BRANDON UNIVERSITY

Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in
North East Region of Saskatchewan

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

The North East Region of Saskatchewan includes the following three major urban centres together with dozens of medium to small size towns and villages, and dozens of rural municipalities consisting of hamlets, farms, and small acreages.

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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Urban Centres	Population 2011 Census	Permanent Resident Landings 2009-2013
Humboldt	5,678	343
Melfort	5,576	133
Tisdale	3,185	144

Data Sources: 8 Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) receiving funding from governmental and non-governmental organizations.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Top services offered
- Reception and orientation
- Settlement
- Information and referrals related to various services
- Language training
- Employment searches and training
- Cultural orientation
- Social inclusion/integration support

Key gaps identified
- Services for newcomers living outside main urban center
- Lack of services for family of TFWs and other categories of newcomers
- Stable funding for some programs and services
- Coordination between service providers

Barriers to access services
- Absence of service agencies in some communities
- Services not readily accessible in some communities
- Transportation challenges make it difficult to commute to where services are provided
- Eligibility criteria for some services
- Insufficient childcare services when accessing other services

Top services needed

Language training; international credentials recognition; employment training; transportation and driver training; housing; childcare; submitting documents and applications required for immigration, settlement, integration, and citizenship.

Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

Language training; supports for refugees and refugee claimants with post-traumatic stress; supports for families and for children of temporary foreign workers; and settlement support workers in schools (SSWIS).

PARTNERSHIPS

Several partnerships existed involving settlement various organizations in the region. Most partnerships were informal rather than formal, and in many cases they simply involved informal consultation, coordination and information sharing on an ad-hoc basis. The partnerships involved organizations within the settlement and integration sector as well as an array of other sectors that were of importance for newcomers (e.g., education, health, housing, justice, employment).

INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY

Economic and community integration of newcomers was a principal goal of most organizations surveyed.

Economic integration was facilitated by the economic boom, and by the Saskatchewan Immigration Nominee Program (SINP), which linked immigrants and employers. Community integration of newcomers was facilitated by services provided to newcomers by settlement service provider organizations. Despite the factors that contributed to the economic and community integration of many newcomers, some challenges persisted for some of them because of insufficient integration services in some communities.

North East Region of Saskatchewan

Introduction

This report is part of a larger project designed to better understand various aspects of newcomer settlement and integration services in Western Canada. It provides a summary of the findings of a survey regarding the settlement and integration of newcomers in the North East Region of Saskatchewan.

The report has four principal foci: the factors affecting the settlement and integration of newcomers in this region; the existing and needed settlement and integration services for newcomers; the capacities of service provider organizations to offer those services and what may be required to increase those capacities; and the existing and potential partnerships in planning and providing services for improving the settlement and integration prospects of newcomers.

The information for the report was collected through interviews conducted in November and December 2014 with 8 representatives of selected settlement and integration service provider organizations and some other types of service provider organizations in the region. Although 8 interviews were conducted, the actual number of respondents to each question in this report may vary because not all interviewees responded to all questions.

Background Information

PROFILE OF NORTH EAST REGION

The North East Region of Saskatchewan includes the following types of communities: a few major urban centres, dozens of medium to small size towns and villages, and dozens of rural municipalities consisting of hamlets farms, and small acreages. The three major urban centres in the region are the cities of Humboldt and Melfort, and the town of Tisdale. According to Statistics Canada, the population of Humboldt in 2011 was 5,678, an increase of 13.6% from 2006; and the population of Melfort in 2011 was 5,576, an increase of 7.4% from 2006; and the population of Tisdale in 2011 was 3,185, an increase of 6.2% from 2006.

IMMIGRATION FLOWS TO THE NORTH EAST REGION

CIC immigration statistics from 2009-2013 indicate the arrival of approximately 700 permanent residents to this region, which constitutes approximately 2% of all immigrants destined to Saskatchewan during that period. Of these most settled in the three major centres in the region, namely Humboldt 343, Tisdale 144, and Melfort 133. It is important to note that these statistics do not include temporary residents who in this region, as in other regions, constitute a substantial number of newcomers.

