

COMMUNITY REPORT

Immigration in 5 Rural Manitoba
Communities with a Focus on Refugees:

**Boissevain-Killarney
Case Study**

August 2016





Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

Brandon University established the Rural Development Institute in 1989 as an academic research centre and a leading source of information on issues affecting rural communities in Western Canada and elsewhere.

RDI functions as a not-for-profit research and development organization designed to promote, facilitate, coordinate, initiate and conduct multi-disciplinary academic and applied research on rural issues. The Institute provides an interface between academic research efforts and the community by acting as a conduit of rural research information and by facilitating community involvement in rural development. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multi-stakeholders.

The Institute has diverse research affiliations, and multiple community and government linkages related to its rural development mandate. RDI disseminates information to a variety of constituents and stakeholders and makes research information and results widely available to the public either in printed form or by means of public lectures, seminars, workshops and conferences.

For more information, please visit www.brandonu.ca/rdi.



Introduction

In November 2015, a national resettlement initiative was undertaken to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees across Canada. Since November 4th, 2015 the Government of Canada has welcomed more than 29,700 Syrian refugees (August 1st, 2016) and the commitment to resettling more refugees to Canada is continuing in 2016¹. More than 1000 Syrian refugees have resettled in Manitoba and, of those, 90 have settled outside of Winnipeg, in rural communities and small centres. This research project was initiated out of this experience and is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO).

The purpose of the project is to learn from the current experiences in five rural communities in Manitoba and examine the settlement and community capacity of these smaller centres to resettle refugees. Selected communities are those who have received newcomers and have recently received refugees or have an active plan in place for the arrival of refugees.

This research project builds on the 2015 “Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western region”² study conducted by the Rural Development institute (RDI) and Immigration Research West (IRW). It offered a snapshot of the immigration settlement services sector in 29 selected rural communities across the western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba) and in the three territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut).

1 Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp>). date accessed August 8, 2016.

2 Ashton et al. (2015, May). Immigration Settlement Services and Gaps in CIC’s Western Region. Retrieved from <https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/publication/immigration-settlement-services-and-gaps-in-citizenship-and-immigration-canadas-western-region/>

Research Method

This study follows the same method as the 2015 study. Five communities³ were selected that are distributed geographically and represent a sample of the provinces’ smaller cities⁴. The five cases are: Dauphin, Portage la Prairie, Boissevain-Killarney, Steinbach-Kleefeld and Morden-Winkler-Altona-Carman.

In the five communities, data were collected through 30 telephone interviews with a senior official of the Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) or a representative of the Refugee Sponsorship Group. The sample of participating service providers included both SPOs that have a primary mandate to serve newcomers (funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or other sources) and community organizations supporting newcomers in some capacity. This research did not include newcomers or refugees and as such the findings are based solely on the opinions and perceptions of SPOs and refugee sponsorship groups’ representatives.

Once data were collected, a draft report was compiled for each community. Each was shared with the research participants and other local stakeholders. Their feedback was incorporated and reports finalized.

3 Similarly as in the Ashton et al.(2015) study, the term “community” is conceptualized in geographic terms as either a “local community” that consists of a single municipality, or a “regional community,” comprising two or more neighboring municipalities and/or areas that are not incorporated as municipalities.

4 Winnipeg is excluded from the study together with the communities participated in the Ashton et al. (2015) study with an exception of Dauphin, due to its recent experience with refugee resettlement (15 individuals as of August 8, 2016).

Boissevain-Killarney Case Study

The Boissevain-Killarney case is a snapshot of perceptions from four participants. Organization representatives reported receiving funding for their operations from IRCC, provincial and private sources. One participant provided feedback to finalize the report.

Community Context

Killarney, a town of 2,197 (2011), is located 37kms Southeast of Boissevain, population 1,572 (2011). The two communities are situated in the Southwest corner of Manitoba close to the Canada-United States border and the International Peace Park. The leading industry in Boissevain is agriculture, while Killarney acts as a commercial hub for the area. Both towns attract visitors throughout the year to the many outdoor recreation activities available and local art.⁵

Three of the four participants were not aware of any refugees who arrived in the Boissevain-Killarney area since the end of 2015, which is consistent with IRCC's publicly available records⁶. However, the fourth participant indicated that a Syrian refugee family of five had arrived in the community during that time. All four research participants reported that there is an existing plan for the arrival of refugees in their community before the end of 2016, and 2 to 4 families would be arriving through Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVOR) programs.



