



Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Brooks, Alberta

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

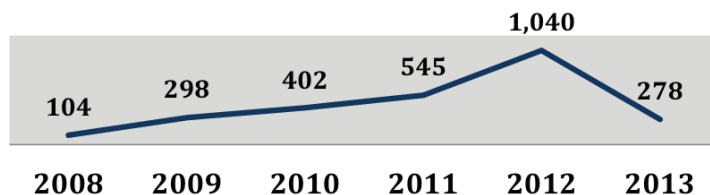


Population (2011): 13,676 in the downtown core and 23,430 including rural surroundings

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

Permanent Resident Landings Brooks 2008-2013

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada



Data sources: 8 Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) receiving funding from CIC, private, and various other sources.

- Findings validated locally

SETTLEMENT SERVICES



Top services offered

Brooks has a well-developed settlement service sector with all possible services listed (appendix A) being offered by the participant organizations or someone in the community.



Key gaps identified

- Foreign credentials recognition
- Assistance with setting up a business
- Business mentorship and networking
- Child care
- Access to housing



Barriers to access services

- English language proficiency
- Lack of access to child care
- Transportation
- Confusion among newcomers on how to access services
- Ineligibility for services among some newcomers



Top services needed

- Language training
- Interpretation services
- Mentoring / business partnership mentoring
- Information and orientation



Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

Housing, needs assessment, information and orientation, mental health services, social support and inclusion, and language training.

PARTNERSHIPS



Brooks has a very well developed and diverse service provider partnership network. The most commonly identified partnerships exist between schools/school boards, municipal offices, children/family services, umbrella organizations, SPOs. Settlement, Integration and welcoming activities were all reported in partnership, but settlement was the least common activity.

INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY



The general perception is that it is relatively easy for newcomers to settle and find work in Brooks, mainly in non-skilled jobs.

English language proficiency was identified as the primary barrier for newcomer settlement in Brooks. Limited employment options, specifically the lack of available high skilled jobs, was also cited as a concern.

IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND GAPS IN CIC'S WESTERN REGION: Brooks, Alberta

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to better understand the settlement and integration services available to newcomers and to explore the service gaps and opportunities in Brooks, Alberta and 28 other rural communities across Western Canada. This research offers a current snapshot of Brooks by providing information gathered from a sample of local service providers. It is not a comprehensive review of all settlement services in Brooks. Data was collected in October and November 2014 from eight organizations that serve newcomers in Brooks through a telephone survey completed by a representative from each organization. The survey was followed by a telephone consultation with 2 participants which allowed them to offer feedback on the initial survey findings. Five of the organizations received funding from CIC, in addition to a variety of other funding sources. Two survey respondents participated in a feedback session on the primary survey findings via teleconference held at the end of November, 2014.

Background

Brooks is a growing town in Southeastern Alberta that recently celebrated its 100-year anniversary. Brooks is the only community of this size within a 100 km radius. The economy of Brooks is mainly focused on the oil and gas sector and agriculture. The community has almost doubled in size since the 1980's. Today, Brooks has a diverse population of roughly 14,000 residents and an additional 7,000 people in nearby Newell.

Community Settlement Concerns

Almost all the service provider representatives felt that the number of newcomers settling in Brooks had increased in the last 5 years and now represents between 10-25 % of the community's overall population. The main driver of growth in the newcomer population is meeting demands in the labour market. Many new arrivals are temporary foreign workers (FTWs) some of whom have become permanent residents and brought their families to Brooks. The majority of the participants felt that newcomers found the settlement process in the community relatively easy. In part this was attributed to the size of the community and the accessibility of well-established settlement services.

Three participants suggested it was somewhat easy for newcomers to get jobs, but this is the case mainly for low skill workers.

There were some concerns expressed over barriers to newcomer integration in the community. For example, it was noted that the lack of a public transit system in the community creates limited transportation options for newcomers. There were also concerns expressed over the ability of newcomers in surrounding communities to access services. A lack of available housing was also cited as a barrier to integration.

