

## Ontario History



# *The Boundaries of Ethnicity: German Immigration and the Language of Belonging in Ontario* by Benjamin Bryce

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history. Berthelette incorporates historical maps throughout his book which provide useful geographical information and reference points to aid his narrative.

Berthelette integrates Indigenous narratives into his work in a compelling fashion. This sheds new light on the interaction of French-origin fur traders and First Nations peoples in the western interior of Canada. His views on “Métissage” will provoke new debates among scholars who are trying to understand this process. Un-

fortunately, much of the Hudson Bay Watershed is untouched by Berthelette.

Victor P. Lytwyn

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West, Volume 1*, translated by George Woodcock, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press (1986 - originally published in 1945 as *Canadien Le métis canadien: Son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'Ouest*, Institut d'Ethnologie, Musée de l'Homme, Université de Paris, Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie XLIV, 1945).

## *The Boundaries of Ethnicity* *German Immigration and the Language of Belonging in Ontario*

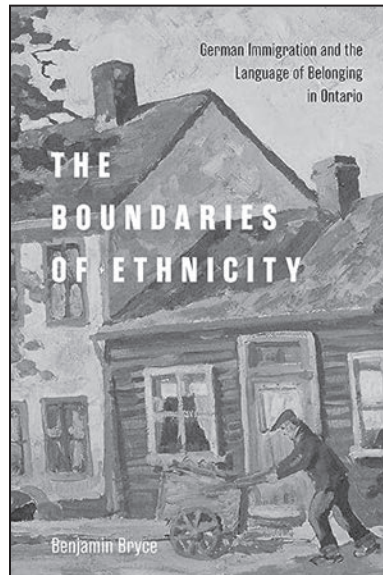
by Benjamin Bryce

Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. 264 pages. \$130.00 hardcover. ISBN 9780228013952 (www.mqup.ca).

Benjamin Bryce's latest book uses German speakers in Ontario in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a case study of how children, parents, teachers, and churches shaped the nature of cultural pluralism. Bryce convincingly argues for complex understandings of ethnicity by showing how people drew and redrew ethnic boundaries. His contention about the complexity of ethnicity aligns with the near consensus within the historiography of ethnicity and migration yet his choice of Germans as a case study makes this book a unique contribution to existing scholarship. Bryce contends that

by understanding how German speakers at this time used language, changed their definitions of ethnicity, and responded to government policy, one can see the origins of Canadian multiculturalism and policies that manage diversity.

The first chapter discusses how Ontario's education system went from being locally to centrally controlled and the resulting impact on the use of German. The second chapter looks at the experiences of German speakers in the First World War and “shows that Ontario society did not require the total elimination of German because of the war” (114). In chapter three,



Bryce returns to education with an examination of two German language colleges in Waterloo, one Catholic and one Lutheran. Chapter four focusses on the broader North American connections within Lutheranism. Chapter five discusses the behaviour and opinions of children towards the German language and the responses of adults and denominational leaders. The sixth and final chapter looks at the entangled relationship between language and denomination and the ways people came to understand and practice bilingualism. Throughout, Bryce illustrates the changing understandings of German ethnicity while giving valuable insight into Canadian attempts to control cultural and linguistic pluralism. He demonstrates that, despite many internal, external, and government forces, German speakers “made and remade the boundaries of ethnicity.” (26)

What is most striking about *The Boundaries of Ethnicity* is Bryce’s ability to weave together different topics such as migration, education, religion, childhood, and war into a convincing and cohesive narrative. He shows impressive engagement with a variety of scholars from multiple sub-fields making this book useful to a broad intersection of scholars. Yet, at times Bryce positions his book as arguing against a variety of historiographical trends, but does not consistently cite the scholarship to which he refers. For example, he is critical of what he calls the “common phenomenon in scholarly studies and popular understandings of cultural pluralism in the Americas” where scholars box ethnicities into specific spaces and imagine surrounding territories as homogeneous or non-ethnic (9). Bryce asserts that these errors can be found in writings about Chinatowns and Little Italies from New York to Buenos Aires, but he does not cite any specific