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN NUMBER OF NEWCOMERS

All but one of the 8 respondents indicated that the number of newcomers destined for or living in this regional community has increased in the past 5 years. They suggested that this was due to four main factors: economic growth and industrial expansion; a skills shortage; the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP); the arrival of an increasing number of family sponsored newcomers; and promotional efforts to attract immigrants by governments and businesses.

Community Settlement

EASE OF SETTLING IN COMMUNITIES

When asked for their perception regarding how easy it was for newcomers to settle in their respective communities, 3 respondents indicated it was 'somewhat easy', 2 indicated it was 'easy', and 1 indicated it was 'somewhat difficult'.

FACTORS AFFECTING SETTLEMENT

Respondents highlighted several factors that either facilitated or hampered settlement. Interestingly, in some cases the same factors facilitated some aspects of settlement but hampered others (e.g., size of the community). Similarly, in some cases the existence of a particular factor facilitated settlement, but its absence hampered it (e.g. adequate and affordable housing).

The three major sets of factors cited as facilitating or hampering settlement in various communities are what might be referred to as services factors, economic and employment factors, and community factors.

The key service factors cited as facilitating settlement included: the existence of settlement and mainstream agencies in some of the larger urban centres (3), and the ability of staff of service provider organizations who speak several languages (1).

The key economic and employment factors cited as facilitating settlement were: the availability of jobs in various sectors (e.g., manufacturing, construction, health, religious institutions, etc.) (4); newcomers arriving to pre-arranged employment (2).

The key community factors cited as facilitating settlement included: smaller communities make it easier for newcomers to get direct, personal and timely social support because people know them and they know people (1); various types of organizations and facilities are located in close proximity of each other (1); and local service provider organizations are well connected with each other as well as other organizations in the local or regional community and can therefore help newcomers find services, employment, and other things they may need (1).

The services factors cited as hampering settlement in communities include: inadequate settlement services in some of the smaller urban and surrounding rural communities that did not have settlement service organizations located within their boundaries (2); the challenges faced by newcomers living in small remote communities in finding and accessing settlement service organizations, including the Regional Newcomer Gateways, that existed in the larger urban centres (2); insufficient language training for all who needed it (4); insufficient settlement and support services for spouses of principal applicants (2); insufficient childcare services (2); insufficient driver training opportunities, especially for winter driving (3); and insufficient training and orientation for understanding Canadian laws (1).

The economic and employment factors cited as hampering settlement included: inadequate and increased costs of foreign credentials recognition (3); and the tendency of newcomers to be shy and deferential and do not make a sufficiently clear and strong case regarding their abilities and personal qualities to be very good employees (1).

The community factors cited as hampering settlement included: geographic isolation and lack of religious and cultural agencies or communities (4); insufficient adequate and affordable housing (1); insufficient accessible or affordable transportation services (5); absence of religious institutions and communities valued by newcomers (1); racism and preconceived notions among Canadians regarding newcomers and vice-versa (1); and pre-conceived notions and prejudice of newcomers towards Aboriginal people (1).

FACTORS AFFECTING GETTING JOBS

In response to the questions of how easy it was for newcomer to get jobs, 4 respondents indicated it was 'somewhat easy' , 1 indicated it was 'easy', and indicated it was 'difficult'.

Respondents indicated that difficulties experienced by newcomers in getting jobs was largely due to several factors, including: language barriers (4); challenges related to foreign credential recognition (e.g., time, costs, standards) (1); requirements for Canadian experience (2); challenges related to transportation (2); and childcare (1). Some also indicated that there was an abundance of entry-level work for newcomers, but not much higher level work that aligned with the special training and skills of some newcomers (2).

Available Settlement Services

TYPES OF NEWCOMERS SERVED

The answers provided by respondents to the question on services their organizations provided to various categories of newcomers were as follows: permanent residents (6), temporary foreign workers (6), new and returning citizens (6), refugees (3), refugee claimants (3), and international students (3).

