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Ethnocultural Communities and Organizations in Steinbach, Manitoba

Final Report

March 2009



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Submitted to:

Vivian Salangsang
Multiculturalism Secretariat
Manitoba Labour and Immigration

Prepared by:

Jill Bucklaschuk
Research Affiliate
Rural Development Institute
Brandon University

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Part One - Ethnocultural Organizations and Communities in Steinbach

Immigration to Steinbach, Manitoba¹

Dating as far back as 1874, Steinbach, Manitoba has had a rich and varied history of immigration that has shaped the community. Initial settlement began when eighteen Mennonite families facing mandatory military service and land shortages in South Russia (presently Ukraine) arrived to the area and proceeded to build a settlement. The strong Mennonite heritage has remained an integral and central part of Steinbach, contributing to successful local immigration strategies and a growing community.²

According to census data, Steinbach's population has grown by 19.9% between 2001 and 2006, with a current population of 11,066. This population increase is largely attributable to influxes of immigrants. Steinbach has consistently ranked as one of the top three regional immigrant destinations (excluding Winnipeg) in Manitoba (Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2007). Since 2005, Steinbach has welcomed more than 1,100 newcomers and their families from such countries as Germany, Paraguay, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, and Mexico.

Since the later 1990s, business owners and immigrant consultants have actively recruited immigrant workers to address labour shortages in the community. Availability of employment opportunities is often cited as the primary reason for immigration to Steinbach. Even prior to the implementation of the Provincial Nominee Program in 1998, Steinbach was one of the fastest growing communities in the province. Today the Provincial Nominee Program has further benefited Steinbach by providing potential immigrants with a direct option to immigrate to rural Manitoba, to join family members already in the community or to pursue employment.

Over the last two years, the nature of immigration to Steinbach has been changing. Immigrants from more diverse cultural backgrounds are arriving, thus impacting what has been a predominately Mennonite cultural base. In 2008, Steinbach welcomed immigrants from over 32 different countries including a recent influx of Filipino, Colombian and Indian immigrants. The changing cultural base has necessitated a change in service delivery strategies as new languages and cultural traditions are introduced.

Like other communities that have welcomed a large number of immigrants over a short period of time, Steinbach faces numerous difficulties associated with settling newcomers. English language classes are in constant demand. Since most of local jobs require a level of technical language and English proficiency, language barriers can hinder new immigrants' ability to obtain work. The Hanover School Division has had to address issues of limited classroom capacity, growing interest in English as an Additional Language classes, and shortages of skilled human resources. Language barriers and the challenge of obtaining and

¹ In 2005, the Rural Development Institute, with support from Manitoba Labour and Immigration, conducted a case study to investigate immigrant experiences and the nature of immigration to Steinbach. Since it provides a thorough and comprehensive presentation of immigration to Steinbach, the final report and subsequent publications will be referenced throughout this paper.

² For more information on Steinbach's history see:
http://www.steinbach.ca/images/File/Steinbach_s_First_Settlers.pdf

communicating medical information have been major concerns for the South Eastman Health Authority. In 2005 it was reported that the increase in the city's population brought challenges around obtainment of affordable housing (Silvius 2005); however, currently, housing is not seen as a significant problem since construction companies and families have been proactive in building new and appropriate accommodations.

Methodology

The following is a list of some of the guiding research questions for this project:

- Are ethnocultural organizations and communities forming in Steinbach? If so, what are they?
- What conditions are necessary for the successful development of ethnocultural organizations in Steinbach?
- What supports are needed for ethnocultural organizations and communities to develop and become viable/successful?
- What are the common themes that have emerged between the case study on Brandon and the case study on Steinbach?
- How do community and regional dynamics impact the development of ethnocultural organizations and communities?

This research project adopted two methodologies to reach its objectives and address the research questions:

- Literature review
- Community scan including interviews

To address the centrality of religion and churches in Steinbach, a literature review was conducted to better understand the role of religion amongst immigrant and ethnocultural groups. The literature highlighted the importance of considering religion and churches when researching ethnocultural groups and attempting to understand where newcomers seek support and services.

A community scan of Steinbach was conducted to gain perspective on the nature of immigration to the community and the presence of ethnocultural organizations as well as immigration service providers. The main point of contact in Steinbach was Eastman Immigrant Services. The nature of some ethnocultural and immigrant groups in Steinbach made it difficult to establish a connection with a wide range of groups. Those that were contacted are not representative of all immigrant and ethnocultural groups in Steinbach; however, they do represent the groups with the largest numbers. It is a challenge to make contact with small groups or with those groups that do not use the services of Eastman Immigrant Services. Once contact was made with individual representatives from Mennonite groups, the Filipino association, and the Colombian group, an initial short telephone interview was conducted (for interview questions see Appendix A), which was followed up with an in-person interview (for interview questions see Appendix B) at a later date. The in-person interview proved to provide the richest information.

