

## Headline News **Uncovering Canada's 'missing history'**



**Above: Early life in Canada. c. 1910 - National Archives of Canada photo**

Canada's "missing history" has at last found a home.

On Oct. 28, York University officially launched a unique and distinctively pan-Canadian initiative – the Canadian Century Research Infrastructure (CCRI) project centre – through which researchers will develop a range of databases from previously unprocessed manuscript census records for 1911-1951, viewed by many scholars as Canada's missing history.

**Right: Statistics Canada workers processing census data, c. 1961 - National Archives of Canada photo**

The University is playing a key role in facilitating the CCRI, a five-year initiative. The centre at York is responsible for the Ontario data and, with its partners, for many aspects of the national project.



These new databases will be linked to other existing publicly available census databases covering the period from 1871 (post-Confederation) to the most recent census in 2001. The result will be a wholly new foundation for the study of social, economic, cultural, and political change in Canada. The CCRI will provide new insights into the changing character of labour, housing, immigration, families, education, language distributions, ethnicity and religion in Canada.

"The CCRI project puts together the remaining pieces of a puzzle to reveal the complete

picture," said sociology Professor Gordon Darroch, director of the centre at York. "We like to think, for example, that the experiences of families and childhood were more orderly and idyllic a half-century ago.

**From left: Cynthia Archer, York University librarian; Laura Fenton, CCRI project assistant; and Robert Drummond, dean of the Faculty of Arts, at the launch of the CCRI project**



"However, the census data seems to suggest that the pressures on families and the pains of growing up today are different, but not less complex, than those faced by our grandparents and great-grandparents." For example, Darroch points to data that indicates the proportion of single-parent families has remained relatively constant.

The databases will bring individuals, families and households to the forefront of historical investigation, and open up a myriad of new research opportunities. They provide large, anonymous samples of the array of information collected from each of the decennial censuses.



**Left: Evelyn Ruppert**

"But in addition to these samples of detailed population characteristics, the project is also building a series of contextual databases derived from Statistics Canada documents, newspaper commentaries and political debates," said centre coordinator Evelyn Ruppert.

"Collectively, these integrated databases will enhance our understanding of the census, its provenance and social consequences."

Darroch added, "The project fosters academic and public-policy research that can, for the first time, link changes in the everyday lives of Canadians to the larger political and social events of the 20th century, such as the Great Depression, two World Wars and waves of immigration and urbanization."

The census data and contextual information will be available on the Web to students and researchers. CCRI is supported by the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Ontario Innovation Trust, the FCAR Funds (Quebec), the BC Knowledge Development Fund, the Harold Crabtree Foundation, IBM Canada, Statistics Canada, the National Archives of Canada and other partners.

The CCRI team reflects an interdisciplinary collaboration of universities, institutions, research groups, and leading scholars who have worked with diverse population databases for the past 25 years. In addition to York, the universities are: the University of Ottawa, University of Toronto, University of Victoria, Université du Québec B Trois-Rivières, Memorial University and Université Laval.

#### **About the centre opening**

The opening of the centre at 282 York Lanes brought together principal investigators, York Professor Gordon Darroch and University of Ottawa Professor Chad Gaffield, who introduced the project and recognized the contributions of the York University centre coordinator, Evelyn Ruppert, and eight York graduate students from sociology and history who have joined the centre as project assistants.

Along with the many guests associated with the project, including various members of the CCRI team, York faculty, administrators and graduate students, were York President Lorna R. Marsden and VP Research & Innovation Stan Shapson, as well as the project's major funding partners represented by Carmen Charette, senior VP of Canada Foundation for Innovation, and David Bogart, executive VP with Ontario Innovation Trust.





**Above: from left, foreground: Seth Feldman, director of York's Roberts Centre for Canadian Studies; Carmen Charette, senior VP of CFI; Ron Pearlman, associate dean, York Faculty of Graduate Studies; and Lorna Erwin, director of York's Sociology Graduate Program, at the launch of the CCRI**

**Below, from left: Chad Gaffield, CCRI team leader; Lorna R. Marsden, York president and vice-chancellor; Carmen Charette; David Bogart, executive VP of Ontario Innovation Trust; and CCRI's Prof. Gordon Darroch**

