



Regional Approaches to Immigration

Half the Story:

The Southwest Regional Immigration Committee

Laurie Block

July 2010



TABLE OF CONTENTS

HALF THE STORY: THE SOUTHWEST IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE.....	3
SURVIVAL	6
GENESIS.....	7
MOTIVATION.....	10
THE GRAPEVINE	12
ADDRESSING THE FEARS, BUILDING ON HOPE.....	13
RESOURCES AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS	15
THE NEXT STEPS: The End of the Prologue, Beginning of a New Chapter.....	19
CONCLUSION.....	21
APPENDIX A: Acronyms.....	22
APPENDIX B: The Key Players and Organizations.....	23
APPENDIX C: The Interview Questions.....	24

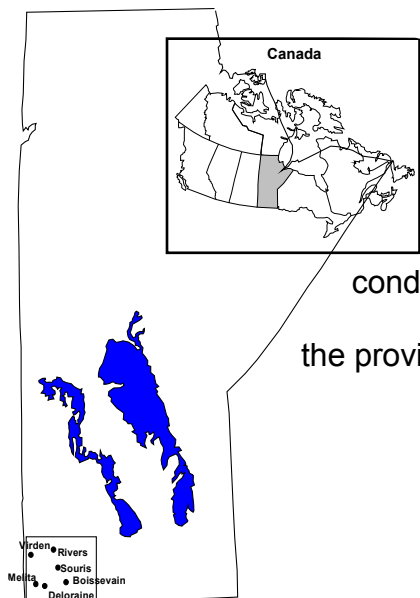
HALF THE STORY: THE SOUTHWEST IMMIGRATION COMMITTEE

*Change is to our lives as water is to our bodies. Without it we dry up.
....Change wakes us up.*
M.A. Radmacher

There's a demographic Tsunami on the horizon. Canada's birthrate is 1.5 per family and falling. We aren't replacing ourselves and, come 2015 more Canadians will be leaving than entering the workforce. As my generation shuffles into retirement, schools shut down, tax bases shrink. Soon we'll be competing for offshore labour to fill all sectors of our economy. By the year 2031, one half of Canadians over 15 will be foreign born; visible minorities will have doubled since the 2006 census, over half of them from Asia (Statistics Canada). The global shifts of population into rural and urban centres and between developed and developing countries can't be accommodated on a case by case or community by community basis. They require a collective will and a regional approach.

This project started when the communities were looking for another option for expanding their populations.

Tanis Chalmers, Melita



Picture a territory the size of a small Central American country, nudging two borders and costing two hours to cross corner to corner through, often in extreme conditions. Manitoba is divided into different regions to which the province provides basic community development resources.

The official Southwest Region...

goes just north of Highway #1 (Kenton) and the RM of Woodworth down to the US border and over to just east of Highway #10 and the Saskatchewan border. The challenges with that region are that it's huge and getting people together from one end of the region to the other on a regular basis is costly.

Joy Dornian, Virden

Nine key players [Appendix A] make that trip every month. From Virden, Melita, Boissevain, from Rivers and Souris, Pipestone and Deloraine they come. Seven EDO's, one town councilor and the regional MAFRI rep arrive from communities with surprising diversity in culture, demography, economic and political priorities, not to mention immigration needs and experiences. Add to their other duties the responsibility of sifting through community resources, available information and expertise in order to create a unified regional approach to immigration. This includes policies and processes, information packages and outreach along the entire immigration spectrum of Recruitment, Welcome, Settling and Integration. It also implies selling their bosses and the local community on the project while simultaneously raising their own levels of awareness.

Everyone needs to get involved because everyone has a piece of the puzzle when it comes to welcoming and integration.

Nola Warnica, Souris

This study examines the form, function and future of the Southwest Regional Immigration Committee with the intention of understanding the benefits and challenges of a regional, collective, informal and de-centralized approach to immigration. Based on transcripts of interviews with 7 of the key players, arranged by the Rural Development Institute of Brandon University to examine the history and methodology of the

Southwest Regional Immigration Committee with the aim of collecting and disseminating the shared experiences and identified best practices needed to support the future of immigration in rural Manitoba.