The Role of Religion and Churches in Ethnocultural Communities and Immigrant Settlement

The case of Steinbach presents an interesting example of successful immigrant attraction, settlement, and retention. Religion is a central part of the community with approximately 40 churches serving a population of about 11,000. The strong religious affiliation, family

connections, and cultural composition of Steinbach has presented a foundation on which to build effective networks that facilitate the arrival of immigrants with intentions to join family and settle in an area that holds similar cultural traditions and values. According to Silvius (2005), many newcomers are familiar with the region of southeastern Manitoba prior to arriving because they have either visited the area or heard about the community through family networks. Religious affiliation and strong connections to traditional cultural values has made Steinbach an attractive community for Mennonite groups and other immigrants.

Religion and church-based organizations play a significant role in newcomer welcoming and ethnocultural group networks and relationships. While ethnocultural organizations are not always linked to a specific religion, religious gatherings and churches often play central roles in social networking and other community-oriented activities. Often newcomers either directly seek or are sought by churches, which offer newcomers a community that functions in a familiar language with a shared traditional culture. Families have the opportunity to continue traditional customs in a venue that promotes a sense of community and support (Sanders 2002, Yang and Ebaugh 2001). In his article on the 'institutional completeness' of ethnic communities, Breton (1964) explains that religion and churches have the largest impact on immigrants' interpersonal networks and integration by ensuring and reinforcing the boundaries of ethnic communities. Also, churches can strengthen and reinforce ethnic identity by supporting and reinforcing cultural values (Chong 1998).

Further literature suggests that churches and religious institutions can be seen as sources of information and support for immigrant settlement. Faith-based organizations tend to have a more closely connected understanding of the service needs of newcomers as well as an ability to establish long-term relationships with clients. Ethnocultural groups that have strong religious and church-based connections are more likely to find the services and supports they need within their own group, as opposed to seeking support from other sources (Ley 2008).

Lastly, churches provide a refuge from discrimination and a source of opportunities for social and economic advancement within a community of support. As Hirschman (2004) explains, the "centrality of religion to immigrant communities can be summarized as the search for refuge, respectability, and resources" (1228). Furthermore the church provides comfort, fellowship, and a sense of belonging by meeting basic human needs (Min 1992).

Ethnocultural Communities in Steinbach

The purpose of this project was to explore the presence of ethnocultural communities in Steinbach and attempt to present an illustration of how the groups function and what they need in order to form organizations. Increased cultural diversity is an emerging trend in Steinbach therefore established ethnocultural communities are rare. The role of religion and centralized activities within the church negate the purpose of having an ethnocultural organization for the largest group of immigrants in the area - Mennonites. Recently, significant numbers of immigrants from the Philippines, Colombia, and India have arrived to and settled in the area, changing the demographic and cultural base of Steinbach. Interest in formal organizations and associations is only beginning amongst these newcomers, with the Filipino community having established the only formal ethnocultural organization. The relatively small number of members of other ethnocultural groups in Steinbach does not lend well to establishing formal organizations, which require a strong and dedicated volunteer base. However, this is not to say that there are no interesting stories to present from Steinbach.

The following is an overview of three ethnocultural communities in Steinbach: Paraguayan-Mennonite, Colombian, and Filipino.

Paraguayan-Mennonite group

As previously mentioned, Steinbach has a rich history and present-day experience of predominately Mennonite immigrants settling in the area. There are primarily two different Mennonite groups living in Steinbach - Paraguayan and Russian-German - holding their own religious and cultural traditions. These groups gather and meet predominately around religion and church and do not associate with one another, keeping to themselves most of the time. They do not have formal organizations nor do they have a need for such recognition. The church and traditional values bond these groups within a tight social network that meets the needs of all individuals and families with very little reason to go beyond the group. They hold many social events including care groups for children, picnics, barbeques, sports, and other activities organized around the church.

There is a lot of migration between Canada and Paraguay amongst the Paraguayan group, which is made possible by dual citizenship. Strong family connections and the central role of the church characterize this group across borders. Between 2001 and 2004, hundreds of families arrived in Steinbach from Paraguay, with families moving back and forth between the two places multiple times. As a method of connecting families that have moved from Canada to countries such as Bolivia, Paraguay, Mexico, and Belize, the Die Mennonitische Post is a newsletter distributed internationally. It is a way to reach the conservative and traditional groups that do not have access to other forms of communication. The newsletters also act as a source of regular updates for those who have migrated from Canada. For the old-order Mennonites, the newsletter has become a way of communicating with family members, sharing family values, and other cultural traditions.

Within the Paraguayan-Mennonite group there is little need or interest to learn English, despite there being language assistance within the community. In Steinbach, people can manage their daily affairs in German and, on the whole, do not need to learn English. The strong connections within the group and infrequent connections with those outside their own community allow many Paraguayan-Mennonites to communicate in their traditional language. While this ensures the maintenance of a traditional language, there are some newcomers that face challenges when finding jobs and may be relegated to what is perceived as 'second-rate' jobs because of language barriers. Most Paraguayan-Mennonites speak a number of languages (Spanish, Low German, High German) with English often being their fourth language.

