the migration narrative operates more clearly. In these domains, Indigenous peoples and immigrants share similar conditions of vulnerability (Kasparian 2012). Yet they are normally studied separately.

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples pointed to major gaps in Indigenous access to health and social services, and highlighted the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from the gains of economic development. The report also pointed to the growing economic dependence of Indigenous peoples on federal funding, indicating a lack of employment and of economic prosperity opportunities for Indigenous peoples. The



report, which blamed structural processes inherited from colonialism for these conditions, recommended the adoption of new relations to treat Indigenous communities on a legal basis, and notably pushed for self-government (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). Twenty years after the Royal Commission completed its work, the conditions of Indigenous peoples had not significantly changed. In 2014, James Anaya, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, stated that of the "bottom 100 Canadian communities on the Community Well-Being Index, 96 are First Nations" (7). He added: "It is difficult to reconcile Canada's well-developed legal framework and general prosperity with the human rights problems faced by indigenous peoples in Canada, which have reached crisis proportions in many respects."

Many immigrants have also suffered from economic discrimination and marginalization. In recent years, several reports have documented the challenges facing immigrants, especially new immigrants, in accessing welfare and public services (Alboim 2009; Goldring and Landolt 2012). Immigrants face discrimination in access to decent jobs and in the recognition of their credentials (Bauder 2006). A large part of the problem is the precariousness of their status and the discrimination they face in society (Goldring and Landolt 2012).

Because very few studies look at the commonality and differences in the vulnerability of immigrants and Indigenous peoples together (Banting and Kymlicka 2010), it is necessary to explore directly these differences in some policy domains like employment. Both immigrant populations and Indigenous peoples experience employment practices and policies very differently. For years, wage labour as a colonial project was imposed on Indigenous peoples as a means of survival, particularly in moments when they were losing the means of maintaining their economies of subsistence (Mills 2013; Lutz 2008; Tuck and Yang 2012). If wage labour has been part of Indigenous experiences since the 19th century (Lutz 2008; Mills 2013), it has been made invisible in the migration narrative, except in times of acute labour shortages like during the Second World War (Mills 2013; Fernandez and Silver 2017). By contrast, immigration and temporary migrants have been at the centre of the shift to a neoliberal migration narrative. In economic terms, neoliberalism tainted various policy realms, as it sought to establish an "environment that fosters new investment, economic growth, and job creation" (Department of Finance 2014, 4). The effect of this neoliberal turn on immigration has been well-documented (Ghosh 2011; Kasparian 2012; Walia 2013; Altamirano-Jiménez 2013). The move of the postwar migration narrative around nation-building toward the improvement of human capital has shifted attention to the costs and benefits of economic immigration (Banting and Kymlicka 2010). Under this approach, immigrants and temporary foreign workers are conceived of as resources (Paquet 2016), and priority is given to the "good deserving immigrants who don't cheat the system" (Pozniak 2009, 177). Other categories of immigrants have received different treatment: tighter criteria for family reunification, the imposition of visa regimes, and safe third-country measures to curtail the number of asylum claimants reduced both humanitarian concerns and family reunification (Pozniak 2009; Root et al. 2014; Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). "Neoliberal multiculturalism," as

Kymlicka (2013) coined it, led to cuts in state-funded settlement services for immigrants, such as vocational training or job searches, because they did not fit the general approach of state disengagement (see also Root et al. 2014; Dobrowolsky 2013; Bonoli 2012). This new orientation projects the image of migrants as productive individuals whose success is conditioned by their ability to self-adjust to changing conditions and to harness new opportunities (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995).

A closer look at access to employment for Indigenous peoples and immigrants highlights some of the challenges these groups face. According to a 2015 labour market survey, the unemployment rate of Indigenous peoples was 11 percent, compared to 5.2 percent for non-Indigenous peoples born in Canada (Moyser 2017). The same survey indicates that the unemployment rate for foreign-born people was 6.9 percent, higher than that of non-Indigenous peoples born in Canada, but much lower than the rate for Indigenous peoples (Moyser 2017). More fine-grained data can be presented for 2011. The following table, based on 2011 figures, combines data from Statistics Canada and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

Table 1 Employment<sup>5</sup> and unemployment<sup>6</sup> rates for Canadians, Indigenous peoples, and immigrants

	Employment rate (2011)	Unemployment rate (2011)
Total Canadians	76%	6%
Aboriginals total	63%	13%
Registered Indians	55%	17%
Non-Status Indians	67%	9%
Métis	72%	9%
Immigrants total	75.6%	8.4%
Immigrants (≤5 years)	63.5%	13.6%
Immigrants (5–10 years)	74.1%	8.2%
Immigrants (≥10 years)	79.8%	7.1%