As indicated in the follow-up consultation, the primary employer for newcomers is a large meat-packing plant. Consequently, higher skilled newcomers find it more difficult to find employment that matches their education and experience. The limited hours of operation for some settlement service providers was cited as a barrier to access services. English language skills were cited as a primary barrier, especially when trying to finding a job. Participants suggested a low cost job-training program could be helpful for newcomers. There was also an identified need for improved access to childcare and social / cultural integration among newcomers.

Available Settlement Services

Brooks has a well-developed settlement and integration service sector with all services listed (27 key services – see appendix A) being offered by the participant organizations or someone in the community. Many of the services listed were identified as needing to be expanded. The services that were identified as being most needed by newcomers include language training and supports, mentoring, including collaboration with businesses (developing on-site programming), interpretation, information and orientation and developing bridging programs.

In regards to newcomers who are ineligible for CIC-funded services, participants indicated that temporary foreign workers (TFW), new and returning naturalized citizens, refugee claimants and international students were all in need of settlement services. Participants indicated that TFWs and new and returning naturalized Canadian citizens had a greater need for settlement services than other groups. Information and orientation, needs assessments,

language training, mental health services, sports and recreation, and social inclusion were all listed as the services most needed by newcomers who are ineligible for services.

Tracking and Planning

All participating service providers reported that their organizations were guided by a strategic plan and that they regularly, either independently or through partnerships, assessed the service needs of the newcomers in their community. These needs assessments took a variety of forms (i.e., survey, community mapping, meeting, discussions with clients, focus groups, and client analysis) and were conducted as frequently as every month or every year.

Specific Capacities

In Brooks, the organizations that participated in the survey had strong organizational capacity. All organizations felt they had capacity to communicate with stakeholders, to meet reporting requirements, and coordinate services with other stakeholders. However, three organizations identified that they did not have adequate capacity to provide services in both official languages. More capacity will be needed to meet the needs of clients in a growing community. In addition, the following capacities were most often cited as requiring development: more staff; ability to offer services that reflect clients' shift work, which is particular to the major employer of the town; increased government financial support to meet the needs of the community; and staff training.

Partnerships

All service provider participants reported being engaged in partnership with other community organizations and it is evident that Brooks has a well-developed service provider partnership network. Participants indicated that there are partnerships among all 21 community partners listed in the survey (see appendix B). The most commonly reported partners were schools/school boards, municipal offices, child and family services, the umbrella organization and SPOs. The activities conducted in partnership were categorized into three groups; settlement (e.g., getting jobs and housing, daily functioning), integration (e.g., teaching labour rules and human rights), and welcoming (e.g., orientation to community, civic events). In Brooks, integration and welcoming activities were more likely to be conducted in partnership than settlement activities. The municipality is seen as playing a key role in coordination of services. Given the level of partnering and number of partnerships that currently exists in Brooks, this community would be a candidate for a LIP.

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Appendix A – List of Possible Services

SETTLEMENT

- Greeting upon arrival/initial reception
- Information and orientation
- Needs assessment and referral
- Interpretation services
- Language assessment
- Language training
- Help finding housing
- Help with daily life (e.g., registering for school, getting a bank account)
- Transportation support

ECONOMIC

- Help finding a job
- Educational upgrading
- Recognition of foreign credentials
- Investment opportunities
- Job-specific language training
- Help setting up a business
- Occupational/business mentorship and networking
- Financial supports

SOCIAL

- Childcare
- Cultural Events
- Recreational services
- Legal support/referral
- Health Services
- Mental Health Services
- Social inclusion/ integration support
- Services for seniors
- Services for women
- Services for youth

Appendix B – Possible Organizational Partnerships

1. School/School Boards
2. Umbrella organizations
3. Newcomers (individuals)
4. Housing services
5. Settlement service providers
6. Health services
7. Municipal offices/EDO
8. Civil society groups
9. Francophone organizations
10. Language training providers
11. Children/Family services
12. Businesses
13. Chambers of Commerce
14. Police Force
15. Universities/Research Networks
16. Ethno-cultural groups
17. Religious organizations
18. Public libraries
19. Foundations
20. Labour market services
21. Other: Province of Quebec and Francophone Secretariat in Edmonton; Health Family Outreach; Santara Safe House.