Russian-German group

The Russian-German Mennonite group is the largest ethnocultural group in Steinbach comprised of close to a few thousand individuals. Like the Paraguayan-Mennonites, church is very important in the lives of Russian-Germans. In Steinbach there are three large churches being built where people of this community meet a few times per week. Within the Russian-German community there are many subgroups divided on the basis of religious differences. These subgroups tend to isolate themselves by choice and form their own congregations that have resulted in building additional churches.

Like the Paraguayan-Mennonites, the church forms the foundation of social groups amongst Russian-Germans. They meet on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays with a choir on Sundays.

Church-based activities include an annual Christmas party, long weekend get-togethers, barbeques, and weeklong family oriented vacations. There are never any challenges in getting people out for social gatherings, as the church is a central part of their lives. Official services are not offered to newcomers; however, everyone in the church helps out when needed.

South Eastman Filipino Association

As Steinbach's only official formally recognized ethnocultural organization, the South Eastman Filipino Association provides a positive example of how such an organization can benefit not only the ethnocultural community that it serves, but also the larger community of Steinbach. Founded in 2001, the South Eastman Filipino Association strives to give back to the community, maintain cultural connections, and support newcomers. They are involved in many activities within Steinbach and seek to extend assistance and involvement beyond ethnic 'boundaries'.

The organization is volunteer-based with a board of seven officers that meet once per month. Their top priorities are to have regularly occurring social events and ensure a sense of belonging for all members. Through the organization, the Filipino community can contribute to both their community as well as Steinbach as a whole, establishing a positive public face as they become involved in community events.

The Filipino group is a growing community and the organization provides newcomers with a source of assistance. In some cases, Eastman Immigrant Services may not be Filipino immigrants' first point of contact as newcomers go directly to the organization. To ensure that individuals receive the services they need, the South Eastman Filipino Association works hand-in-hand with Eastman Immigrant Services to guide people to the right offices and to proper resources. Also, the organization has proved to be a good source of settlement workers; Eastman Immigrant Services sometimes calls on the organization when they need assistance finding Filipino settlement workers.

Since it is the only formal organization in Steinbach, the South Eastman Filipino Association has become a source of information for other ethnocultural communities wishing to establish an organization. In the South Eastman Filipino Association's experience, to ensure that a successful organization is established, the leader needs to be open-minded and have time to devote to organizing people, establishing bylaws, and other responsibilities. A strong champion is needed in order for a successful organization to be established. Also, ethnocultural communities need a dedicated volunteer base on which to draw for various events. New immigrants have many struggles in their daily lives, so giving time to the organization is often an added burden. Many Filipino's have small children and young families further challenging their ability to devote time to the organization.

Some of the activities organized by the South Eastman Filipino Association include a beach day in the summer, family days, participation in Canada Day celebrations, an annual Christmas party, and participation in the Pioneer Days Parade (where they sell food as a fundraiser). To raise the necessary funds for the organization a five-dollar yearly membership fee is collected and sponsors are sought for various community events.

Colombian group

Colombians are a relatively new group of immigrants in Steinbach. Currently there are approximately twenty-four Colombians living in Steinbach and most have come to the area as temporary foreign workers. There is a desire within the Colombian community to bring more professional immigrants to the area; in the future, Steinbach may see a further influx of Colombian immigrants. Part of the purpose for initiating the development of a formal organization is to provide assistance for newcomers and actively bring other Colombians to the area. Too many people come to Canada without help or a social network- a formal organization can provide a starting point for newcomers.

Despite a desire to form an organization, the Colombian community has yet to become formally organized and recognized. As part of the initial steps in forming an organization, they are working with the South Eastman Filipino Association to learn about processes and procedures. Also, Eastman Immigrant Services has been a source of assistance for the Colombian community as they attempt to organize and participate more publicly in cultural events.

The Colombian community was a part of the Culturama festival. The festival was seen as an opportunity to teach Steinbach residents about Colombia and Colombian culture. There are many stereotypes of Colombians within Steinbach and one of the purposes of forming an organization is to continue to educate people about Colombian culture and promote the country in a positive manner.

The Colombian community tries to meet once a month and sometimes bi-weekly. Over the Christmas season Colombians meet every evening for about one hour as part of their Christmas celebrations and to prepare traditional food; there were approximately twelve people participating in these meetings. Occasionally it is difficult to get the Colombian community to work together because they are typically very open people and prefer to have a broad social network within and outside their cultural group.

As has been encountered within the Filipino community, the Colombian community realizes that they need a champion for the organization and someone who will be a strong and dedicated leader. They also need dedicated volunteers to support activities and events. To form a group, there also needs to be knowledge of the law as well as acknowledgement of cultural differences otherwise they will not be able to navigate the process of becoming an organization.