INVENTORY OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Respondents identified a broad range of services they provide newcomers. Most of these services fall within the scope of what are broadly defined as settlement services that can be grouped into the following sub- categories: initial welcome and reception services (2); information, orientation and referral services (5); language assessment and training (3); interpretation and translation services (3); employment search and referral services (3); community networking and cultural bridging services (2); student and family support services (1); citizenship application and exam preparation services (1); basic technology services (e.g., computers, copiers, faxes, and internet) (2); workshops on a wide range of settlement and integration issues such as Canadian laws, rights and duties, emergency services, etc. (2); support for children to participate in sports (2); sectors orientation services (e.g., financial, labour, health, educational sectors) (1); document and application access and processing services (e.g., official documents and application forms) (1); driver education (1); and collection and distribution of donated furniture and other materials (1).

In response to whether the services they provided needed to be expanded either in number or in their availability to a broader and larger number of newcomers both in larger urban communities and in smaller urban and rural areas, 4 said yes and 2 said no.

SERVICES NEEDED MOST FOR SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION

Respondents indicated that the services needed most for settlement and integration were those related to: information on and access to various settlement and integration programs (1); language training at all levels (3); educational upgrading; (1) employment training and searches for principal applicants and their spouses (3); international credentials recognition (1); accessing, completing and submitting documents and applications required for immigration, settlement, integration, and citizenship (1); orientation to laws (1); finding adequate, appropriate and affordable housing (2); affordable and convenient transportation (1); driver training, especially winter driving (3); childcare services (2); and student and parent assistance provided by Settlement Support Workers in Schools (SSWIS) program (1).

SERVICES NEEDED MOST BY NEWCOMERS INELIGIBLE FOR CIC FUNDED SERVICES

Respondents noted that the services most needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services were: language training (2); supports for refugees experiencing post-traumatic stress (1); supports for families and for children of temporary foreign workers (2); and settlement support workers in schools (SSWIS) (1).

Assessment of Newcomer Needs

Of the respondents from eight organizations, seven indicated their organization regularly assessed the service needs of newcomers either on their own or jointly with other organizations. The organizations that assessed such needs either internally or jointly did so largely informally, rather than formally, through the following means: observations by organizational officials; conversations with members of other organizations periodically; conversations with newcomers individually and in groups; and intake forms.

Organizational Capacities

In response to the question of their assessment of the capacity of their respective organizations to perform various functions the results were as follows: adequate capacity to communicate with stakeholders (7 yes and 0 no); coordinate services with other service providers (7 yes and 0 no), and meet reporting requirements (7 yes and 0 no); capacity to produce governance and strategic plans (5 yes and 2 no); to mobilize the welcoming of newcomers (5 yes and 2 no); sufficient staff for delivery and maintenance of services (5 yes and 2 no); capacity to provide such services in both official languages (4 yes and 3 no).

Most respondents indicated, either explicitly or implicitly, that their own organization as well as other organizations required more financial and human resources either to expand the scope of existing services, or to offer additional services needed by newcomers living either in their communities or in nearby communities.

Most respondents indicated, either explicitly or implicitly, that their organizations required more financial and human resources to expand the scope of existing services or to offer additional services. In responding to questions regarding the adequacy of financial resources from various sources to maintain current services, most respondents indicated they were adequate from governmental sources (5 yes and 2 no), but only one indicated they were adequate from non-governmental sources (1 yes and 1 no).

Partnerships

Seven respondents indicated their organizations were involved in partnerships with other service provider organizations in the region. Most partnerships tended to be informal and non-institutionalized, rather than formal and institutionalized. Generally, they simply involved consultation, coordination and information sharing on an ad-hoc or on an as-needed basis, rather in a regularized or systematic manner.

Such partnerships involved several different types of organizations from various sectors including: settlement service organizations; primary, secondary and post-secondary educational organizations; housing organizations; justice organizations; business organizations; ethno-cultural organizations; museum organizations; municipal, provincial and federal service provider organizations; Regional Intersectoral Committee (RIC); and community based Integrated Services Committees.

Of the 6 respondents who answered the question regarding what kind of activities for the benefit of newcomers their organizations partnered with other organizations, 5 indicated integration activities, 4 indicated settlement activities, and 3 indicated welcoming community activities.

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