



Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Nanaimo, British Columbia

This community report is part of the “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region” study.

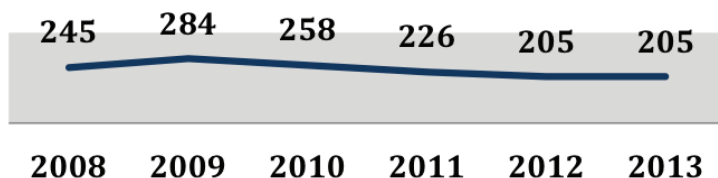


Population (2011): 98,021 residents

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

Permanent Resident Landings
Nanaimo 2008-2013

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA



Data sources: 3 Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) receiving funding from Provincial, CIC, NGO sources. One SPO receives membership fees.
• Findings validated locally.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES



Top services offered

- Almost all services were indicated to be offered in Nanaimo to some extent.



Key gaps identified

- Job-specific language training
- Assistance finding a job, housing and setting up a business
- SPOs lack information about local service provision and have insufficient capacity for collaboration



Barriers to access services

- Lack of information about services available
- Ineligibility for services
- Language and financial difficulties of newcomers
- Discrimination because of being a newcomer
- Lack of childcare



Top services needed

Assistance finding a job and setting up a business, foreign credential recognition, language training (including job specific language training), and health services (including mental health)



Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

- Language assessment and job specific language training
- Assistance finding a job and with daily life
- Assistance finding housing

PARTNERSHIPS



Nanaimo service providers are partnering with others to deliver services to newcomers. Settlement, welcoming and integration activities were all reported in partnership but integration was the least common activity. Participants reported a desire for a partnership with most of the listed partners.

INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY



- There is a mixed perception of how easy it is for newcomers to settle in Nanaimo. Lack of affordable rental housing, obtaining employment, language barriers and lack of information about available settlement services are the main challenges newcomers are facing in Nanaimo.
- Perception: It is “very difficult” or “somewhat difficult for newcomers to obtain employment due to low availability of jobs, lack of recognition of foreign credential and experience, and discrimination.

IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND GAPS IN CIC'S WESTERN REGION: Nanaimo, British Columbia

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 Nanaimo, British Columbia and 28 other rural communities across Western Canada. This research offers a current snapshot of Nanaimo by providing information gathered from a sample of local service providers. It is not a comprehensive review of all settlement services in Nanaimo. Data was collected in October 2014 from 3 organizations that serve newcomers in Nanaimo through a telephone survey completed by a representative from each organization. One organization receives funding from CIC, one from NGOs, and one from membership fees. Two organisations receive provincial funding. One survey respondent provided email feedback on the preliminary survey findings contained in the draft report.

Background

Nanaimo is located on Vancouver Island, a 2 hour ferry ride from Vancouver. According to Statistics Canada, the 2011 population of the Nanaimo census agglomeration was 98,021, a 6.1% increase from 2006. CIC reports that from 2008-2013 a total of 1,423 Permanent Residents (PR) arrived to Nanaimo.

Community Settlement Concerns

Respondents were unanimous that the number of newcomers living in or near Nanaimo has increased in the last 5 years, and speculated that this was due to expansions in the TFW program, growing numbers of International Students attending the local university, and the development of partnerships between local businesses and international companies based in China that result in newcomers from China increasingly seeing Nanaimo as a good location to start a business. The respondent who provided feedback also drew attention to significant secondary migration from Vancouver and Toronto. However, newcomers to Nanaimo face a number of settlement challenges, especially finding suitable, affordable rental housing, obtaining employment, and language barriers. Respondents were in disagreement with regard to how easy it is to settle in Nanaimo, with 2 saying that it is "somewhat difficult" and 1 indicating that it is "somewhat easy." Their

responses point to a lack of information about settlement services and confusion about what is available. One person noted that settlement success depends on the availability of ethnic community support, as such support—which varies significantly among ethnic groups—may positively influence the settlement process and assist newcomers to obtain low skilled jobs.

ACCESSING SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Two of the 3 respondents agreed that over 25% of newcomers to Nanaimo find it difficult to locate the services they need, suggesting that newcomers tend to lack information about available services. When asked about newcomers' ability to access services, respondents were unanimous that the following concerns had been raised in Nanaimo: not being eligible for services, language difficulties, discrimination because of being a newcomer, financial difficulties, and lack of childcare. At least 1 respondent indicated that each of the concerns listed in Appendix A has been raised. Additional concerns include program eligibility conditions and, in some cases, family members' control of newcomers' access to services.