Eastman Immigrant Services

As Steinbach's only immigrant service organization, Eastman Immigrant Services assists newcomers arriving to the region of southeastern Manitoba and is often the first point of contact for many new immigrants. The organization services a large area that includes all communities within a one-hour radius of Steinbach; with increased immigration to the area, Eastman Immigrant Services may require satellite offices in the near future. It is estimated that approximately 60-65% of newcomers arriving to Steinbach go to the Eastman Immigrant Services office. Services at the organization include reception and orientation, employment and counselling referrals, language referrals, language activities, and access to community resources. Eastman Immigrant Services holds regular information sessions to provide newcomers with guidance on topics such as income tax returns, credential recognition,

property taxes, the laws of Canada and local bylaws, Canadian pensions, and banking. The organization coordinates the Settlement Partners Program, which, with the help of other community members, assists newcomers with the process of settling into Steinbach. Some of the services offered through the program include the following:

- Orientation/Learning About the Community and its Resources
- Assistance in Finding Housing
- Guidance for Major Purchases
- Language Partner (for those with limited English)
- Support During Beginning Adaptation Period
- Temporary Bed and Breakfast
- Friendship
- Someone to go for Coffee With

South Eastman English and Literacy Services is a community-based organization that provides access to basic education, English as an Additional Language instruction, and literacy learning opportunities for adults. There is a desire to integrate and streamline language programs into the services of Eastman Immigrant Services; however this is not an immediate plan.

Eastman Immigrant Services regularly hosts (or co-hosts) a number of social events for newcomers and other community members. Each year the organization holds a Christmas party for those newcomers that arrived to the region within the past twelve months. The party brings people together for a night of food, games, and other holiday festivities.

Following a newcomer's request for a familiar social event, Eastman Immigrant Services worked to coordinate a quiz night, which has grown to a monthly activity. A truck driver who arrived from the United Kingdom sought to have a familiar social gathering to attend whenever he was in Steinbach, thus Quiz Night at a local restaurant was established. Many non-immigrants and various cultural groups now attend Quiz night with attendance averaging around 60 to 70 people and threatening to outgrow the event's current venue.

Eastman Immigrant Services sponsor's the Ladies' Social Group which meets twice a month; once to have coffee and share experiences and the other time to engage in local activities such as pottery classes and gardening.

The Grunthal Low-German Ladies' Night is a group that meets on the last Friday of every month at South Oaks School in Grunthal to discuss family life and experiences. Childcare and a healthy snack are provided.

A community newcomer picnic is held annually at a local park with the intention of welcoming newcomers to Steinbach. It is a 'potluck' and each family brings something to share with the group. Games and other family events are organized and are open to all community members.

Every Wednesday Eastman Immigrant Services hosts an orientation session for newcomers with the intention of providing a brief introduction to living in Canada including information on health care, working, schooling, and other local services as well as other local information related to settling in Steinbach.

Culturama - Walk the World in a Day

In the past, Eastman Immigrant Services and the Steinbach Arts Council had organized a community-based cultural celebration; however, following the event there was a desire to expand the celebrations. In November 2008, Culturama was held with the purpose of showcasing both immigrant and local heritage and culture to the community, providing newcomers with an opportunity to be included in a large community event. With door counts approximating 550 – 600, Culturama exceeded organizers' expectations. The event included 196 dedicated performers and volunteers who cooked food, performed dances, and organized the event. Celebrations included dance, drama, and visual arts performances organized around different ethnic communities including Irish musical story telling, Scottish Pipe Band, Irish singing, African singing, German music, Welsh singing, and Filipino music and dance. Some of the ethnocultural groups and communities that were involved in the event included Nicaraguan, Sudanese, Zimbabwean, Indian, Ukrainian, Paraguayan, Colombian, Filipino, Scottish, English, Irish, Russian, and German.

Newcomers were asked to cook traditional foods for the event, which were offered to participants free of charge. Foods included traditional fares from Colombia, German/Russian, the Philippines, Paraguay, the Netherlands, Ireland, East Africa, and Germany. Feedback around the food was extremely positive and participants enjoyed learning about the authentically prepared food.

In conjunction with the event, local school children participated in a drawing competition with winning entries being featured in a calendar of "unity art". Entries were displayed during Culturama. Also, booths were set up in the venue to showcase various cultures including displays and talks from members of the Paraguayan, Zimbabwean, Ukrainian, Colombian, and Scottish communities. Presentations at the booths involved multi-media methods that sought to educate participants about customs, heritage, geography, and other traditions. In addition to the booths there was a dance portion of the event that included performances as well as explanations of the history behind particular dances. Some of the style of dance included hip-hop, line dancing, belly dancing, Highland dance, Filipino dance, and others.

