

## **The Census, Demography and Quebec Some Milestones**

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### **Abstract**

1991 was a very important year in the history of the Canadian Census: it was the year of the last decennial enumeration of this century, and it marked the 325th anniversary of Canada's first Census, the famous nominal census taken by Jean Talon in 1665-66. At this time, in the last decade of the twentieth century, it is fitting to remember some of the things we are inclined to forget (or perhaps that some of us never knew) about early census-taking activities in Canada. This brief summary links 1666 with 1991, by focussing attention on selected milestones in the history of Canada's federal census, noting, along the way, some related developments in the teaching of demography and in demographic research. Although the contributions of Quebec and Quebecers are also highlighted, they are presented in appropriate national context.

### **Résumé**

L'année 1991 a été très importante dans l'histoire du recensement au Canada: elle représente l'année du dernier dénombrement décennal à avoir lieu durant ce siècle-ci, et elle marque aussi le 325<sup>e</sup> anniversaire du premier recensement au Canada, soit le fameux recensement nominal effectué par Jean Talon en 1665-1666. En ce moment, il est important de se souvenir de certaines choses dont nous avons tendance à oublier (ou que certains d'entre nous n'ont peut-être jamais su) en ce qui a trait aux activités prématurées reliées au dénombrement du Canada. Ce bref résumé établit un lien entre 1666 et 1991, en dirigeant notre attention sur certains événements marquants de l'histoire du recensement fédéral au Canada et note, au passage, certains développements ayant trait à l'enseignement de la démographie et de la recherche démographique. Bien que les contributions apportées par le Québec et les Québécois soient aussi mises en valeur, elles le sont dans un contexte national approprié.

**Key Words:** The Canadian Census, Demography, Quebec

### **Introduction: Jean Talon's Census, 1665-66**

1991 was a very important year in the history of the Canadian Census: it was the year of the last decennial enumeration of this century, and it marked the 325th anniversary of Canada's first Census, the famous nominal census taken by Jean Talon in 1665-66.<sup>1</sup>

At this time, in the last decade of the twentieth century, it is fitting to remember some of the things we are inclined to forget (or perhaps that some

of us never knew) about early census-taking activities in Canada. This brief summary links 1666 with 1991, by focussing attention on selected milestones in the history of Canada's federal census, noting, along the way, some related developments in the teaching of demography and in demographic research. Although the contributions of Quebec and Quebecers are also highlighted, they are presented here in appropriate national context.

To begin, it is important to remember that this "first" Census was essentially an enumeration of the French-speaking population of what is now the province of Quebec.<sup>2</sup> "..... The first century and a half of Canada's population history, from 1605 to the war that ended with the cession of the colonies, was almost exclusively French-Canadian history" (Keyfitz, 1960). The 1666 enumeration counted 3,215 souls who were mainly those living in the largest centres in New France. These individuals were all either immigrants or descendants of the original immigrants who came to settle a new continent in the early seventeenth century.

The enumeration of the colony of New France that began in 1665-66, continued periodically to 1754. During the French régime, censuses were taken regularly and frequently: "..... censuses were taken 37 times. In addition, nine partial censuses were taken". In the later years of the régime, before the conquest, even more censuses were taken. Additional details of historical census-taking in this earliest period are available in a number of Census volumes, and need not be repeated here (Canada, 1876; Canada, 1945).

### **1759 and 1763. The Conquest and the Peace Settlement**

About a century after the first Census of the colony of New France in 1666, Wolfe defeated Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham (1759) and the colony of New France was ceded to the British with the peace settlement of 1763, the Treaty of Paris. A century of mainly French census-taking came to an end (Canada, 1945, 8).

Another reason for the importance of 1763 and the events of this period deserves mention. Nathan Keyfitz has pointed out that the birth of the question of immigration "..... as an issue in Canadian thinking and politics occurred about the time of the peace settlement of 1763 (the Treaty of Paris) when the English victors looked out over a vast territory taken from France after a costly struggle, and occupied largely by French settlers who had little wish to return to France" (Keyfitz, 1960, 142, 143). Keyfitz goes on to say that immigration, since 1763, has been "fair ground for controversial

discussion", a statement that no one would contest: immigration has been, and remains today, a burning issue everywhere in Canada and in Quebec. And this is a reminder of the importance of the Canadian Census over the years, in providing statistical data series on immigrants and immigration, and as well, on ethnicity, language and a variety of socio-cultural population characteristics. These census data as employed by both anglophone and francophone researchers have given demography in Canada certain distinctive features, but that is another story.

