

Rural Development Institute

Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multistakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

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Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC's Western Region i

Executive Summary

This study called “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region” was funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) through Immigration Research West (IRW) at the University of Manitoba and was directed by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) of Brandon University. 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 provide a preliminary examination of settlement services and partnerships. As a result, the primary objective of this project is 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. As a secondary objective 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 regional report is part of the “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region” study and synthesizes the findings of the four provincial reports for British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

This project is made possible through partnerships with many individuals and organizations. Five co-Principle Investigators (co-PIs), active immigration researchers from western Canadian Universities facilitated the planning, and research activities across the western provinces; Dr. Miu Chung Yan (University of British Columbia); Dr. Anna Kirova (University of Alberta); Dr. Joe Garcea (University of Saskatchewan); Dr. Lori Wilkinson (University of Manitoba); and Dr. Bill Ashton (Rural Development Institute, Brandon University). For the purpose of this project a governance structure was set up for all aspects of the study.

Twenty-nine rural communities and urban centres across the four western provinces were selected by provincial advisory panels to participate in this study. 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. To be eligible for selection, the communities must not have had extensive examination or evaluation of settlement services and must be receiving increasing numbers of newcomers. For this reason, large centres like Vancouver, Edmonton, Regina and Winnipeg were excluded from the study.

Data for this project was collected by telephone interviews with 147 settlement service provider representatives in the 29 different communities. Those communities sampled (Figure 4) represented different geographic regions of the four provinces, varied in size and number of newcomers receiving, and had at least one CIC funded organization². The participants were recruited using mainly a snowball technique and are senior officials, knowledgeable members of SPOs within each of the selected communities. Once data collection was completed, 29 community reports were compiled presenting the

¹ 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 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.

research findings in each community. Participants and additional immigration stakeholders provided feedback on the reports to ensure accuracy. In total, 80 participants and immigration stakeholders in 26 communities provided feedback. Upon finalizing the community reports, four provincial reports were compiled each one for British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. The provincial reports (Appendices B-E) summarize the findings across the communities sampled in the four western provinces and provide an overview of the settlement services, identified key gaps, barriers to accessing services, and described the extent of community partnerships.

This regional report synthesizes common themes emerged across the four provinces. Additionally, this report suggests a strategic direction for the actions needed in order to address the gaps identified and improve the delivery of settlement and integration services in rural areas across western Canada.

The key findings of this report are summarized under three themes of Settlement and Employment, Services and Gaps and Partnerships. The findings related to settlement and employment identified issues regarding community based concerns, while the findings related to settlement services and gaps and SPO partnerships discuss issues that are within CIC's purview. Based on these key findings, three strategic directions are suggested for Citizenship and Immigration Canada aimed at supporting the settlement and integration of newcomers into rural areas and smaller centers in western Canada.

1. 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. Enhancing Organizational Capacity and Funding at the Agency Level

CIC is asked for more flexible policies that serve diverse group 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 would 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. 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 and small centres 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 expand existing partnerships. CIC needs to ensure the LIPs program reflects and supports the provincial differences regarding partnerships.

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