The survey [Appendix C] consisted of a series of 21 questions in three clusters; Places, People, and Impact/Action. From the responses to these questions we tell the story of the Southwest Regional Immigration Committee, delivered, when possible, in the words and voices of those most intimately connected to it. Their responses have been organized into seven themes or subgroups:

- SURVIVAL – small centre sustainability
- GENESIS – formation, form and formalizing the regional immigration committee
- MOTIVATION – the push-pull factors of collective action
- THE GRAPEVINE – the support and sociability of informal networking
- ADDRESSING THE FEARS, BUILDING ON HOPE – selling communities on change
- RESOURCES – what the communities within the region bring to the table
- THE NEXT STEPS - ending the prologue and beginning the new chapter

This narrative approach offers an accessible language to conceptualize successful interventions emerging from regional efforts and provide context to the efforts of those who live the reality of rural immigration. Their stories become a vehicle for further investigation of rural immigration at a regional scale or multi-local or municipal scale as well as a record of its past.

From the transcripts a roster of key players was drawn (Appendix B) which includes the people, institutions, organizations and businesses cited in the interviews as important contacts in the search to identify a humane and effective immigration process.

SURVIVAL

The oft repeated history of the dying town cuts close to the rural bone. The children are gone and the train don't stop here no more. Neither does the bus or the doctor. Boarded windows, empty classrooms, and crowded cemeteries stand as monuments to the way things were.

I look back at the original settling of Western Canada, look how actively involved the railways were, what hook was needed to get the people to move here? Once they started the flow, it just took off.

Ed Brethour, Virden

Small centre sustainability involves achieving critical mass; numbers enough to revive rural institutions; education, healthcare, business and tourism. Immigrants continue to show up unannounced and unanticipated, parachuted in by the RHA or local business. However they arrive, newcomers need support and guidance as well as a welcome. Most of all, in order to feel a sense of belonging, an immigrant needs to be seen.

Immigration is a front-burner concern. The projected surge of newcomers underscores the formation of a regional approach to immigration issues. The Southwest Regional Immigration committee's approach is to anticipate and capitalize on the anticipated arrival of (relatively) large numbers of foreign workers. The subtext to this imminent wave of immigration is the struggle to keep rural Canada sustainable. Beyond any one-off search for temporary help or individual skill sets lies the pressing necessity to attract, embrace and hold onto newcomers; young families with the abilities and desire to invest their lives as well as their livelihoods in the region. The name of the game is survival.

*We're looking at depolarizing Winnipeg and trying to make regional, rural
Manitoba more of a force within our province*

Shirley Bell, Deloraine

GENESIS

Formation, Form and Formalization

Though the wave of newcomers hasn't hit shore yet, the Southwest Regional Immigration Committee is already knee deep, responding proactively to projected developments even as they react to real time demands. With or without warning or even direct recruitment, strangers find their way to South West Manitoba.

*...and the culture of Brandon is changing and that spills over into rural
communities. What also spills out into the rural communities is people.*

Dornian

In the past the lack of a coherent, consistent and unified regional approach resulted in last minute local responses, often beginning out of the blue, with a call in the night.

...the group was thrown quickly into sort of a process and a welcoming stage due to the RHA's Filipino nurses recruitment last year. We have 3 nurses here in the town and we had to scramble to find accommodation, get them settled...

Bell

Very quickly, town planners, EDO's and CDC's saw the mobility of a global labour force as the way to reestablish the population and social vitality of small centres. They also recognized the need for a process in order to avoid predictable disasters. A collective response to provide new arrivals with support in the form of welcome and settlement packages as well as supplying accurate information off shore to prospective immigrants.

...we've all heard horror stories where permit people come here, they arrive and the employer just wants you to start working. There's no house organized, there's no this and this, and they've come with a family, in winter where there's no coats ...

Bell

The world as you know it changes and in response a handful of activists roll up their sleeves and collectively make history.

The first thing was the formation of individual community immigration committees because...we just haven't had the experience of large volumes of people, especially immigrants, moving into our communities. It was trying to formalize a community, an organized approach to it instead of ad hoc where you know somebody in town welcomes them and answers any questions they might have...

Bell

Though the seeds of grassroots immigration initiatives run deep in Southwest Manitoba, the actual beginnings of the committee were quite casual. Three women in the MAFRI office, dictating and typing a proposal for a MOF grant. Later a promotional tour to test the interest in nearby communities.

Myself and a woman who is an immigrant, Heather Ayre from Minto, we did a traveling road show and we went to communities in the area that had expressed an interest in immigration and, based on responses, those communities that stepped forward and said “Yes, we are interested”, were invited to be part of a committee.

Dornian

While its origins appear surprisingly, if not typically, informal, almost uniformly the dominant perception was that their group was, from its inception, actually quite formalized.