Settlement in the Community

Participants considered newcomer settlement in the Boissevain-Killarney community to be within the difficult range, since three of the four participants reported settlement being “somewhat difficult” and one being “difficult”. Overall, the community is new to the settlement process of immigrants and refugees and this lack of experience can be challenging for all involved. Boissevain-Killarney is a small rural community and gives a feeling of isolation to newcomers due to its location and lack of ethno-cultural diversity in the community. Limited language programs, limited employment opportunities as well as the lack of public transportation were all cited as additional potential challenges to settlement. Participants noted that community capacity is limited due to settlement services not being readily available in Boissevain-Killarney. Newcomers often must find transportation to the communities of Cartwright or Brandon to meet with a Settlement Facilitator. Participants stated that while these challenges exist, the community is supportive of newcomers and being a safe and affordable community to live in were seen as easing newcomer settlement.

⁵ Retrieved from <http://www.killarney.ca/default.asp> and <http://www.boissevain.ca/information/default.htm>

⁶ Government of Canada, IRCC, Map of destination communities and service provider organizations retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/map.asp> (day accessed July 22nd, 2016)

Table 1 – Settlement Services offered in Boissevain-Killarney as reported by the four research participants.

 <p>Information and Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs assessment and referral • Information and orientation • Initial reception 	 <p>Literacy and Language Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language training (once per week only) • Language assessment 	 <p>Support Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation (volunteers) • Services for youth, seniors and people with disabilities
 <p>Labour Market Access Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance finding a job • Connections with employers • Job skill building courses 	 <p>Community Connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal volunteer-based mentoring programs 	

Settlement Services

There are limited settlement services and supports available to newcomers in Boissevain-Killarney. Available services indicated by the participants are shown in Table 1 (page 3). Participants also noted that there are no services offered just for refugees in the community.

Two out of four participants reported services need to expand to meet the needs of the current newcomer population, while two felt services are sufficient in relation to the current population but if more newcomers arrive then expansion will be needed in the future. Participants indicated that expanding community outreach is needed to communicate the current services offered, as well an expansion of language programs to offer training five days per week.

Participants were asked whether services needed to change to meet the needs of the newcomer population and two out of four cited this was not necessary since the services currently offered are the services that are needed. The other two participants believed services would need to change in the future to meet the expected increase in Boissevain-Killarney's newcomer population. A focus should be put on cultural diversity, culture shock and adaptation services as well as programs that help newcomers feel welcome in the community. Refugee-specific services will also be needed in the future since more refugees are anticipated to arrive. Examples are English language programs tailored to Syrian refugees, interpreter and translation services.

Short and Long-term Needs of Refugees

Participants were asked to identify the top short and long-term needs of refugees. Participants identified accessing housing (mentioned by 3 participants); forming social connections and integrating into the community (3), as well as healthcare needs (3) as the top three short-term needs. Healthcare was seen as priority as refugees arriving tend to have immediate healthcare needs (dental and mental health especially), which participants noted must be addressed right away before health issues become larger long-term needs.

Participants indicated that finding employment (3) and having a sense of belonging in the community (2) were the most important long term refugee needs, in addition to moving towards independence related to finances, transportation, and being able to relocate if they wish (2). English language acquisition is also a top long term need in order for refugees to gain employment and adapt to everyday life in Boissevain-Killarney (2).

Community Capacity

All four participants were in agreement that their community has the capacity to attract and retain refugees. The four participants ranked ten areas of community capacity for assessing the community's ability to respond to the needs of refugees. The results are listed in Figure 1.

Transportation was considered the lowest capacity to meet refugee needs with half the participants indicating the capacity is very low, while the other half indicated low to medium capacity. Transportation within the community is available through a taxi and Handivan service, however this is for a fee. Volunteers also informally provide transportation to newcomers. The largest challenge is accessing transportation between Boissevain-Killarney and other communities.

Regarding Mental Health services, participants indicated a low to medium capacity. Specifically, there is a need for more counseling services and staff to meet current demand as well as more staff trained to address unique mental health needs of refugees, including trauma.

Two participants indicated that Boissevain-Killarney has a low capacity to meet housing needs of refugees as low income rental housing is limited. However the other two participants felt that although there is room for improvement in this area, housing is available.

