

Borders as Social, Cultural and Economic Divides A Reflection on Canada's Maritime Provinces

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Borders of all types (natural, man-made or political) all have the tendency to divide people such that each group evolves in different and unique ways. As an Upper Canadian who lived and worked in two of Canada's Maritime Provinces for more than four decades, I have observed the divide existing among them. Stemming from their original independence as colonies and then focusing on central Canada, Maritime Provinces tend not to collaborate with each other. This was seen in the "great divide" between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick where the border towns of Amherst NS and Sackville NB tended to turn their backs on each other. The first faced south towards Halifax and the other north to Moncton and Fredericton. In the 1970s, Moncton newspapers were not available in Amherst, so one was forced to travel to Sackville to obtain them to find out about events occurring in nearby Moncton (65 km from Amherst). Similar divides were noted in inter-university relations, where it was easier for UNB to enter into collaborative research programs with the University of Maine than with institutions in Nova Scotia.

The opposition to the construction of the Confederation Bridge linking Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick provides another case of social and cultural divides in the concern that such a fixed link would destroy the "Island way of life." In a parallel process, the 1990's construction of the Øresund Bridge between Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark also led to a breach in the social, cultural and economic divide between the two countries.

The inter-provincial divides among the Maritime Provinces appear more deep-seated than in other parts of Canada. One reason may be the absence of immigrants and in-migrants for other provinces to the region. As pointed out by David Foot in his seminal demographic work, *Boom, Bust and Echo* (1996), there is no "echo" growth in the Maritimes leading to an aging population compared with other parts of Canada. The lack of new entrants into the Maritime population may lead to a lack of innovation and acceptance of change, creating a vicious circle.

Today's more globally connected individuals and communities in our social media dominated digital age will likely further breach long-standing border divides leading to enhanced understanding and acceptance of "others." This paper explores border divides in the Maritime Provinces based on the author's observations and reflections.