Right off the bat when we brought the first group together, we set up a list of guiding principles and specific objectives that the group agreed to and we never wavered from that...We’re all on the same page in terms of short and long term goals. The vision is the same.

Dornian

With MOF funding, the committee established priorities and hired a coordinator who was instrumental in developing a three year action plan to meet the requirements of the funding arrangement. They work within a three-tiered structure comprised of the regional body, local immigration committees and sub-committees to address specific tasks such as marketing, conferences and a website. The committee operates by consensus and while its composition consists almost completely of EDO’s whose participation is part of their job, the presence of a volunteer from Rivers and frequent consultation with local immigrants suggests that group membership is open. Within the group itself several appear to occupy specific roles. Dornian is described as “the pathfinder ” – situated between the committee and provincial support. She also seems to have the most acute and theoretical grasp of community development. Chalmers, until funding ran out, was the hired part-time coordinator and took charge over administrative and meat and potatoes issues such as developing recruitment material.

Bell appears to be an instigator or sparkplug. Their division of labour reflects a systemic, almost theoretical approach.

Collectively we plan; collectively we set goals and carry them out. Individually they work within their own communities...Collectively they gather resources and try to train themselves, try to increase their knowledge. The collective is the capacity building; the individual is the specific action items.

Dornian

MOTIVATION

Push-Pull Factors

It's not just a job, it's because you truly are interested and you want to make your community better...my little community I believe is a diamond in the rough and I will be your best salesman anywhere. Like you can't stop me talking about it.

Donna Morken, Rivers-Daly

Sparked by the concrete benefits of collective action the Southwest Regional Committee began by taking advantage of efficiencies of scale to pool their resources, share materials and create product, marketing and settlement packages and audio-visual supplements in which local context is framed in a regional template. Nonetheless beyond practical considerations in describing the human factor in immigration the words that surface time and again are *passion* and *champion*. Some are more invested than others.

...it's people's lives, it's their fears and opportunities....it's part of my personality to reach out and help people and my involvement and my passion is to hope we can make that transition and immigration process so much easier.

Bell

It isn't just the smell of government dollars or the specifics of a job description that draws them onto the committee. Among these practitioners of rural life you find

visionaries and activists who reacted to the initial trickle of new comers as a means of preserving and restoring local and regional services.

Each community needs it's champion...people who are passionate about immigration. Part of the hope of the project is that, if these people haven't emerged yet, they will and their passion will make it work in each community. The challenge of being regional is how you identify people with the passion to move it on...[It] needs to have somebody with a bigger picture. Passionate about the idea in a bigger scope than just what happens in their home town.

Dornian

Some are more focused on a systematic approach: articulating goals and priorities, emphasizing design and implementation of action plans; framing individual experience in a global perspective.

There needs to be consistency across Western Manitoba...needs a system applied to all rural communities. They all can't piecemeal this together.

Brethour

Others are fiercely committed to the local, drawn by the romance of the past, emotional attachment bound up in relationships.

What drew me into the immigration issue? Two things I suppose: community and my background. My grandfather was one of the first residents of Rivers and also one of the first people to work for the Railroad. We were the first station west of Winnipeg that was a repair depot. So in the old days. the early nineteen hundreds there was many immigrants that came to Rivers because of the trains and then moved on as the railway was built. I grew up with train stories where my grandfather would bring immigrants off the train and take them home to his house and Grandma would make them something to eat... He'd throw them in the washtub and then they got back on the train because they were looking for work.

Morken

THE GRAPEVINE

Swimming against the tendency to formalize, there is near consensus on the importance of informal contacts within the group. Wearing several hats, carrying varied portfolios, these EDO's stand out conspicuously in their small centers. They have to keep on their toes about what to say and who to say it to. A hundred kilometers down the road, among peers who share the work they can unburden. Almost all the respondents valued the support and sociability of informal networking.

...a lot of ideas flow and they're welcomed. I think everybody is taking something from another community and learning from it.

Warnica

There's also a cross-pollination in between communities and ideas. No matter what group you get together, as long as you don't spend too much time in planning and organizing, you have opportunity to talk.

Brethour

The impetus to further formalization rises out of the committee's uncertain future as funding runs dry. The short term strategy of incorporation is a means of finding stable and ongoing fiscal support. Without the money, there can be no long term goals. With a projected influx of larger numbers of immigrants, the anticipated increased workload makes formal partnerships with government and business in the form of professional settlement workers and recruitment officers crucial if not inevitable. With increased formalization and professionalism, some foresee a pivotal role and a national platform in the future. The consensus is that that the Southwest Regional Committee is here to stay.