Sources: Based on Statistics Canada 2011; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada 2013

This table also shows that the unemployment rate among Indigenous peoples was much higher—13 percent for the total Indigenous population, and 17 percent for Status Indians—than for the total immigrant population (8.4 percent). The unemployment rate for the total Indigenous population was comparable to the unemployment level for the most recent immigrants (13.6 percent), but was not as high as the rate for Registered Indians. The table also presents employment rates, which measure the ratio of employed to the working-age

<sup>5</sup> The rate of employment is a measure that includes all people of working age, even those who stop actively looking for work.

<sup>6</sup> The unemployment rate measures the ratio of people actively looking for work in relation to the total active population.

population in these groups. A similar situation prevails at this level as well. While the rate of employment in 2011 was comparable for newly arrived immigrants and for Indigenous peoples in general, it was much lower for the total Indigenous population (63 percent) than for the category of total immigrants (75.6 percent). Notably, Status Indians' employment rate, at 55 percent, was lower than the rates for immigrant groups. Non-Status Indians had a higher employment rate than recently arrived immigrants, but at 67 percent, it was still lower than that of immigrants who had been in the country for five to 10 years (74.1 percent). The gap in the employment rate of Indigenous peoples compared to immigrants has remained wide in more recent years.

These data confirm what scholars have pointed out for years: Indigenous peoples are worse off than any other population category in Canada. In the words of Gerber (2014, 124), "despite remedial programs, policies and the annual infusion of billions of dollars, Aboriginal peoples remain at the bottom of the hierarchy in terms of education, employment, income, health, and imprisonment."

When it comes to explaining these differences, with the exception of a few scholars who attribute the high unemployment rate of Indigenous peoples to individual characteristics such as low educational level (Walton and Macdonald 2010), most researchers insist on the broader conditions of systemic racism and on the colonial legacy and the reserve system, which negatively affect all aspects of Indigenous peoples' lives (Pendakur and Pendakur 2011; Keal 2003; Palmater 2014). Such a systemic approach should include the migration narrative, which contributed administratively to separating Indigenous peoples from the rest of the labour force, and helped to make them yet more invisible.

Programs for immigrants have developed intensively over the last 20 years. Interested in recruiting higher levels of human capital, the federal government adopted several new programs destined to improve the "economic outcomes of entering immigrants" in the economic stream (Ferrer et al. 2014). There was a modification of the point system in 2002, and the adoption of new programs like the Canadian experience class Ministerial Instructions, adopted in 2008; the Federal Skilled Trades Program, introduced in 2013; reforms to the Live-in-Caregiver Program; and Provincial Nominee Programs, which will be discussed further below (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell 2014). As the latter argue, these programs were deployed in large part to address the problem of deteriorating labour market outcomes for immigrants. In an effort to improve the labour market participation of underrepresented groups, the federal government announced in 2014 that it would support the development of a skilled, mobile, and inclusive workforce; introduce better measures to connect Canadians with available jobs; promote post-secondary education and skills development; implement initiatives to help attract skilled foreign workers; and take steps to align training with the needs of the private sector (Department of Finance 2014). The adoption of the Global Skills Strategy in 2017 is another example of support to high-growth companies in attracting international talent (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2017).

The underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in employment in the Canadian economy cuts across all occupational categories and is more acute than for any other disadvantaged groups, such as women or visible minorities (Harish and Verma 1996).

Such underrepresentation remains a key problem for Indigenous peoples even after the economic recovery of the early 2010s, with unemployment figures much higher for Indigenous peoples than for non-Indigenous people (Moyser 2017). Indigenous peoples are so invisible from the employment situation that even the state's policies to correct problems of underrepresentation of certain categories of workers have excluded them. Hence the Employment Equity Act of 1986, adopted to bring some corrective measures to address problems of underrepresentation, identified four designated groups: visible minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples. Yet the specific legislation and policies that ensued mostly benefited visible minorities and women (Harish and Verma 1996). To be fair, Indigenous peoples have also benefited from employer-incentive measures, but without major effect. Measures such as greater access to employment in federal agencies, or in construction and transportation, were inoperative in a new economic discourse about global competition and the need to diversify and globalize the workforce.