GETTING JOBS

Respondents were unanimous that finding a job in Nanaimo is "very difficult" or "somewhat difficult." The main reasons include lack of jobs and lack of foreign credential recognition, and a labour market dominated by an "old boys club" of employers who believe that without Canadian experience newcomers are unsuitable for Canadian work, regardless of their qualifications. However, respondents pointed out that obtaining recognition of foreign credentials is costly, time consuming, and not always successful.

Available Settlement Services

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDER CAPACITY

Two respondents provided figures indicating the number of newcomers served in their organisation. One agency serves 470 PRs, 78 Naturalized Citizens and 40 TFWs each month, while the other annually serves 300 International Students and 200 people whose status not known. The two agencies also indicated that in the month prior to the survey a total of 190 International Students and 4 Canadian citizens requested but did not receive services.

INVENTORY OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES

At least 1 respondent indicated that they provide each of the services listed in Appendix B, apart from assistance setting up a business, investment opportunities, and job-specific language training. Similarly, at least 1 respondent reported that each of the services listed in Appendix B is offered by another SPO, except for investment opportunities.

Respondents reported that the services most needed by newcomers include: settlement services, assistance finding a job and setting up a business, foreign credential recognition, language training (including job specific language training), and health services (including mental health). At least 1 respondent indicated that each of the services listed in Appendix B needs to expand, except: help with daily life, language training, interpretation services, needs assessment and referral, and financial supports. Investment opportunities are considered by 1 respondent to be needed but not offered. It is important to note the large number of “don’t know” responses to the question of whether services are offered and/or need to expand. If SPOs lack information about local service provision, then it is perhaps not surprising that newcomers lack information.

NEWCOMERS INELIGIBLE FOR CIC FUNDED SERVICES

Respondents reported the main needs of newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services to include: language assessment and job specific language training, assistance finding a job, housing and with daily life. With very few exceptions, at least 2 respondents indicated that each of the needs listed in Appendix B is experienced by International Students, TFWs, Refugee Claimants, and Naturalized Citizens. There was no need thought not to be experienced by any ineligible newcomers.

Tracking and Planning

All respondents indicated that their services for newcomers are guided by a strategic plan, either internally or jointly with other SPOs, and that they regularly assess the service needs of newcomers internally or with other SPOs. Assessments are conducted annually and on an ongoing basis based on client feedback and evaluation surveys, informal observation, skill assessments, and feedback from students, teachers, principals, and SWIS. Additional sources of information include other SPOs and the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce. Only 1 respondent was aware of an annual report on settlement achievements, namely, the Vital Signs report released by the Nanaimo Foundation.

Specific Capacities

Two respondents provided information regarding specific organizational capacity. Both indicated that they currently

have adequate capacity in terms of staff to provide services. Only 1 respondent indicated adequate capacity in the remaining capacities listed in Appendix C. One or 2 respondents reported that they will require additional future capacity in all of the capacities listed in Appendix C, except for provision of services in both official languages, which is expected to remain the same.

Partnerships

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). All respondents reported active SPO partnerships in their community: 3 carry out settlement activities, 2 provide welcoming services, and 1 offers integration supports in partnership. One or 2 respondents indicated that their organization partners with each of the agencies listed in Appendix D. One or 2 respondents also indicated a desire for partnerships with the following agencies: school/school boards, umbrella organizations, newcomers, housing services, settlement service providers, francophone organizations, language training providers, businesses, chambers of commerce, police force, universities/research networks, and ethno cultural groups. In their feedback on the draft report, one participant mentioned that to facilitate collaboration among SPOs and ensure adequate provision of services, there is a need for funding that is not restricted to certain groups, and which is offered on a less competitive basis than currently occurs, since competition among agencies inhibits partnership development and information sharing.

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Appendix A – Possible Concerns about Access to Services

- Lack of services in community
- Confusion about where to get help
- Not being eligible for services
- Language difficulties
- Lack of childcare
- Transportation difficulties
- Hours of the day that services are offered
- Financial difficulties
- Discrimination because of being a newcomer
- Discrimination because of race or ethnicity

Appendix B - 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 C – Possible Organizational Capacities

- Staff to provide services
- Financial support from government sources to maintain current services
- Financial support from non-government sources to maintain current services
- Communication with stakeholders
- Coordinating services with other service providers
- Staff skills for delivery and maintenance of services
- Mobilization of community to support and welcome newcomers
- Creation of governing and strategic plan
- Meet reporting requirements
- Provide services in both official languages