I think a lot of our projects and processes and products that we have developed can be used within other communities in our region and other regions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Canada. We would like to be recognized as a regional force or a specialist on immigration and used as a reference point... a source of information, procedures, partnerships....

Bell

This has been a tremendous government project and it's something that I could see would develop into something more. Not just a shot in the dark, "Let's throw money at this project and hope that it works." No, this could be something much greater than what it is.

Morken

ADDRESSING THE FEARS, BUILDING ON HOPE

If you live in a small community, a few people can make a big difference.

Dornian

For now change has come slowly. Until the immigration wave breaks the real action remains in the arena of settlement. For reasons of efficiency and ease of transition the thrust of marketing and recruitment has been aimed at English speaking immigrants, mainly from the UK, those with a closer fit to the existing culture.

A lot of small town communities, they don't have an understanding of what it takes for a newcomer to move into a new community and not know anybody and not know where things are. Trying to become involved but not always accepted.

Chalmers

This amounts to a tacit form of exclusion. Whether it's due to the resistance to change associated with the historic small c conservatism of rural centres or discomfort and unfamiliarity with difference, a great proportion of immigrants to Southwest Manitoba look and sound much like us. The dark side to this is an undercurrent of covert racial tension implicit in the dehumanization of others.

These tendencies illuminate a poorly hidden aspect of our culture, embedded in attitudes, history and casual conversation; in city, town and country and, in all these places, difficult to dislodge.

I can say this, there is a concern among some people...the people coming in – are they socially going to fit into the community? There is some concern that some people won't fit in and they never will fit in. Now is that the fault of the immigrant or is that the fault of the community? I don't know if it's because there's a perception that there is too much diversity between the two. Some people say "Well, if they're not going to stay should we be actively recruiting them? It's a tough question to answer. That's maybe one issue; it's kind of under the surface so it's not very visible.

Brethour

How do you sell people on change? Can those who have 4 or 5 generations of sweat and tears invested in the fields, creeks and gullies; who can tell you where the slough used to be and remember exactly where they stood when the old hotel went up in flames adapt to sudden social change? People who value the turning of the seasons and the consistency and predictability of daily life, can they make room for the wanderer and his suitcase? Will we bar the doors or respond to the challenge with open minds?

It's a mistake not to recognize that places as well as people are vulnerable to stereotyping. The cliché of a dying town where skin is white, necks are red and the politics obsolete; where the beer bottles in the ditches outnumber the customers in the Co-op; where pickups are many and mufflers few and anyone with sufficient gumption, youth and education is already gone and the rest are walking fodder for urban sophisticates.

The activists and planners of the Southwest Regional Immigration Committee give the lie to these. Deeply involved in the dynamics of their small communities they

know the value of home; the smell of spring and the sound of the ice going out; the intimate attachment to land and nature. They know their place, can touch their roots and maintain that sense of connection to the earth that city dwellers often lose and immigrants sacrifice.

Here the champions step in to remove cultural cataracts, exploding stereotypes and moving things along with energy and passion. They inspire, reassure and motivate with deep commitment and vision, bringing the fearful and hesitant, the indifferent and downright hostile; those trapped in the obsolete paradigms of the past, on board.

RESOURCES AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS

What they bring to the table

Each community is at a different rung in the ladder, in the number of immigrants, the employment needs. Each has a different take on what their role is in facilitating immigration and making community a good place.

Warnica

Virden along with the neighbouring towns of Reston and Pipestone are looking at 10-15 years of rapid growth, fueled by a boom in the oil patch. Boissevain boasts of over 200 managerial and semi-professional jobs (Banman) but lacks the available housing, land and business opportunities to accommodate new immigrants. For larger, thriving centers, the regional interest is less in welcome and settlement than in recruitment, marketing and making room for business at the table. What settlement needs they confront, they feel they can address with made at home solutions.

Because of proximity to Brandon, bedroom centers like Souris and Rivers keep one foot in agriculture and the other on city sidewalks, concentrating on settlement and integration needs of those who show up, often for the decent, affordable housing unavailable in the city. The focus here and in smaller centers like Deloraine is hands-on, face to face services. to those who are already there, with or without invitation

I have been working with the school. The transition and settlement of children is very, very important to the retention and settlement of newcomers to our community so I've been working with the local resource teacher...

