



Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in Port Alberni, British Columbia

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

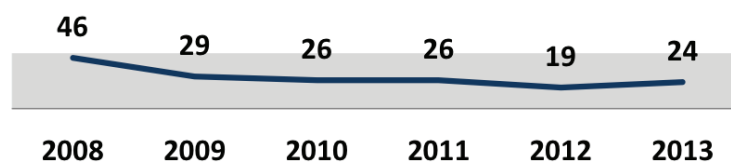


Population (2011): 17,743 residents.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011 Census

Permanent Resident Landings Port Alberni 2008-2013

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada



UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA



Data sources: 2 Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) receiving funding from CIC, provincial and private sources.

SETTLEMENT SERVICES



Top services offered

- Assistance finding a job
- Educational upgrading
- Occupational mentoring



Key gaps identified

- No SPO in Port Alberni to exclusively provide settlement services; newcomers tend to rely on family members for support
- All of the services need to expand



Barriers to access services

- Language barriers
- Lack of services
- Lack of information about services
- Lack of information sharing among SPOs



Top services needed

- Language training and assessment
- Foreign credential recognition
- Needs assessment and referrals
- Health services
- Social inclusion/integration support



Services needed by newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services

- Language training and assessment
- Needs assessment and referrals
- Most of the settlement services are needed

PARTNERSHIPS



The most commonly identified partnerships exist with schools/school boards, umbrella organisations, children /family services, businesses, chambers of commerce, and labour market services.

Participants reported a desire for a partnership with newcomers, housing services, health services, municipal offices, civil society groups and others.

INTEGRATION IN COMMUNITY



- Perception: It is "somewhat difficult" for newcomers to settle in the communities. Lack of settlement services and lack of information; lack of public transportation; and challenges of developing social networks are some of the main barriers that newcomers face.
- Perception: It is "somewhat difficult" to access jobs in the communities, with language barriers and lack of recognition of foreign credentials presenting the most important challenges.

IMMIGRATION SETTLEMENT SERVICES AND GAPS IN CIC'S WESTERN REGION: Port Alberni, 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 Port Alberni, British Columbia and 28 other rural communities across Western Canada. This research offers a current snapshot of Port Alberni by providing information gathered from a sample of local service providers. It is not a comprehensive review of all settlement services in Port Alberni. Data was collected in October 2014 from 2 organizations that serve newcomers in Port Alberni through a telephone survey completed by a representative from each organization. Both participants receive provincial funding, and one also receives funding from CIC as well as from private sources. Although provided with one week to do so, neither participant offered feedback on the preliminary survey findings contained in the draft report.

Background

Port Alberni is located on Vancouver Island approximately 85km from Nanaimo and 200km from Victoria. According to Statistics Canada, Port Alberni had a 2011 population of 17,743, representing a 1.1% increase from 2006. CIC figures indicate that from 2008-2013, approximately 170 Permanent Residents arrived to Port Alberni.

Community Settlement Concerns

Respondents reported that the number of newcomers living in or near Port Alberni has increased in the last 5 years, and speculated that this was likely due to expansions in the Provincial Nominne (PN) Program and also because newcomer families were increasingly bringing family members to live with them due to the relatively lower cost of housing in Port Alberni compared to larger urban centers.

ACCESSING SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Respondents agreed that it is “somewhat difficult” for newcomers to find services to help them settle due to racism, language barriers, lack of services, and lack of information about services. For these reasons, respondents agreed that over 25% of newcomers to Port Alberni find it difficult to locate the services they need. Apart from discrimination because of being a newcomer (which was

reported by 1 respondent), both respondents agreed that all of the concerns about the ability for newcomers to access services listed in Appendix A have been raised in their community.

