



Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC's Western Region

This community report is part of the "Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC's Western Region" study.

This project explores settlement services available to newcomers in communities across the four western provinces and identifies potential service gaps and opportunities. Secondly, this project examines what partnerships exist in communities to better serve newcomers.



29 rural communities across Western Canada were purposely selected to maximize diversity to ensure valid conclusions.

- The total population in these 29 communities (2011 census) is 1,191,228.
- They received 37,330 permanent residents (2009-2013).
- The population ranges from 1,761 in Arborg – Ashern, Manitoba to 104,109 in Langley, British Columbia.
- Permanent Resident (PR) landings (2009-2013) ranges from 88 in Virden Manitoba to 4,320 in Brandon, Manitoba.
- Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) in communities have different levels of settlement services capacity.



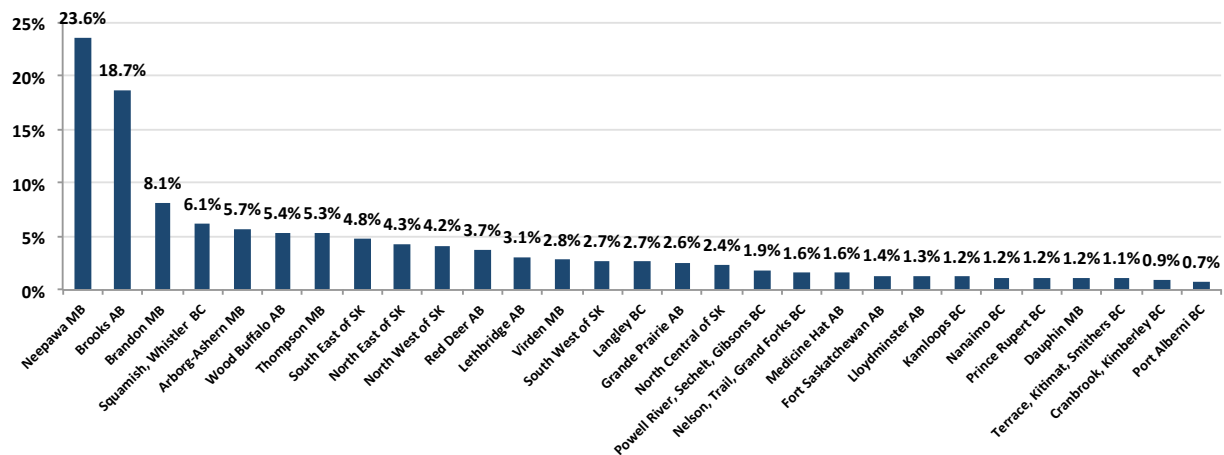
Significant research efforts have focused on examining settlement services in large centres across Canada. With more immigrants selecting small centres and rural areas, this project is intended to inventory the extent to which settlement services exist in selected communities across Western Canada (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) and to identify gaps, barriers and needs. Additionally the applicability of the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) model was examined as one option to enhance settlement services outcomes for newcomers¹ in Western Canada.

This project’s governance structure consisted of researchers, CIC, provincial government and settlement service organizations. There was an overall project panel and a provincial advisory panel for each western province.

Twenty-nine rural communities² and urban centres across the four western provinces were selected by provincial advisory panels. Selected communities were receiving newcomers annually, must not have had an established CIC Local Immigration Partnership (LIP), must have at least one CIC funded organization,³ and large centres like Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg were excluded from the study.

Telephone interviews were conducted with 147 senior officials of settlement service providers in the 29 communities. 29 draft community reports were compiled presenting the research findings in each community. 69 participants and immigration stakeholders in 21 communities provided feedback on the reports to ensure accuracy. Based on the 29 community reports, four provincial reports were compiled – one each for British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. These provincial reports summarize the findings across the communities sampled in each province. A regional report was then compiled that synthesizes common themes that emerged across the four provinces. Three strategic directions address the gaps identified and the improvements needed for the delivery of settlement and integration services in rural areas across western Canada.

Permanent Resident arrivals (2009-2013) as % of Population in the 29 selected communities



The **key findings** of the regional report are summarized under three themes of **Settlement and Employment, Services and Gaps** and **Partnerships**.

1. For the purposes of the study, “newcomers” are defined to include all Permanent Residents, Refugees, Refugee Claimants, Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW), Naturalized Citizens, and International Students that have been in Canada from 1 day to 5 years.
2. The term “community” is conceptualized in geographic terms as either a “local community” that consists of a single municipality, or a “regional community,” comprising two or more neighboring municipalities and/or areas that are not incorporated as municipalities.
3. Although the criteria was to have at least one CIC funded organization in the communities sampled, a broader range of SPOs participated that either cost-share funding with CIC or are solely funded by other federal, provincial, municipal, NGO, private and other sources.

SETTLEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

- Settling newcomers is a challenge across much of western Canada.
- Small rural communities offer benefits to newcomers but lack key services (lack of childcare, affordable housing, and public transportation).
- Finding employment is harder in the regions that are farther west.
- English language proficiency and foreign credential recognition are the two most commonly mentioned issues that create challenges to newcomers seeking employment.