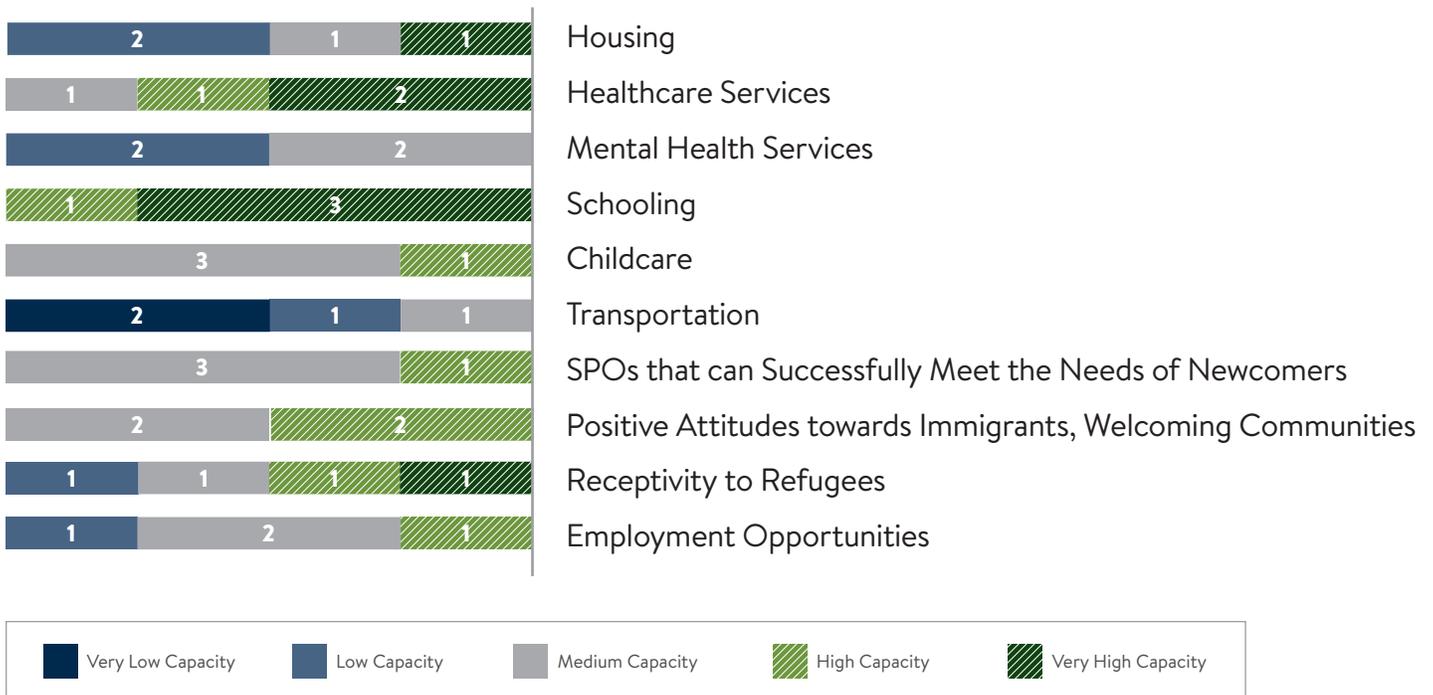
Participants had mixed perceptions around receptivity toward refugees since this capacity area scored from low up to very high. One participant noted the community seems to be less open due to limited cultural understanding and misinformation through the media. Overall though, the participants felt that attitudes are quite positive towards refugees and newcomers in general. Two out of four participants indicated that the community is generally positive and welcoming towards refugees.

Childcare and SPOs' capacity were seen as medium by three participants and high capacity by one. Participants indicated that the capacity to meet needs is impacted by limited funding and thus limited ability to offer services.

Participants' opinion of the community's capacity to meet employment needs of refugees varied. There was no consensus on the availability of employment opportunities, since two participants found it was sufficient and two limited. Some employment opportunities are available, especially entry-level positions, but language skills are essential for refugees to take advantage of those. For refugees with specialized professions and skills, opportunities are quite limited.

Regarding schooling and healthcare services, more than half of the participants felt that their community had high to very

Figure 1 - Areas of community capacity ranked from very low to very high by the four research participants



high capacity. Good schools, hospitals and clinics are available in the community, however some travelling to neighboring communities is required in the cases of emergency or accessing specialized health services.

Partnerships and Agency Capacity

Two of the four participants reported their organizations were engaged in partnerships with other community organizations. The partnerships mentioned were with churches, other SPOs, local government, schools, Turtle Mountain Adult Education Centre but also with volunteers.

Participants also shared their opinion regarding what types of local partnerships are needed in the community in order to better respond to the needs of refugees (regardless of whether the partnerships are already in place or not). One participant mentioned the need for all levels of government to collaborate on service provision and funding to better provide information and services to refugees. Other important partnerships needed are with Settlement SPOs and Language Service SPOs to provide holistic support to newcomers and refugees. Participants indicated that sponsorship groups, community members, and refugees should be working together to communicate needs, build relationships between refugees and local residents, and facilitate positive attitudes towards refugees. Participants indicated that the school divisions, healthcare services, and social assistance should

also collaborate to better support families and provide specialized or individualized support for refugee students. Most of the partnerships needed appear to be in place in Boissevain-Killarney; however, more collaboration among the organizations is needed.