works (9). His emphasis on the book’s role as a corrective to existing historiography is most evident in the second chapter, where he cites some of the scholarship that he is arguing against, but not enough of it. This problem is repeated in a later chapter when he asserts that Lutheranism’s concerns with the ethnicity of its parishioners “complicates the narrative about the rise of organized religion in Canada” (117). Yet he fails to cite where this narrative can be found. Readers familiar with German history may know the scholarship to which Bryce refers. However, because *The Boundaries of Ethnicity* will rightly appeal to historians from a variety of subfields, a fuller range of references would have been helpful.

Though the book looks at the history of German speakers in Ontario through the experiences of two Christian denominations who spoke German, the author has made the explicit decision not to include Mennonites in his analysis. This is somewhat ironic, given that the front cover illustration is a painting by a German speaking Mennonite born in the Russian Empire who settled in Waterloo. (xiv) The author justifies his decision to focus solely on Lutherans and Catholics in three ways. First, he states that fewer than one in ten people recorded as “German” in Ontario in the 1911 census were Mennonite, emphasizing that “In fact, there were five times as many Lutherans in Ontario as there were Mennonites” (6). Yet, later in the book Bryce rightly discusses the difficulty with “counting ethnicity” and the unreliability of census data (13). A more thorough engagement with scholarship on Mennonite history in Canada would show that census data is especially unreliable when it comes to Mennonites because of complicated migration histories and contentious debates over their identity as either a religious or an ethnic group. The second way

the author justifies the exclusion of Mennonites from his analysis is by stating that, although adding Mennonites “could prove fruitful” his “preliminary research and secondary sources suggest that such an approach would not fundamentally change the main findings of this book” (6). While Bryce could be right that including Mennonites might not “fundamentally change” the main findings of the book, an engagement with Mennonite scholarship such as Marlene Epp’s *Mennonites in Ontario: An Introduction* suggests that the inclusion of Mennonites would challenge at least some of the main findings. The author’s final jus-

tification for the exclusion of Mennonites is the most convincing; the fact that there is already a substantial body of literature on Mennonites and a comparable body does not exist on German speaking Catholics and Lutherans (6).

*The Boundaries of Ethnicity* is an impressive contribution to multiple areas of historical research, furthering understandings of crucial concepts such as ethnicity, identity, education, religion, and the state.

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## *What Nudism Exposes* *An Unconventional History of Postwar Canada*

by Mary-Ann Shantz

Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022. 254 pages. ISBN: 9780774867207

*What Nudism Exposes* reveals the history of nudism and naturism in Canada with a focus on the 1950s, '60s and early '70s. Mary-Ann Shantz argues that this unconventional practice was led by remarkably conventional people, who upheld heterosexual marriage, emphasized the importance of family, and posed little threat to racial, gender and sexual norms of the time period.

Led primarily by European, especially German, immigrants to Canada, the nudist movement opened private clubs, primarily in Ontario and British Columbia. Ontario became the home of the London Sun Club (1955), Glen Echo (1955) near Newmarket, the Ponderosa Nature Resort (1964) outside Hamilton, the Four Seasons Nature Park (1969) close to Guelph, and the Lakesun Club (1959) near King-

ston. In British Columbia, some of the more prominent clubs were the Van Tan Club (1959 - North Vancouver) and the Sunny Trails Club (Surrey). There were a few clubs in the Prairie provinces and one in New Brunswick. In Quebec, the movement stalled after a police raid on the Quetans Club, which had been established in 1951. Although the leader of the Quetans, Gaetan Couture, was acquitted, the police raid put an end to organized clubs in Quebec until 1969. Some of the clubs started as cooperatives, but eventually became private resorts, as people wanted more amenities and had more desire to spend their weekends at leisure instead of working on projects to improve the club.

The clubs were linked together by the Canadian Sunbathing Association (1947-1960), a publication, *Sunbathing for*