Bell

To make the three-tiered approach to regional activism work these differences need a resolution. A unified regional approach requires continual maintenance. Strong personal connections between the region, the local and the individual need to be cultivated and nourished. Beyond the list of key players, institutions and businesses in Appendix C other necessary players, identified by the regional committee, are school divisions the RHA, RMs, youth groups, churches and ministerial associations, volunteer groups, ethnic support groups, recreation departments, marketing clubs, Chambers of Commerce, tourism groups, and already settled immigrants. As local resources in the immigration process they pick up the tools designed by the Regional Committee and apply them in the way that best suits each community.

As the main driver of immigration, the private sector is critical to a smooth marketing and recruiting process. Business needs to participate in all phases of the process, coming to the table for consultation, training and access points to information about the needs of foreign workers.

If there's one mistake out there...it's they forget the business connection, they forget the front end of the process. They're all dealing with the back end of the process, the settlement and the government is big on that. They've totally forgotten the front end.

Brethour

Along with the conspicuous absence of the private sector, significant obstacles confronting successful delivery of immigration services at the community end of the pipe are often attitudinal; tunnel vision and parochial points of view when it comes to the bigger picture.

Sometimes these people, not necessarily school divisions but other agencies, have little fences built around themselves and don't understand how they connect or how they're involved in changes in the community.

Brethour

What undermines a regional approach are defensive postures when it comes to matters of home turf and areas of jurisdiction. Levels of commitment not only vary with local availability of resources and services; but with workload, community awareness and grassroots support for the immigration project.

...in our community, it's part of our strategy. Is it a really strong part of our strategy? No. Perhaps in our case it's better to have an outside group or an arm's length group.

Brethour

Conflicting goals and strategies manifest in tensions surrounding jurisdiction and local responsibility. Everybody wants to be a player, expects a say in decision making but at arm's length, far from the down and dirty but with the option of defending local interests.

This should not be a municipality driven approach. It's alright when you're initiating it but how do you make that transition?.. You can come up with all kinds of things but sustainability of these schemes is the key thing.

Brethour

It could be these differences are an unforeseen product of the interview process itself. An opportunity to vent, by phone, at distance and to a perfect stranger provides a healthy avenue to upload stresses inherent in the work of compromise and consensus building. Nothing fundamental or systemic, only hairline cracks in the boardroom table, surface damage to the veneer. Or perhaps an indicator of deeper divisions; centrifugal forces with the power and potential to polarize the working of the regional committee. Already we see dualities stretching the fabric; tensions between regional and local, collective versus individual, formal and informal, talk and action, information and product, settlement and recruitment, arm's length and hand's on, business and government, volunteer and professional.

It's trying to reach that right balance.

Brethour

Restoring equilibrium like changing attitudes is, clearly, a job for a champion.

THE NEXT STEPS: The End of the Prologue, Beginning of a New Chapter

Step One

Up till now, the actual presence of newcomers has been so small the numbers haven't been tracked. The work of Regional Committee has been preparatory, proactive. Mostly spade work; growing processes, partnerships and a knowledge base, preparing the soil before planting. Next come the transplants; immigrants hungry for a place in the sun.

The regional group has got a history now and has established relationships. It's translating what they each know now into building a strong committee that will help carry the plan into action.

Dornian

Step Two

Rather than marketing or recruiting or smoothing the wrinkles of settlement, the work of raising consciousness is fundamental. Having sown the seeds and developed contacts the next stage is increasing and sharing the knowledge base and the roster of key players and champions. It's important to get it right.

We wanted to feel comfortable with what we knew so we spent a lot of time training and trying to familiarize ourselves with different processes. I still don't think we're comfortable with it yet....It's a very complex process and we did not want to get in the position where we are giving individuals bad or inappropriate advice. We didn't want to do harm.

Dornian

Step Three

The process of taking that knowledge and disseminating it, whether face to face or through print or electronic media is also situation sensitive.

You want to have people come but you want to bring them for the right reasons. You want to be honest with them. You don't want them to have any delusions.

Warnica

Step Four

Organizing information and taking inventory of local and regional resources: population base; up-to-date numbers and profiles of immigrants and employers in your communities; gaps in the local workforce.

Do surveys on your immigrants, why they moved here, what issues they had in moving here, get immigration stories...

