

In 2017 Canada is celebrating its sesquicentennial anniversary, that is the 150th anniversary of confederation. I spent two weeks in Canada in June of this year, conducting interviews for my research with parliamentarians and civil servants in Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City. This proved to be a great time to go to Canada, not only because only days before I arrived the Quebec Government published a document in the hope of re-opening a dialogue on Constitutional politics – my field of study – but given that this combined with preparations for celebrating the birth of confederation, due to start days after I left, the topic of constitutional politics, was on the minds of many.

My research is a comparative project which looks at the experience of constitutional politics in three plurinational states: Canada, Spain and the UK. It is particularly interested in how these states have dealt with, or in the case of the latter two, continue to deal with, secessionist movements and what this tells us about the accommodation strategies thus far employed by all three states. As well as examining the different paths taken, it seeks to examine what affect territorial autonomy has on secession demands and offer some insights into the future terrain of this field, particularly in light of the recent developments in the constitutional ambit in the three cases.

The UACES/JMCT scholarship I was awarded to facilitate my fieldwork trip to Canada was primarily used to cover travel and accommodation costs incurred. This allowed me to travel to three cities and speak to a number of politicians, including ministers and civil servants in incumbent and past governments of Canada and Quebec. In total, I conducted 14 interviews, all of which were semi-structured and digitally recorded. In addition to this, I was given a tour of the Canadian Senate and Quebec National Assembly, and the chance to have quick informal chats with several other politicians, some of whom have agreed to participate in telephone/Skype interviews arranged for a later date.

I was also able to meet with several academics located in Quebec who work on this topic. This provided an invaluable opportunity to discuss the project with these experts, as well as chat about the possibility of future collaborations and different avenues for further research. Indeed, I have already agreed to collaborate with one of the academics I met on a potential research article, and was invited to present a paper at a conference held at the University of Quebec, Montreal.

Overall, the fieldwork trip to Canada was a hugely rewarding and worthwhile endeavour. I managed to meet a number of important politicians and academics, as well as experience some of the pre-celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the confederation. I would once again like to thank UACES and the JMCT for their generous scholarship.

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