

Editor's Note

The following article by Myron Momryk on the Library and Archives of Canada (LAC) provides a helpful introduction to the resources of the LAC. It also serves to introduce several samples of the documents actually available in the LAC, documents pertaining to very early Ukrainian Catholic life in Western Canada. These documents were discovered in the LAC by Jars Balan, who has also capably translated them for us here and for the historical record.

Archival Sources for the Study of Eastern Christianity at the Library and Archives of Canada

Myron Momryk

The Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is one of the oldest departments of the federal government. It preserves archival records of individuals and organizations of national significance as well as those of the government itself. Since its establishment in 1872, the LAC has acquired material documenting the political history of Canada and the activities of the federal government. This policy is still a fundamental part of the acquisition strategy of the LAC and the archival holdings reflect this tradition.

A researcher interested in other topics, such as the history of Eastern Christian religious institutions and communities in Canada, has to approach this topic from the perspective of the historical relations between the religious institution/community and the federal government. An additional factor is the relationship between the Canadian government and the countries-of-origin of the members of the various Eastern Christian communities. As a result, the researcher will inevitably encounter archival material that focuses on the political dimension of this relationship. The search for archival sources will lead to a variety of records and collections – some more unusual than others – and such research requires much time and patience. However, depending on the research topic, the rewards may justify this effort.

In my experience, it is among the records of the *Immigration Branch* (RG76) that one finds the earliest documentation relating to the presence of Eastern Christianity in Canada. As

immigration of Slavic groups from central and eastern Europe increased dramatically in the 1890's, references to the religious dimension of their experience in Canada were also documented in federal government records. The records document the presence of these groups as communities and legal entities and their relationship with federal government. There is, however, little if anything about the spiritual dimension of their experiences save for requests from the pioneering communities for land to build churches and to establish cemeteries, requests to be found in some of the first entries in the immigration records.

The arrival of the Doukhobors in 1898–99 and their settlement in Saskatchewan is also well documented in the records of the *Immigration Branch* (RG76). However, differences soon arose between the Doukhobors and the local authorities regarding, e.g., the system of communal land-holding and registration respecting births, marriages and deaths. These issues gave rise to a long history of confrontations with law-enforcement agencies of the federal government. Files were soon created by the Royal North West Mounted Police on the Doukhobors, eventually producing a rich source of records on their leadership and their activities. The RNWMP and later the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Records* (RG18) are among the most detailed sources of information on the Doukhobors. The records are now part of the *Canadian Security and Intelligence Service Records* (RG146) at the LAC. Access to these records is possible through the Access to Information and Privacy legislation.

Slavic immigrants from eastern Europe were perceived to be a rich source of converts for the Canadian Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches and there are archival references to their efforts among the immigrants. The arrival of the new immigrants in north-western Canada prompted the various Catholic and Protestant Churches to send missionaries in an attempt to convert the new settlers and make them into "Canadians." The Protestants were successful in recruiting a number of recent immigrants as interpreters and as ministers and their records are located in the Canadian Archives and Special Collections Branch of the LAC.

An example of how the political role of the clergy can influence historical events in an ethnocultural community is the role of Bishop Nykyta Budka (1877–1949) at the outbreak of the First World War. His pastoral letter of 27 July 1914 to members of the Greek Catholic Church in Canada to support the Emperor of Austria-Hungary in the war against Serbia became a controversial issue and certainly had an influence on Canadian government policy towards the “enemy aliens.” His recantation a few days later could not repair the political damage. The internment of the “enemy aliens,” mostly citizens of Austria-Hungary, produced a large collection of records in various government departments. Among these records are individual files on the religious needs of the internees.

The *Russian Consular Records (Li-Ra-Ma Collection)* (MG30 E406) are a unique source of historical information on the early years of the Russian Orthodox Church in Canada. These are files produced by Russian consular officials in Canada during the years 1900 to 1922 with the main focus on the war years, 1914–18. The files contain historical information on Russian Orthodox clergy and parishes in Canada and their relationship with the Russian consulates.

A defining event regarding the future development of the Eastern Christian groups in Canada was the Russian Revolution, the subsequent Civil War, and foreign intervention. The Canadian government was directly involved in the foreign intervention in North Russia and Siberia and among the Canadian Expeditionary Force to Siberia were members of the Royal North West Mounted Police.

In Canada, the labour conflicts, which built up during the First World War, led to the Winnipeg General Strike and the founding of radical political parties such as the Communist Party of Canada in 1921. These strikes and labour actions were attributed to east European immigrants and the Bolshevik influence in Canada. As a result, immigrants and their organizations were viewed with suspicion by federal and provincial authorities. The “loyalty” of the recent immigrants to Canada and Canadian institutions and values was suspect. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (as the Royal North West Mounted