Bell

Step Five

Assess the relative merits and efficiencies of print and websites. Choose the most effective media at your disposal for communicating with potential immigrant workers who are young, often surprisingly well-educated and computer savvy. In their home countries 83% of immigrants get information about jobs, geography and social milieu not from government offices or pricey fold-out pamphlets and videos but from the web.

Step Six

Get business involved.

*I need to get to the immigrants that want to come here so I need a bridge... a process where I can get, not just jobs but businesses **and** jobs in our community We can set up marketing, we can set up settlement but if they don't get the immigrants to come here, the group has failed.*

Bell

CONCLUSION

Opening the Book on the Future

So far the Southwest Regional Immigration Committee has explored the logistics of immigration, including an objective look at its processes and perceived effects, from outside the skin. Now, they need to share what they have learned by raising consciousness and disseminating their knowledge through a variety of methods and media. They will need to organize the information more formally and take inventory of local and regional resources. The committee will need to choose an effective media for communicating with potential immigrant workers and they will need to have businesses involved in each step of the way.

In the end though successful immigration has more to do with those human qualities indispensable to relationships; empathy, memory and generosity of spirit. Solidarity with those who find themselves out of place or neck deep in cold foreign waters.

Immigration can, and will, connect us to the rest of the world. Sometimes I think I myself and we in rural Manitoba live in a bubble. We need to be connected to the outside world. We're just nicely getting started.

Dornian

APPENDIX A: Acronyms

CDC - Community Development Corporation

EDC – Economic Development Council

EDO – Economic Development Officer

GO – Growing Opportunities

LIM – Labour and Immigration Manitoba

MAFRI – Manitoba Agricultural, Food and Rural Initiative

MOF – Manitoba Opportunities Fund

RDI – Rural Development Institute (of Brandon University)

RHA – Regional Health Authority

RM – Rural Municipality

APPENDIX B: The Key Players and Organizations

The Southwest Immigration Committee

Interviewees

Ed Brethour, EDM, Town Of Virden

Tanis Chalmers, EDO, Melita

Dale Banman, EDO, Boissevain

Shirley Bell, EDO, Deloraine

Donna Morken, Town Council, Rivers; Vice-Chairperson Rivers/Daly CDC

Joy Dornian, MAFRI, Virden

Nola Warnica, EDO, Souris

Further Contacts

Penny Burton, Cartwright – “a walking book”

Javier Vargas, Maple Leaf Farms, Souris

Pam McConnell, regional LIM staff person

Pamela McTavish, MAFRI GO Region representative for South Parkland

Businesses

Rainbow Trailers, Cartwright

Nestibo Agro, Deloraine

Vandsele Seeds

APPENDIX C: The Interview Questions

Preamble

I'm calling on behalf of Rural Development Institute (RDI) because of your experience of talking with other communities in response to rural immigration. We want to learn from your experiences working through a regional approach to build welcoming communities. By sharing your stories of innovative, supportive and proactive strategies you will be helping regions throughout Manitoba manage change.

Places

1. Identify those communities you have recently been talking with, so the RDI can better understand the physical scope of your efforts with immigrants. **CUES; distance, geography, travel, communication.**
2. Describe the people and places your region embraces.
3. How has your region changed and how is it changing under the influence of immigration? What's been gained? Is anything lost?

People

1. Who else is involved in your multi community or regional approach?
2. How and when did the group form?
3. Who else needs to be included to make rural immigration a positive experience in your region?
4. Who else should RDI be talking to?
5. Is there unanimity of approach? Are there dissenting voices in your region?
6. What are the *hot button* issues?
7. Knowing there are existing local and regional economic development organizations (Community Development Corporations – CDCs and regional corporations), what function is this more informal group serving? Do you think it will remain informal or become more formalized? In what way?

Action and Impact

1. What drew you into the immigration issue? What keeps you engaged?

2. What activities are done collectively? What are done individually, and why the different approaches?
3. How does the group decide on which activities are a priority? How are the financial aspects considered?
4. What immigration related needs did your group confront right off the bat?
5. Where did this take your group?
6. What do you believe needs to happen (to improve immigration and to become a more welcoming community)? What would you like to address next?
7. For the regional group, what challenges are the most complex or difficult to resolve?
8. As a group, what worked really well and what crashed and burned?
9. Has anything surprised you and your regional group?
10. Given all that you've learned and experienced in building welcoming communities in your region, what is your advice to someone at the beginning of the process? What should they do first? What should they avoid? What creates a solid foundation for growth? What are the pitfalls?
11. Is there anything else you need to say?