

Building Welcoming Communities:

A Multi-Sector Regional Collaborative Approach To Rural Immigration

*Funded through the Building Rural and Northern Partnerships Program,
Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

October 2009 – August 2010

Background

The Rural Development Institute recently completed projects exploring the impact of temporary foreign workers on the demographics of Brandon and examining the community's ability to absorb and support newcomers. These foundational projects provided the impetus for the development of dialogue groups and networks that resulted in the gathering of information on what constitutes a welcoming community.

This current project will drill deeper into the rural areas of southwestern Manitoba as they too experience an influx of immigrants. Immigration to southwestern Manitoba has increased dramatically within the last few years. For example, businesses such as Hytech/Springhill Farms in Neepawa have brought in two hundred temporary foreign workers to address labour shortages, thirty-two Filipino nurses were recruited by the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority in June of 2009 and entrepreneurs from other countries are acquiring businesses and agricultural land within the region as the domestic population ages. Communities across southwestern Manitoba are beginning the welcoming process of inviting, settling and retaining immigrants. New regional collaborative groups are forming as a means of collective problem solving within this recent era of immigration.

Welcoming Communities Model

Rural Secretariat funding for this project is to enable rural communities to improve the ability to be welcoming within the stages of invite, settle and retain (WISR model) through a collaborative engagement with multiple stakeholders. The research methodology will blend community development practices and participatory action research to examine a regional approach to immigration.



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Guiding Questions

The guiding questions include:

- What are the unique opportunities and barriers faced by rural regions and communities as they invite, settle, and retain immigrants?
- What are the indicators of a welcoming community within the three stages?
- What resources and knowledge do rural regions and communities need to successfully welcome immigrants?
- What is the most effective, applicable and appropriate way to transfer and mobilize knowledge in rural regions and communities?
- What lessons have been learned in other rural communities and how are these applicable to southwestern Manitoba? How can rural regions and communities learn and create opportunities from common experiences?

Central Activities

The central activities of the project include:

- Enhancing multi-sector collaboration among rural communities in southwestern Manitoba through dialogue sessions that will help to identify local/regional challenges, opportunities, and indicators of a welcoming community;
- Working with communities to develop and enhance regionally appropriate centralized resources for immigrants and service providers focused on welcoming;
- Co-hosting a Regional Rural Immigration Forum on immigration in small rural communities designed to disseminate knowledge on immigration and immigration-related processes to immigrants, employers, community residents, and service providers;
- Building opportunities for exploring the characteristics of welcoming rural communities beyond Manitoba, into other regions and provinces;
- Developing and designing a welcoming rural community strategy with holistic approaches to implementation, focused on the southwestern Manitoba region; and
- Building research and knowledge transfer and mobilization skills among graduate and senior undergraduate students.

This project will directly impact opportunities for community development by establishing a strong foundation of knowledge on which rural communities can build enhanced plans to be a welcoming community for immigrants.

For more information on the project contact

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