GETTING JOBS

Respondents also agreed that it is “very difficult” for newcomers to find jobs in Port Alberni and indicated that this is primarily due to the overall high unemployment rate in a community that is struggling economically due to the loss of traditional industries and low rates of tourism. Additional factors include language barriers and perceived lack of transferrable skills among newcomers, as well as negative perceptions about newcomers held by employers who discriminate against newcomers based on race and perceived cultural differences. Perhaps related to the difficulties of finding employment in the context of widespread discrimination, one respondent noted that a large proportion of immigrant families operate small businesses in Port Alberni.

Available Settlement Services

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDER CAPACITY

One respondent provided information about the number of newcomers served in their organization, indicating that only 5 newcomers have received services in the 17 years that the organization had been in operation.

INVENTORY OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Respondents were asked to indicate whether a list of specified services are available in Port Alberni, either by their organization or another SPO, and whether such services need to expand. The responses may indicate a lack of communication among SPOs, as there are a large number of cases where 1 respondent indicated that a particular service is needed but not offered, while the other reported they offer that service in their organisation. Similarly, in cases where 1 respondent indicated that another SPO offers the service, the other respondent reported that the service is needed but not offered. There was agreement related to these services: assistance finding a job, educational upgrading, and occupational mentoring, which are offered by both respondents. Noting that there is no SPO in Port

Alberni whose focus is on providing settlement services, and that newcomers tend to rely on family members for support, respondents agreed that almost all of the services listed in Appendix B need to expand.

According to respondents, the most needed services for newcomers include: language training and assessment, foreign credential recognition, needs assessment and referrals, health services, and social inclusion/ integration supports. Foreign credential recognition, integration supports, and needs assessment and referrals are each provided by 1 respondent, while health services, language training, and language assessment are each reported by 1 respondent to be offered by another SPO.

NEWCOMERS INELIGIBLE FOR CIC FUNDED SERVICES

One respondent provided information about the needs of newcomers ineligible for CIC funded services, reporting that the most needed services are language training and assessment, and needs assessment and referrals. The same respondent also reported that all of the services listed in Appendix B are needed by TFWs except educational upgrading, assistance setting up a business, and services for seniors. Similarly, the respondent indicated that all of the services listed are needed by Naturalized Citizens except interpretation, occupational mentorship, and financial supports, while International Students need all of the services except: assistance finding a job, recognition of foreign credentials, investment opportunities, job specific language training, assistance setting up a business, occupational mentorship, financial supports, childcare, and services for seniors. Neither respondent was able to provide information about the needs of Refugee Claimants.

Tracking and Planning

One respondent reported that their services for newcomers are guided by both an annual internal strategic plan as well as an annual strategic plan developed jointly with other SPOs. Assessments are based on informal feedback from board members, clients, and ethnic community groups. Provincial statistics provide an additional source of information. Neither respondent was aware of an annual report on settlement achievements in Port Alberni.

Specific Capacities

With respect to specific organizational capacities, both respondents reported adequate capacity to communicate with stakeholders and meet reporting requirements. Neither organisation has adequate capacity with regard to financial support from government or nongovernmental sources to maintain current services, creation of governing and strategic plan, and the provision of services in both official languages. Both respondents agreed that additional future capacity will be needed for all of the capacities listed in Appendix C.

Partnerships

Both respondents report active SPO 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). One respondent provides settlement, welcoming, and integration activities in partnership, while the other does not undertake such activities in partnership. Both respondents partner with schools/school boards, umbrella organisations, children/family services, businesses, chambers of commerce, and labour market services. Neither partner with foundations, language training providers, or settlement service providers. One respondent reported a desire for a partnership with each of: newcomers, housing services, settlement service providers, health services, municipal offices, civil society groups, language training providers; police force ethno-cultural groups, and foundations.

Research Team

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

Jenny Francis, Ph.D. Candidate (Co-author)

University of British Columbia

Tel: 604-822-8688, Miu.Yan@ubc.ca

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

Lori Wilkinson, Ph.D. (Chair of Project Advisory Panel)

University of Manitoba

Tel: 204- 474-8491, Lori.Wilkinson@umanitoba.ca

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