The expectation voiced by the majority of participants is that the event should be an annual one. Future plans for the event include changing venues to accommodate larger numbers of participants.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, Steinbach can be seen as an interesting case study in which to study rural immigration and ethnocultural communities. Mennonite culture, tradition, and mobility have greatly shaped the community and continue to be an important part of Steinbach's identity. Strong family and religious connections have contributed to the large-scale movement of people into the area, keeping Steinbach in the top three immigrant receiving destinations in Manitoba. In recent years, newcomers to Steinbach are becoming more diverse from countries such as the Philippines, Colombia, India, and the United Kingdom; in the future it will be interesting to see how these immigrants settle and integrate into a predominately Mennonite town. Service providers will need to change strategies for service delivery, consider the presence of new languages and religions, and continue to celebrate the diversity of cultures that exist in this rural community.

Ethnocultural organizations in Steinbach are newly emerging; however, strong, vibrant, and active ethnocultural communities have been present in the community for years. While they do not have a typical formal organization, Mennonite groups have formed very close knit, strong communities that offer individuals support, social networks, and an opportunity to celebrate and practice traditional cultural values. The ‘institutional completeness’³ (Breton 1964) of the Mennonite community is remarkable as all needs are met within the group. They do not have a need or desire to become a formal ethnocultural organization and function very well without the support offered to formal organizations. The large numbers of Mennonites within these communities allow individuals to be able to speak their traditional language, practice their traditional religion, and continue with traditional culture. Steinbach remains one of the top three immigrant receiving communities in Manitoba because of the strong Mennonite connections that have facilitated immigration to the area and made Steinbach a growing community.

³ Breton (1964) uses the term institutional completeness to represent the degree to which these organizations provide services for its members, and observes that there are variations amongst groups. Breton explains that “institutional completeness would be at its extreme whenever the ethnic community could perform all the services required by its members” (194).

Part Two - A Comparison of Ethnocultural Organizations and Communities in Two Rural Communities

Brandon and Steinbach: Different Immigration Stories, Similar Lessons

In early 2008, the Rural Development Institute conducted a research project on ethnocultural communities in Brandon. To view the final report from phase one, please visit the following website:

<http://www.brandonu.ca/organizations/rdi/Publications/Immigration/MappingEthnocultural-BdnandWestmanFinalReport08.pdf>.

To increase understanding and awareness of ethnocultural communities and organizations in rural areas, it is necessary to compare and investigate the similarities and differences between the two case studies – Steinbach and Brandon. From such an analysis it will become evident that despite numerous differences there are similar lessons to be learned from both communities.

- Consider the nature and history of immigration in a community. No two cases are the same.

Steinbach has a more evident and varied history of immigration as compared to Brandon. Steinbach has experienced growing pains and struggled with service provision in the past (Silvius 2005); however, in recent years, despite continued influxes of newcomers, the community of Steinbach has learned from their past experiences and seem to have addressed a number of service provision and housing challenges. Brandon, on the other hand, is only recently experiencing large influxes of newcomers and currently struggles with associated challenges. For example, language barriers cause difficulties in many service provision organizations and available and affordable housing is near impossible to find. Service providers and local stakeholders are learning how to deal with such rapid changes as they go. Until the past few years, Brandon has consistently had rather low numbers of immigrant arrivals, while Steinbach has consistently ranked amongst the top three immigrant receiving communities in Manitoba. The past and present experiences of immigration in a community greatly impact the presence and nature of ethnocultural organizations and communities.

Ethnicity, country of origin, and immigration history impacts ethnocultural communities' ability and desire to form formal organizations; this is a sentiment that was also echoed in the first phase of the project. Immigration to Steinbach has been predominately driven by the close family and religious connections of different groups of Mennonites. The majority of newcomers in Brandon have been recruited by industry to address labour shortages. These newcomers have no prior connections to the area and do not have the same type of family and cultural foundation as is found in Steinbach. In Steinbach there are no formal ethnocultural organizations within Mennonite groups as their affiliation is linked to the church. In Brandon, there are few ethnocultural organizations amongst groups of newcomers because they have not been in the area for long and have arrived to Brandon on temporary work permits. The more formal ethnocultural organizations and communities found in Brandon include those groups that have been in the area for generations.

- The centrality and functions of religion in immigrant communities cannot be ignored.

The role of religion is one of the most significant differences between the two communities, especially in terms of the impact and influence on immigration attraction, retention, and settlement. Throughout the research on ethnocultural communities in Brandon the role of religion and churches was, at most, peripherally mentioned. However, in the case of Steinbach religion and the role of church is one of the first topics mentioned when discussing immigration. The centrality of church and religion within Mennonite culture has negated the need and desire for formal ethnocultural organizations. Mennonites meet all of their social needs through church and church-based activities. Religious services are conducted in the language they are most comfortable with and traditional cultural values are encouraged. They do not struggle with ensuring a younger membership since church is family-centric with plenty of opportunities and options for youth involvement. When new Mennonite immigrants arrive to the area, they either seek or are sought by the church, which provides a familiar community to address any challenges or concerns they may have.

Lessons Learned

While the differences between Steinbach and Brandon may outnumber the similarities, there are a number of lessons to be learned from these two case studies.

- 1) To ensure vibrant and successful ethnocultural communities and organizations cultural celebrations must be encouraged and supported.