The participants were also asked about their own agency's or organization's capacity to meet the needs of newcomers, including refugees in the community. Three participants ranked their organizational capacity on a set of activities (Figure 2, page 6). Fewer participants answered these questions, as they were mostly intended for SPOs and did not always apply well to sponsorship groups or other community stakeholders who were not formally funded for their support of newcomers.

The organizational capacity was found to be very low to somewhat low on several items. More financial support is needed from both government and other sources to maintain current services. Participants indicated that by increasing funding, SPOs would be able to expand their services, provide interpreters and translators, as well as increase the operating hours of the Settlement SPO.

Participants indicated there is a need for more communication and coordination between stakeholders and mentioned lack of communication regarding the services available in the community. Mobilization of the community to support and welcome newcomers was seen as generally a high capacity, as well as agencies' capacity to meet reporting requirements.

Figure 2 - Areas of agency capacity as ranked by the three participants responding to this question



The following two sections of the Boissevain-Killarney community report contain information on the recent experience the one participant had with refugee resettlement since November 2015 and should neither be considered exhaustive or representative of the community as a whole.

Recent Experiences with Refugees

From the perception of the one participant the sponsorship group and the Adult Learning Centre were the two organizations involved in the process of refugee settlement in the community. Housing and English classes were the first things arranged while preparing for the refugee arrival. The participant indicated that the sponsorship group and SPOs worked in silos rather than in collaboration. The sponsorship group provided the following services to refugees: housing, financial support, help integrating into community, church related social support, information and referral, and transportation.

Challenges & Successes

The main challenge faced during the refugee resettlement in the community, according to the one participant, was not having a clear timeline for the refugee arrival. In one instance the sponsorship group paid for housing for 4-6 months prior to the arrival of their sponsored refugee family. There is a call for the Federal Government to either provide specific timelines for the refugee arrival or provide financial support to the sponsorship groups to alleviate these unnecessary expenses.

The lack of interpreters in the community was also mentioned as a challenge due to the low English levels of the refugees arriving. The one participant indicated that an increase in language programs and volunteer conversation or mentorship programs might help to ease the challenges associated with the language barrier.

The participant was unsure of the key successes of the refugee resettlement at this point.

Conclusion

The community of Boissevain-Killarney faces unique challenges as a rural destination for newcomer and refugee settlement due to both its location and lack of experience in welcoming and settling newcomers. Only one participant had a recent experience with refugee resettlement in the community, but all participants reported there is a plan in place to welcome several families before the end of 2016.

Limited services and supports are available to newcomers in Boissevain-Killarney mainly due to insufficient funding for SPOs. Partnerships among organizations involved in the newcomer settlement process are informal in nature and there is a call for more collaboration and coordination. Lack of public transportation within the community and to other communities, together with lack of ethno-cultural groups creates a feeling of isolation and additional challenges for refugees and newcomers in Boissevain-Killarney.

Despite the challenges and their limited experience with newcomer and refugee settlement in the community Boissevain-Killarney was overall seen as a welcoming, safe and affordable community for newcomer and refugee settlement. Participants are hopeful for the arrival and successful settlement of new families in their community.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE RESEARCH TEAM

William Ashton, MCIP, PhD
Director

Rachael Pettigrew, PhD
Research Associate

Eleni Galatsanou, MSc
Project Lead

Meghan Miller Cronkrite
Research Assistant

Special thanks to the members of the Project Advisory Panel for their input and assistance: Bequie Lake, Teresa Burke, Laurie Sawatzky & Cathy Dowd Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO); Lori Wilkinson, Immigration Research West (IRW) and University of Manitoba; Liz Robinson, Manitoba Government; John Biles & Benjamin Walker Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Terms:

Newcomers: Includes all immigrants, permanent residents, refugees, refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and international students that have been in Canada for 1 day to 5 years.

Refugees: Includes all Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs), Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), Refugees under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program (BVORs) and refugee claimants. A refugee is different from an immigrant, in that an immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are forced to flee (IRCC, 2016)

Community: A municipality, district, region or other geographic area consisting of population clusters.

Stakeholder: Any group, organization, or enterprise that has newcomers and/or refugees as the primary or secondary clientele.



Contact Us

Rural Development Institute, Brandon University

270-18th Street, McMaster Hall, Lower Level

Brandon, Manitoba R7A 6A9

Phone: 204-571-8515

Email: rdi@brandonu.ca

www.BrandonU.ca/RDI