### **1867 and 1871. Confederation and the 1871 Census. Taché and Tanguay**

A little over one hundred years after the conquest in 1867, Confederation took place under the British North America Act (now the Constitution Act, 1867), and a decennial Census in the year ending in "1" was made one of the articles of Confederation. Although the legal "raison d'être" of the census was to determine representation in the House of Commons, the information it provided was seen as important so that the settlement and government of the country could proceed in an informed and organized fashion. Confederation brought together Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and these four provinces were covered by the 1871 enumeration. (By 1881, Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and the Territories, as then constituted, were also included.) Because of the country's essentially bicultural and bilingual make-up, the federal census was conducted and documented in both languages as a matter of course. The 1871 Census was an important milestone because of its comprehensiveness and the greater reliability of the 1871 statistics compared with those of previous Censuses. It is also worth recalling that these improvements were largely the result of the efforts of two French Canadians, Joseph Charles Taché (1820-1894) and Cyprien Tanguay (1819-1902).

In 1864, Joseph Charles Taché, a member of a family then prominent in the public service in Ottawa, was appointed the first permanent Deputy Head (Minister) of the Department of Agriculture which had responsibility for the existing federal statistical system, including the census. Eminently qualified and with proven ability in a number of fields, Taché was justifiably critical of the work of the jurisdiction and of the census statistics for which he had assumed responsibility. He began his mandate by making recommendations subsequently put into practice, that were designed to improve the collection and production of Canadian statistics. Taché remained Deputy Minister of Agriculture through Confederation until July, 1888, and has been called the father of modern statistics in Canada (Worton, 1990).

Following Taché's report on the poor quality of the 1851 and 1861 census data, Cyprien Tanguay was appointed to work on "special statistics", that is, to review and prepare historical materials relating to Quebec and to incorporate them into the 1871 Canadian census volumes. Tanguay's appointment is an interesting example of how francophone expertise was enlisted by the federal government in the nineteenth century, to the everlasting benefit of Canadian statistics and demography. Tanguay worked for the office of the Census on the compilation of census and vital statistics data. The results are still available in both English and French in the published volumes of the 1871 Census, which represented a considerable improvement over previous efforts. Volumes I, IV, and V (Canada 1872; 1876; 1878) are particularly noteworthy, especially the bilingual, historical account in Volume IV of the Canadian Census from its earliest beginnings to 1871. Most demographic research on the history of the French Canadian population, (e.g. Henripin, 1954) or on relevant data issues, uses or cites Tanguay's well-known genealogical dictionaries (Tanguay, 1871-1890; 1886).<sup>3</sup> His attachment to the federal census in Ottawa, and his membership in the Royal Society of Canada are less well known.

## **The Twentieth Century**

There are a number of dates in the twentieth century that deserve to be remembered as milestones in Canadian census taking, and in demographic research. The commencement of the teaching of demography in Canadian universities is also briefly noted.

### **1906. The First Quinquennial Census**

A special quinquennial Census that had begun in certain western and northern territories in the previous century, was established as a census of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba on a regular basis, in the first decade of the twentieth century, with the purpose of recording the development of Canada's west. The first such Census was taken in 1906. In 1956, the scope of this quinquennial Census was expanded to include all of Canada.<sup>4</sup>

**1913, 1918. The establishment of the BSQ in Quebec in 1913. Henri Bunle and "the French connection". The establishment of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in Ottawa in 1918, with R.H. Coats as the first Dominion Statistician.**

In Quebec, the establishment of the provincial "Bureau des statistiques du Québec" in Quebec City sanctioned in December, 1912, preceded the setting up of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics (DBS), Canada's federal statistical agency, in 1918. Henri Bunle, a professional statistician from France, was recruited to set up Quebec's provincial statistical bureau, and he did so, in less than a year, before returning to France. At DBS, R.H. Coats assumed leadership as first Dominion Statistician, and his accomplishments in developing the bureau's statistical programs, including the Canadian Census, were considerable.

**1941, 1951, 1961. The Decennial Censuses During and After the War**

The 1941 decennial enumeration marked the first-time inclusion in the Canadian Census of questions designed to provide information on fertility and migration. The 1941 fertility data were used in a monograph on "The changing size of the family in Canada" (Charles, 1948). This volume became a landmark in Canadian demographic research. Newfoundland joined Confederation in 1949, becoming Canada's tenth province, and thereby was included in the 1951 decennial Census. Although the 1951 Census schedule did not ask questions on fertility and migration, they were again included on the 1961 questionnaire.