Following the significant and far-reaching success of Culturama in Steinbach and the Lieutenant Governor's Winter Festival in Brandon, such celebrations must be encouraged. The population of individual ethnocultural groups in rural areas may be too small to host such events on their own therefore multicultural events, showcasing the rich diversity of communities and involving a wide array of community members, prove to be the most effective means to promote cultural diversity.

Ultimately, in areas of rather limited diversity, multicultural events act as an avenue in debunking stereotypes and educating community residents. In celebrating cultural traditions, ethnocultural organizations serve an educating function, which has the potential to combat racism and discrimination. Education about various cultural traditions and ethnic groups is helpful in successful settlement strategies and in ensuring a welcoming community.

Lacking the sort of culinary diversity boasted by larger centres such as Winnipeg, cultural celebrations such as Culturama and the Winter Festival offer community residents a chance to try various kinds of traditional ethnic foods that otherwise would not be found in smaller rural communities. In discussing these events with community members it is often sited that the food is the "best part" of the event. Encouraging ethnocultural communities to celebrate traditions such as food, dance, performance, and language through such multicultural events reinforces the groups' own cultural traditions and provides a way for others to learn about cultures and traditions. Multicultural celebrations offer rural communities an opportunity to bring together a diverse range of community members, to celebrate cultural traditions, and encourage ethnocultural groups to continue sharing.

In many cases, encouraging multicultural celebrations and events may be the most effective way to encourage groups to celebrate their heritage and educate community residents of other ways of life. It is necessary to alter thinking on ethnocultural organizations and communities in rural areas to broader sentiments of accepting and celebrating cultural diversity and heritages.

- 2) Establishing and maintaining ethnocultural organizations requires a large amount of time from a dedicated leader and a strong volunteer base.

Without a strong champion or leader ethnocultural organizations could not form or operate. The establishment of ethnocultural organizations requires an individual who has the time and energy to devote to seeking funds, organizing meetings, coordinating social events, and ensuring that the organization runs smoothly. A strong and dedicated volunteer base is also required. In the case of Brandon, it was continually sited that finding volunteers was one of the most significant challenges in maintaining an organization. Oftentimes volunteers are older members and it is difficult to find younger volunteers since other responsibilities such as young families take much time and energy leaving little to give to volunteering. Rural communities are further challenged in this respect because of small populations of both ethnocultural groups and community residents. Mobilizing people to coordinate and manage organizations and activities is a challenge when the volunteer base is small to non-existent.

- 3) Immigrant serving organizations must have knowledge of the process of establishing formal ethnocultural organizations and be willing to assist ethnocultural communities with the process.

Finding information on how to establish a formal ethnocultural organization and developing an understanding of the process can be challenging for newcomers. They must overcome language barriers, cultural differences, and demands on their time. Eastman Immigrant Services in Steinbach has been an indispensable help to both the Filipino association and the Colombian community throughout the various stages of establishing an organization. Westman Immigrant Services, Brandon's sole immigrant service provider organization, faces continual staffing challenges and overstretched resources. While the organization would like to provide more targeted information to ethnocultural communities on organization formation, they are overwhelmed with numerous other demands. Immigrant serving organizations can be an invaluable resource in the formation of ethnocultural organizations, but it also has to be acknowledged that they are often overburdened with other service demands.

Provincial government has a role to play in ensuring that all information on ethnocultural organization formation reaches immigrant service providers. Also, it may be necessary to distribute such information to a wider network. Developing centralized resources in various languages for interested ethnocultural groups to use would be invaluable throughout the process of establishing organizations. Furthermore, resource kits focused on highlighting the possible functions of strong, vibrant ethnocultural organizations and communities may encourage groups to seek this avenue of formal organization.

With the proper information and supports from government, immigrant-serving organizations can guide ethnocultural communities as they navigate the process of establishing an organization. In time, ethnocultural organizations can serve many of the same functions as an immigrant service organization thus alleviating much of the strain placed on such organizations in small areas with large numbers of immigrants.

- 4) Rural communities and local service providers need to develop dialogues and communicate lessons learned with one another.

Rural community leaders and rural immigrant service organizations could greatly benefit from having more communication with one another to share experiences and lessons learned. In a sense, Brandon is currently going through what Steinbach has already worked through; there is potential for these communities to share experiences and learn from one another. Discussions and information sharing between the two communities would be fruitful for community leaders, residents, and newcomers.

- 5) Collaboration and linkages with other organizations benefits (or would benefit) ethnocultural communities.

As was discussed in the report for the first phase of this project, collaboration and communication amongst non-government organizations and ethnocultural communities is needed to support ethnocultural organizations. By connecting with other organizations, ethnocultural communities can gain knowledge that will help them operate; the same can be said for immigrant service providers throughout rural Manitoba. Sharing lessons learned, best practices, and key challenges amongst organizations can only benefit those groups that wish to form organizations. Collaboration also ensures that services are not being duplicated and opens opportunities for more cultural events and activities. In the case of Brandon, the Lieutenant Governor's Winter Festival is a good example of how collaboration and linkages across organizations, communities, and groups can benefit not only ethnocultural communities but also Brandon as a whole. In Steinbach, the Culturama event is a good example of individuals working together, across organization and ethnic boundaries, to celebrate culture.