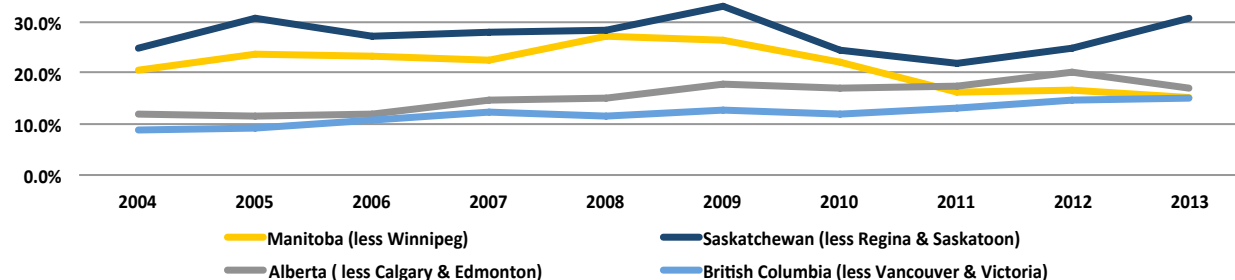
SERVICES AND GAPS

- The needs of newcomers are similar across the western region. Extending service offerings to a broader range of newcomers who currently do not qualify will benefit the communities at large.
- Expanding services is needed across western region: specific services need to be offered more often; the definition of who is eligible for services needs to be broadened; and services need to be located in more communities within given geographic regions.
- The range of language services can be limited (i.e., basic language skills). Increased offerings of advanced language training, job specific language training, and literacy training is necessary in rural communities.
- Settlement services are necessary and integration services are needed. More emphasis needs to be placed on integrating newcomers into the community, which will require more services and supports.
- A reliable form of funding (i.e., core funding) is needed for SPOs to support the organizational capacity required to provide effective settlement services.
- Remote communities face additional service provision challenges, largely due to low population density and large distances (e.g., Thompson, Manitoba; Smithers/Terrace/Kitimat, British Columbia)
- Language is a barrier to accessing services along with having small children; SPOs do not offer childcare during service hours and have limited access to public transportation.

PARTNERSHIPS

- Partnerships are key to service newcomers in rural and small centres. The majority of participants from all 4 provinces reported working in partnership with others in their communities.
- Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are supported, but need to build upon existing organizational partnerships. There are provincial differences with regards to the development of LIPs.
- Private sector partnerships and involvement is desired. Participants from all provinces expressed a desire to improve their involvement and coordination with local businesses and employers.

More Immigrants are choosing to migrate to rural areas: Percentage of Permanent Residents in BC, AB, SK, MB living outside the big cities, 2004-2013



1. Strategic direction: Expanding the availability and accessibility of newcomer services

CIC is asked to expand existing settlement services so SPOs can provide better services that match the needs of newcomers in rural communities. In addition, SPOs want to improve access to existing services to include other newcomers, those whom CIC considers ineligible. Moreover, settlement services need to be offered in other nearby locations to overcome the larger distances in rural areas. Equally important, existing integration services need to increase so they are more accessible and suitable to the newcomers, including addressing cultural differences.

2. Strategic direction: Enhancing Organizational Capacity and Funding at the Agency Level

CIC is asked for more flexible policies that serve diverse groups of newcomers in rural areas. CIC is also asked for core funding of SPOs. The rural SPOs have fewer choices, fewer funding options, and fewer staff options than some of their urban counterparts. Multi-year funding is needed to stabilize their operations for more flexible funding policies to enable SPOs to address the rural issues of distance and low densities when providing services. SPOs also want to be able to benefit and learn from practices others are using in the delivery of similar settlement services.

3. Strategic direction: Fostering Partnerships to increase organizational capacity in the communities

CIC is asked to enable the LIPs program in western Canada to develop capacity for partnership and enhance and build upon existing partnerships. Many rural areas and smaller cities are already involved in various types of partnerships. The LIPs program can add substantively to existing working relations. In rural communities that are just starting out with few newcomers, a LIP program can help realize a regional approach with key stakeholders. LIPs are also a strategic investment in more established SPOs where recruiting and involving employers, municipal leaders, and others can expand existing partnerships. CIC needs to ensure the LIPs program reflects and supports the provincial differences regarding partnerships.

Research Team

Bill Ashton, Ph.D. (*Principal Investigator*)
Rachael Pettigrew, Ph.D. (*Research Associate*)
Eleni Galatsanou, MSc (*Project Coordinator*)

Rural Development Institute, Brandon University | Tel: (204)-571-8513 | Ashtonw@brandonu.ca

Joe Garcea, Ph.D. (*Co-Principal Investigator*)

University of Saskatchewan | Tel: (306)-966-5222 | joe.garcea@usask.ca

Anna Kirova, Ph.D. (*Co-Principal Investigator*)

John McCoy, Ph.D. (*Co-author of the Alberta communities and provincial reports*)

University of Alberta | Tel: (780)-492-0913 | akirova@ualberta.ca

Miu Chung Yan, Ph.D. (*Co-Principal Investigator*)

Jenny Francis, Ph.D. Candidate (*Co-author of the British Columbia communities and provincial reports*)

University of British Columbia | Tel: (604)-822-8688 | Miu.Yan@ubc.ca

Lori Wilkinson, Ph.D. (*Co-Principal Investigator and Chair of Project Advisory Panel*)

University of Manitoba | Tel: (204) 474-8491 | Lori.Wilkinson@umanitoba.ca

All reports are available at: <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publications/immigration-services-and-gaps/> and http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/research/immigration/reports_IRW.html