The federal census, as one of the two main sources of Canadian "official" statistics was important in providing information crucial for the conduct of demographic research, both before and after 1950.

**1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Early Demographic Research**

A few individuals in English and French Canada (Quebec) explored the census data available in the early decades of the twentieth century, and published research results. In English Canada, Burton Hurd, described as the only demographer in the university setting in Canada at that time (Ryder, 1988), was using census data extensively in studies of what were then called the "racial origins" of Canada's population (Hurd, 1929; 1937). A third volume based on the 1941 Census data was not released until much later (Hurd, 1965). In the 1930s Louis Rosenberg used census data extensively in

his investigations of the social, economic and demographic characteristics of Canada's Jewish population (Rosenberg, 1939). Also in the early 1930s in Quebec, Georges Langlois, a journalist by profession, prepared and published his "*Histoire de la population canadienne française*" (1934). According to Jacques Henripin "..... Avec ce livre la démographie des canadiens français passait de la mythologie à la connaissance empirique" (in Dumont and Martin, 1962, 133).

### **The 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The Teaching of Demography**

#### *English Canada*

Among the first persons to teach university courses treating population growth and dynamics as central pre-occupations were Enid Charles and Betty Macleod. In the mid-1940s, Charles then at DBS, taught a comprehensive course on "Population trends and social policy" at Carleton (then) College. During the two academic years from 1948 to 1950, Betty Macleod also gave a course in population in the Department of Political Economy at McMaster University. In the early 1950s Norman Ryder gave a course in demography as a member of the (almost-born) Department of Sociology, University of Toronto. Subsequently in 1955-56, Dennis Wrong, who succeeded Ryder there, gave a course on population. These courses were undoubtedly approved and given because of the fortuitous presence at these schools, of persons with the required expertise, but they were not included on a continuing basis in the universities' curricula.<sup>5</sup> (It was not until the 1960s that the study of population became formally installed in English Canada in the sociology departments of the University of Alberta, with the arrival of Warren Kalbach, and of the University of Western Ontario, on the initiative of Grant Reuber, and with the arrival of Richard Osborn).

#### *French Canada (Quebec)*

##### **Laval University**

The teaching of demography in a "structured" way first took hold in Quebec at Laval University in 1950. Thaddeus Poznanski, who worked in the private sector, began to give courses in demography that year in Laval's Department of Sociology, continuing to do so until 1956. From 1956 to 1964-65, Yves Martin (a sociologist trained at Laval, who also spent two years from 1954-56 at l'Institut National d'Études Démographiques—INED)

gave two courses in demography in the same department. In addition to courses in human ecology and urban sociology, Martin gave one course in demographic analysis each year as a required course for all sociology majors and as an optional course for other social science students. A second course on "doctrines de population" was offered once every two years to those interested in the field.

### **The University of Montreal**

After completing doctoral studies at the University of Paris and a stay at INED in the early 1950s, Jacques Henripin returned to Canada, and as of 1954-55 taught demography as a member of the Department of Economics in the Faculty of Social, Political and Economic Science at the University of Montréal. In 1964 (and then formally in 1965), the *département de démographie* was established at this university with Henripin as Director, where he was joined by H. Charbonneau, J. Légaré and others (Charbonneau, 1990). To this day, it remains the only Department of Demography in Canada.

The ties that developed between the bureau and the Department of Demography at the University of Montreal were particularly important. In the early 1960s in connection with the bureau's 1961 Census monograph program, Jacques Henripin was invited to author a monograph on fertility in Canada based on the 1961 Census data. Henripin's volume "*Tendances et facteurs de la fécondité au Canada*" was published in the original French in 1968; the mandatory English version did not appear until 1972. Henripin speaks of the felicitous conditions under which this work was carried out. Also in the course of planning and writing this monograph, he established contacts with the demographic and social science community in English Canada that have lasted until the present (Henripin, 1988). Students trained in the Department of Demography at the University of Montreal began to arrive at DBS in Ottawa in the late 1960s to work as summer students. Subsequently, an increasing number came, some eventually on a full-time basis.

The commencement of the teaching of demography and the expansion of demographic research in Canadian universities and at DBS in Ottawa, stimulated interest in the federal census-taking exercise, and in the use of census data in demographic research by both anglophone and francophone social scientists. Gradually, the growing number of demographers in the universities and the students trained (in both English and French Canada)

were, in the natural course of events, drawn into the consideration and discussion of the Census questionnaire and statistics.