In the past few months, some tangible steps for collaboration and communication amongst organizations in Brandon have been taken. In October 2008, the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation organized a service provider fair to bring together newcomers and service providers and raise awareness of the services that are available in Brandon (for the final report see Appendix C). In January 2009, the Rural Development Institute hosted a workshop with the purposes of linking ethnocultural organizations and communities with non-government organizations in Brandon (for the final report see Appendix D). Both events can be considered a success and there is a strong desire to have follow-up meetings.

Concluding Remarks

Providing information and implementing place-based approaches are the most vital steps in encouraging strong, vibrant ethnocultural organizations. Rural communities face very unique challenges that are intricately linked to their histories and present-day experiences. Each community uniquely struggles with small populations, lack of venues for activities, and limited resources. Furthermore, every ethnocultural community is different. It cannot be assumed that all ethnocultural groups are able or wish to form organizations. Some cultures do not have the same notions of volunteerism as is found in Canadian culture, which would impact a groups' ability to establish and operate a formal organization. Other cultures may feel that the common bond of tradition, language, and religion is all that is needed to develop a strong ethnocultural organization, and, in the case of Mennonites, this is all that is needed to

meet the needs of individuals in the group. Essentially, what works in one community may not work for another.

Finally, when thinking about ethnocultural communities and organizations there tends towards a perspective that emphasizes experiences of immigration and the role such organizations can play in settling newcomers. This may often overshadow the importance of considering those ethnocultural groups that have been here for many generations and do not have the same needs as newcomers. It is equally important for all ethnocultural groups to celebrate diversity and promote cultural traditions. Discussions of ethnocultural organizations and communities should not always be equated to discussions of supporting and settling newcomers; ethnocultural organizations and communities help to preserve a history of immigration and multiculturalism while also ensuring that people never forget their 'roots'.

Recommended Next Steps

- Present the findings from this study to local government and immigrant service providers in Steinbach and Brandon to encourage feedback. Consulting with communities on these findings is the most effective way in evaluating what is to be done to encourage the development of vibrant ethnocultural organizations.
- Engage members from ethnocultural communities, local and provincial government, immigrant service provider organizations, and other community-based service providers in discussions on ethnocultural organizations. Building on the meeting held at Brandon University in January 2009, it is necessary to continue bringing together multi-sector groups to open dialogue on lessons learned, challenges, and next steps. Such meetings could be held in Steinbach and perhaps, eventually, a meeting with both communities would prove fruitful in sharing information and building capacity. Rural communities have a lot to learn from one another and boundaries should not be made between municipalities and the knowledge they can share.
- Centralized and up-to-date resources and information are needed in communities that receive immigrants, especially in rural communities that lack the same infrastructure as larger urban centres. For example, maintained websites can be an invaluable resource to newcomers who seek to learn more about services offered in a community. Eastman Immigrant Services operates an informative, current, and easy to access website with lists of services offered, upcoming community events, volunteer opportunities, language learning, employment resources, and other information about Steinbach. On the other hand, Westman Immigrant Services' website is less thorough and does not display upcoming community events nor is it easy to navigate. Furthermore, the website's address and much of the content on the pages continues to use the organizations' old name. Immigrant service organizations often lack the time and resources to devote to updating a website, however centralized resources are key to ensuring successful settlement and service provision. These organizations need to be given resources to maintain such information sources and encouraged to further develop their websites, including links to research, community events, and government documents.

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Appendices A and B

Ethnocultural Communities and Organizations Interview Questions

1. What is the nature of your organization and the main purpose behind your operations?
2. How long has your organization been in existence and how did it form?
3. What is the structure of your organization or group? Is there an elected board / any employees?
4. Do you offer any support, resources or services:
 - a. To newcomers?
 - b. To ethnocultural groups?
 - c. To the community as a whole?
5. If **yes** to any part of the above question, what is the nature of this support?
6. What are the key challenges to ensure vibrant membership, participation, and successful operation of your organization?
7. Does your organization participate in or have any linkages with other ethnocultural, government, service organizations, or other groups within your community or beyond?
8. If **yes** to the above question, what is the nature of these linkages or partnerships? Do these partnerships have any impact on your operations, membership or profile?
9. What are the vision and plans for your organization in the future?
10. How did the community/organization form?
11. What is the structure of the organization/community?
12. What does the organization/community offer to newcomers?
13. What challenges has the organization/community faced?
14. Where does the organization/community receive funding from?
15. What are the top priorities of the organization/community?
16. What benefits are provided to members?
17. Is there a volunteer-base? Approximately how many?
18. Does the organization/community have links with other organizations?