The contrast with the narrative about the employability of immigrants and of temporary foreign workers as part of the solution to economic prosperity is significant. The employability of immigrants is highly praised in the construction of programs and initiatives serving the migration narrative. As a result, assessing on a regular basis the economic outcomes of entering immigrants is part of a global strategy to attract (and retain) the best and brightest (Ferrer, Picot and Riddell 2014). By contrast, the economic situation of Indigenous peoples is portrayed as a problem—a social problem for which the solution is framed in terms of more assistance to victims. The social construction of Indigenous peoples as “less desirable” to employers (Fernandez and Silver 2017) is reminiscent of their construction as dependent on welfare programs. In their analysis of federal approaches to social programs, Ladner and Orsini (2004) revealed the negative construction of Indigenous peoples, portrayed as helpless victims in need of assistance (2004). Indigenous peoples are nearly invisible in employment-related programs. There were no specific federal employment program for Indigenous peoples until the late 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Economic programs for Indigenous peoples include welfare support rather than specific employability services, with a focus largely on education, health, and social assistance.<sup>8</sup> The recent increased attention to Indigenous economic development through programs such as leveraging partnerships and taking measures to guarantee equal opportunities for Indigenous communities represent a relatively small

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<sup>7</sup> There is a caveat regarding this comparison. Major differences exist in the design and implementation of federal policies regarding immigrants and regarding Indigenous peoples. Federal agencies maintain special relations with Indigenous subjects, and have an obligation to consult these populations. Thus, most monies for improving the economic situation of Indigenous peoples are going through consultations with the main stakeholders, and many programs for Indigenous peoples are administered by First Nations authorities. On immigration, rarely are immigrants themselves consulted. Major stakeholders are, rather, employers and provinces. Thus, federal authorities have more leeway when dealing with the immigrant population. Despite these differences, a comparison is possible when looking at the objectives and types of policies developed.

<sup>8</sup> In 2007, education spending for Indigenous peoples accounted for almost a quarter of all spending; since the election of the Trudeau government in 2015, around 83 percent of money is dedicated to education, green infrastructure, and on-reserve water quality.

amount of money, according to the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (NAEDB—now the National Indigenous Economic Development Board [NIEDB]). For the fiscal year 2013–2014, only 2.8 percent of the \$8 billion the Department was granting to the Aboriginal Affairs and North Development portfolio was proposed for economic development (*Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada* 2013). These programs serve first and foremost to reduce Indigenous peoples' reliance on social assistance (Taylor et al. 2019).

The invisibility of Indigenous peoples in employment policy also prevails in the administration of these programs. An example of this can be found in the Labour Force Survey from Statistics Canada. These surveys, which offer an important measure of economic performance in Canada, have systematically undermeasured the employment situation of Indigenous peoples because, since the surveys were created, they have excluded certain groups: the Canadian Armed Forces, institutionalized populations, Indigenous peoples living on reserves, and other Indigenous settlement in the provinces. Improvements to the Labour Force Survey introduced over the years enlarged the groups and regions covered, but still excluded on-reserve Indigenous peoples. Hence, more regions were included in the survey between 1971 and 1977, and new territories were included in 1991 (Yukon) and 2009 (Nunavut). Even categories for immigrants and non-permanent residents were included in 1995, with specific questions for refugee claimants and foreign students. More questions were added in the 2006 survey to assess the labour market outcomes for immigrants better. These additional questions allowed data distinctions between newly arrived and more established cohorts of immigrants (Labour Force Survey 2017). But at no point did these administrative decisions ever involve getting data and helping Indigenous peoples improve their employment access and situation.<sup>9</sup>

A similar condition of invisibility characterizes the administrative calculation of unemployment rates in the federal Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey (Macdonald 2015; Friesen 2015). Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) establishes a maximum local unemployment rate - 6 percent - that employers have to take into account for obtaining a positive Labour Market Impact Assessment to hire temporary foreign workers. This measure, which serves to protect national employment, excludes unemployment rates on reserves, which are much higher. Since the 1950s, the federal administration considers "on reserve Indians . . . to be neither in nor out of the labour force" (Lutz 2008, 195). The invisibility of Indigenous unemployment statistics is thus detrimental for on-reserve Indigenous people who suffer from high levels of unemployment. The intervention of the chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec-Labrador, Ghislain Picard, in the 2018 provincial election campaign in Quebec underlines the problem well. Reacting to debates among the four main political parties about the need to adjust immigration levels to respond to labour shortages, Chief Picard invited politicians to think about Indigenous peoples in their search for solutions to labour needs (Normandin 2018). Emphasizing the high levels of unemployment among many Indigenous peoples in the province, Chief Picard stated that Indigenous peoples were too often invisible in public policies (Picard 2018).