#### **1966. PRDH. Charbonneau and Légaré**

In 1966, Hubert Charbonneau and Jacques Légaré founded "Le programme de recherche en démographie historique" (PRDH). The initial purpose of this program was to reconstruct, with the aid of computers and computer technology, the population of Quebec before 1850, using the earliest 17th century census records. This computer treatment was to be extended to later censuses and to parish register records. When the 1960s drew to a close, PRDH was operational. A voluminous series of publications since that time relating to methodological and substantive aspects are evidence that the original purpose of the program was accomplished. Eventually, the publication of "Naissance d'une population ....." (Charbonneau et al, 1987), demonstrated the success of this endeavour in utilizing computers to prepare unique and important demographic data bases on this country's earliest population.

These are by no means all the milestones that could be cited. The reader is encouraged to search out other noteworthy landmarks.

#### **Conclusion**

The details summarized in this brief note are a reminder that, thanks to census taking activities in this country, Québec has always been an important part of Canada's recorded history. Furthermore, the federal census, one of the most important sources of demographic data, has long been the focus of cooperative activities between English and French Canada, their governmental agencies and universities, and between anglophone and francophone demographers. Of course, along the way some aspects of this history have been less than perfect.<sup>6</sup> But it is important to remember the things that were "right" ..... particularly the successful cooperation in the federal census effort, initially based and gradually built up over many years, on the earliest initiatives in New France.

On June 4, 1991, the last decennial Census of this century was taken in Canada. Let it not be forgotten that the Canadian Census is one of the means whereby English- and French- speaking Canadians have worked together to improve and perfect an exercise that has always had, and



continues to have, benefits for both, and that constitutes an important legacy for the science of demography in this country in the twenty-first century.

## **Disclaimer**

Based on a presentation in French in May, 1991, on the occasion of the annual meetings of l'Association des démographes du Québec (ADQ) at the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec. The views expressed here are those of the author, and in no way reflect the views of Statistics Canada.

## **Footnotes**

1. This census is often referred to as the world's first "modern" census. It was the first census in the sense that it preceded similar efforts in other countries. Sweden had a fairly early census count in 1749. The first federal census of the United States was taken in 1790, and the first general census of the United Kingdom took place in 1801. However, the first Canadian census was not really a "national" or a "modern" census in the contemporary sense of these words. "Les recensements décennaux modernes ne commencent qu'en 1851, et c'est après la création de la confédération seulement (1867) que les statistiques on pu être centralisées" (Dupâquier, 275). See also Canada, 1945, 8.
2. It also deserves note that Canada is the only country in the world that has a continuous series of birth records for three centuries, and this series, essentially confined to French Canada, owes its existence to the assiduous record-keeping of births, marriages and deaths by the Roman Catholic Church. The history of the provincial registration of births dating from the very first ecclesiastical registers of baptisms, marriages and burials in the early seventeenth century in Quebec, up to the early decades of this century is available in considerable detail in an authoritative work (Kuczynski, 1930).
3. In the compilation of the family genealogies which involved him in years of travel and laborious research, Tanguay used all the historical records he could find, including the parish registers (Langlois, 1934, 88). This work contributed to the development of demography in Quebec, where early interest focussed on tracing the origins and history of the French Canadian population.
4. Canada's quinquennial Census is unique in the annals of census-taking around the world. The definitive story of its growth and survival in Canada to the present is available in Pryor, 1992.
5. Before the 1940s in the Department of Sociology at McGill University under Carl Dawson's direction, courses in sociology had a strong ecological component. Dawson had completed doctoral studies in sociology at the University of Chicago, and his work demonstrated unequivocally the influence of this school. The various editions of his co-authored text include a section on ecology, and the last edition has references to the most reputed demographic publications of that period (Dawson and Gettys, 1948). Nevertheless, the annual McGill calendars and relevant publications by McGill sociologists in the 1940s show clearly that population courses in McGill's Department of Sociology stressed purely sociological aspects such as the assimilation and integration of immigrants.
6. What things were "less than perfect"? Only one of a number of aspects is noted here. French translations of demographic texts prepared for the standard census volumes and published in

the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s (and even later), were often incomprehensible and sometimes quite erroneous. Francophone students were frequently advised by their Quebec professors to avoid the French versions and to read the English texts! But the efforts and initiatives of concerned officers have gradually brought positive, if not perfect, results.

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