

**Richard Yeomans**  
**2020 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Award Recipient**

The United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada is pleased to announce Richard Yeomans as recipient of the 2020 UELAC Scholarship Award. Richard is a PhD student at the University of New Brunswick whose doctoral research examines the late eighteenth and nineteenth century legacies of American loyalists in New Brunswick. In particular, his dissertation asks how New Brunswickers employed scientific research for the purpose of regulating the natural resources of the province, and how that knowledge was disseminated through agricultural networks, voluntary associations, and colonial exhibitions until Canadian Confederation in 1867.

Richard was raised in Fredericton along the St. John River, where his family has lived since first arriving in 1783 following the end of the American Revolution. He has always expressed an interest in local history and New Brunswick's loyalist heritage. In 2011, Richard began his undergraduate degree at the University of New Brunswick in the Faculty of Arts. As an honours student in the



history programme, he pursued his interest in Loyalist Studies, publishing an article in UNB's undergraduate history journal, *Time Pieces*, on the myths and narratives of the loyalists in Canada. Richard was awarded his Bachelor of Arts with honours in history in the fall of 2015.

Richard began his graduate studies at Queen's University in 2016, working under the supervision of Dr. Jane Errington. Funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Richard's Master's thesis, "The Age of Constitutionalism: Crisis, Rebellion, and Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Colonial North America," examined the role of constitutional thought in the development of colonial American resistance to the authority of the British state. His thesis argues that beginning in 1765 American colonists recognized the need for constitutional reform in order to mitigate imperial power from London. At the same time, debates between colonists on the continent, and Britons in the metropole, were the product of a growing democratic spirit. Past historians, such as R.R. Palmer, argued that this spirit was present only in people who took up the revolutionary cause, but it was likewise informing more moderate ideologies that sought out peaceable reform over a violent independence. At the onset of war, American colonists who refused

to take up arms against the British became the enemies of the larger republican movement, which moderates interpreted as jeopardizing the degree of liberty guaranteed by a connection to the British Constitution. By 1783, thousands of American colonists who refused to join in the rebel cause entered into an exile that propelled them into the British Atlantic World. Of the nearly fifty thousand refugees that left the newly independent United States, the lion's share arrived and settled on the shores of the Fundy coast. Once there, loyalist refugees continued to exhibit principles and beliefs that were democratic in nature, mirroring those of their more rebellious counterparts. In doing so, the refugees that landed in the Atlantic region, and established New Brunswick, demonstrated the enduring legacy of American-born democratic attitudes, which shaped the development of new colonial societies throughout their diaspora.

Richard's PhD dissertation continues to investigate how New Brunswick's unique social and political culture within a larger British Atlantic World was characterised by the loyalist's belief in constitutional change through time and process, rather than violence and social disruption. This disposition appears throughout the legislative record, influenced a great number of public intuitions, and informed the day-to-day actions of settler society. The regulation of the province's natural resources to promote future provincial success and settlement became a driving force behind New Brunswick's governmentality.

New Brunswick offers a unique vantage from which to gage the impact revolution had on the mentalities of American loyalist refugees. When New Brunswick was carved from peninsular Nova Scotia following the influx of loyalists that settled north of the Bay of Fundy in 1784, thousands were left destitute as a result of civil war and resettlement. By using a system of representative government following the opening of the provincial assembly in 1786, loyalist refugees used a distinct constitutional language to shape the legislative process in the newly created British colony. At the turn of nineteenth century, several voluntary associations formed that were designed to promote legislation for the regulation, maintenance and longevity of resources. These associations employed modern science to provide suggestions and solutions to industries such as timber, fish, and agriculture. New Brunswick's moral economy, characterised by the need to leave something better for the next generation, originated with the loyalist refugees, and their experiences of civil war and resettlement on unfriendly soil.

By the 1820s, New Brunswick had enacted more legislation for the protection of natural resources than any other settler colony that would join Confederation. Newly landed British immigrants were acutely aware of the province's distinct political culture, and contributed to it. In 1839, James Robb, a Scottish chemist and professor of natural science at King's College in Fredericton, New Brunswick, observed that the provincial "Assembly [is] a radical body," an assessment provoked by the legislature's decision that year to assert its authority over King's College, an institution incorporated by royal prerogative. Robb recognized the act as both radical and reflective of his own sensibilities; a desire to combine local knowledge with modern science and to assert assembly control over public

institutions. Conversant with the politics of 1830s British North America and Britain, Robb understood that calling New Brunswick radical did not mean it was rebellious. The New Brunswick Assembly's ability to navigate progressive change without violent social disruption, as happened in the Canadas, derived from a loyalist mentality that influenced the establishment of the colony in 1784 and laid the foundation of a political order based on evolution, rather than revolution.

Richard continues to engage within local conversations about New Brunswick's loyalist past, contributing op-eds to Brunswick New Ltd, and the NB Media Co-op. He has also organized a panel for the 2020/21 Atlantic Canada Studies Conference, encouraging historians to create a 'new' New Brunswick history, and to challenge the out-dated narratives of the region and its peoples. Richard is the creator and website manager for [atlanticdigitalscholarship.ca](http://atlanticdigitalscholarship.ca), the official website for UNB's Atlantic Canada Studies Centre. Working under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth Mancke, Richard continues to promote a richer and more complex history of New Brunswick.