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<sup>9</sup> Off-reserve Indigenous peoples have been included, but until 2007, statistics were limited to the Western provinces and territories (Labour Force Survey 2017).

These examples illustrate the current administrative and policy invisibility, and marginal place, of Indigenous peoples in the narrative of immigration and prosperity. The growing place private sector employers occupy in defining immigration strategies and objectives (Kasparian 2012, 3) increases further the risk of reinforcing the marginalization of Indigenous peoples from economic activity. For many businesses indeed, immigration represents an alternative to social spending on human capital with the recruitment of foreign highly skilled labour.

The Federal preference for immigration stemming from the neoliberal migration narrative has also been encouraged by the “provincialization of immigration policies” (Paquet 2016). All provinces—excluding Quebec, which has had its own system since the Cullen-Couture accord of 1991—adopted Provincial Nominee Programs in the late 1990s and 2000s, and became responsible for some integration services (Paquet 2016; Fourot 2014). The Provincial Nominee Programs resulted in a significant increase in immigrants to the Western provinces between 2006 and 2012, ranging from a 64 percent increase in the number of permanent residents in Manitoba, to an 86 percent increase in Alberta, and a 427 percent increase in Saskatchewan (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012). This provincialization of migration management reinforced the narrative of migrants as economic and demographic resources, insofar as it became an additional strategy the provinces deployed to boost their competitiveness: they used their newly acquired power to attract and retain immigrants based on their own assessment of labour market needs and future growth demand (Baglay and Nakache 2014). With this new orientation, provincial authorities began giving priority to attracting immigrants and offering them better conditions for integration, often at the expense of relations with Indigenous peoples and their rights. The Lorje Report, entitled *Open Up Saskatchewan: A Report on International Immigration and Inter-Provincial In-Migration to Increase the Population of the Province of Saskatchewan*, offered an illustration of this new orientation. Submitted in 2003 to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan as a list of recommendations to the Government of Saskatchewan on increasing immigration, including to rural areas, the Lorje Report drew criticism from Indigenous communities (Kordan 2011). These criticisms did not stop Saskatchewan from expanding its nominee programs to new categories of workers in later years, however. A 2004 government task force suggested that new efforts to increase immigration should not detract from promoting policies for Indigenous programs, educational development, and labour-market opportunities.

## Conclusion

While many areas of social science have gestured toward decolonization by acknowledging the presence of Indigenous peoples’ contributions and resistance, migration scholarship is still lagging. In its own limited way, this article argues for addressing migration narratives as specific historic moments in which Indigenous issues and immigration narratives are being entangled. This critical migration analysis calls for an approach that is distinct from that of postcolonialism. While the latter focuses on comparing processes of domination, exclusion,

and racism in state policies toward migrants and racialized minorities, the approach adopted here emphasizes the unique reality of Indigenous peoples' experiences in migration narratives. Following Tuck and Yang's approach, this gesture to connect the past and the present of migration policies and narratives can help uncover the "colonial pathway" immigration can follow when migrants are invited to invest in settlers' ways of life (2012, 12).

Henceforth, the focus on migration narratives should bring to the foreground some ontological continuity between a past of colonial settlement and a present of immigration dynamics and policies. Such an approach enables a critical analysis of the role of migration narratives in the economic marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Such an approach may challenge in a new way concepts central to migration scholarship, such as human capital, labour shortages, citizenship and borders.

Including migration narratives in the global system of repression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples in Canada should not be interpreted as a strategy by which to divide Indigenous peoples and racialized minorities in the country. It should rather be seen as a first step, and perhaps an invitation to move toward decolonizing migration scholarship. One possible way of doing this would be to foster a study of entanglements—that is, the Indigenous/settler relations shaping each other in changing circumstances (Für 2014). Acknowledging the agency of Indigenous peoples in the construction of migration narratives, this could open the way to making more space for Indigenous peoples' thinking and experiences (Tuck and Yang 2012), such as in their continually negotiated practices of mobility, citizenship, and bordering processes (Wood 2003; Blackburn 2009; Simpson 2014).

Moreover, revealing Indigenous peoples' existence within, experience of, and interests around international migration would certainly help scholarship and policies to improve integration of Indigenous peoples' enduring claims for respect of their ancestral and treaty rights, recognition of past misdeeds, and compensation for colonial practices. The call to decolonize migration scholarship, and the deliberate effort to highlight continuing instances of dispossession and marginalization, might offer precisely this kind of space.

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