Appendix C – Final Report from the Service Provider Fair

**IMMIGRATION, MIGRATION,
OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES:
BRANDON, MANITOBA**

**Notes from *Tapestry of Our Community*
*Service Providers' Fair***

October 15, 2008

Submitted to:

Shawn Ankenmann
Homelessness Coordination,
Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal
Corporation

Hope Roberts
Settlement Director,
Westman Immigrant Services

Prepared by:

Monika Sormova
Research Assistant,
Rural Development Institute,
Brandon University

Alison Moss,
Research Affiliate,
Rural Development Institute,
Brandon University

**Tapestry of Our Community
Service Providers' Fair**

Wednesday, October 15, 2008, 11am – 9pm.
Central United Church Auditorium, 327 – 8th Street, Brandon, MB.

Community Display Participants

Assiniboine Community College
Brandon Community Welcome
Brandon Friendship Centre
Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
Canadian Mental Health Association
Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Career and Employment Youth Services
Child and Family Services of Western Manitoba
City of Brandon
CMHA – Restore/Refit
Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre
Public Health Services
Prairie Health Matters (RHA)
Race Relations Network
RHA Diabetes Study
7th Street Health Access Centre
Samaritan House
Streetlove
Service Canada
The Counseling Centre
The Women's Resource Centre
United Church Ministries
Westman Coalition for Employment Opportunities Inc.
Westman Crisis Services
Westman Youth for Christ
Westman Immigrant Services
YMCA
YWCA – Westman Women's Shelter

Welcome

Brandon's first immigrant and community service provider fair was planned and hosted by the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation and Westman Immigrant Services. The Rural Development Institute (RDI), Brandon University offered input into the day's activities and recorded discoveries from presentations and community dialogue. The information presented in this report reflects RDI researcher's interpretation of October 15, 2008 activities.

Shawn Ankenmann, Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (BNRC)

Mr. Ankenmann welcomed everyone to the Service Providers' Fair and thanked all participants of this inaugural event. He noted the importance of bringing different agencies and community organizations together to inform each other of their services and the challenges they are facing, to network, and to avoid duplication of services in the community.

There has been a will to host a similar event in Brandon for many years. This fair is the first in a series of similar events that will hopefully be planned annually. The main purpose is to encourage the community to work together as Brandon continues to change over time. Mr. Ankenmann noted that in order to attract more public to the event, the next fair should be held at a more public venue such as the Town Centre.

Laura Moar, Brandon Friendship Centre (BFC)

The BFC operates five buildings at different locations in Brandon. Currently the organization is running fifteen community-based programs including Partners for Careers (resume writing, job postings, counseling), Adult Learning, In a Good Way (pre- and post-natal education), Access Service (addressing issues of family violence), Drop-In Centre for Youth, and others.

The BFC always tries to develop new programs to meet the needs of people in the community; they often partner with other organizations in the area such as the Brandon Regional Health, 7th Street Access Centre, Samaritan House, and others. On request, their cultural worker/ Elder works with other organizations in the community and offers information sessions regarding Aboriginal culture. Although their main focus is the Aboriginal population in Brandon and area, they also serve non-Aboriginal clients.

The BFC's Kokum's Little Daycare provides care for 36 children and currently there are no spots available because of limited availability. The BFC also operates a 40 housing units in Brandon. They are receiving requests for housing units daily and currently there is a 3-year waiting list for open units. Their Transitional House on 12th Street also has a long waiting list. The BFC is looking at adapting another building to help alleviate the need for housing in the community.

The Brandon Friendship Centre offers tours to interested clients or organizations on request. Their 60+ staff in Brandon always seeks ways to grow and develop new programs to meet the needs in the community.

Ms. Moar mentioned that the lack of housing is the number one issue that the BFC deals with on a daily basis. In Brandon, the shortages of adequate housing and high rents result in increasing homelessness and have effects on people transitioning from other communities. There is a particular demand for apartments with 3 or more bedrooms to accommodate families with more than 3 children.

Brandon's rapidly growing population also puts stress on other BFC programs such as Head Start and In a Good Way, both of which have waiting lists and simply cannot meet demands. More space is needed for programs so that more people can be included.

Marie Wotton, Child and Family Services (CFS)/ Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre

The Elspeth Reid Family Resource Centre focuses on family issues, parenting, and the well being of children. The Centre offers a variety of services to its clients including parenting courses, support groups, family literacy and preschool programs, parenting outreach programs,

and others. The Elspeth Reid Centre focuses on serving families holistically. Ms. Wotton affirmed “parents can’t meet kids’ needs if their own needs are not met.”

The main issues affecting the Centre mirror the needs of families. The first issue mentioned was family income, often a barrier that places stress on families. The lack of housing, particularly low-income housing, is an ongoing local issue. A serious lack of childcare, particularly the lack of infant spaces, is having an impact on the well-being of today’s families.

While the Centre offers a wide range of classes and services to the public, families encounter a number of barriers that prevent them from accessing services. These obstacles include parents’ lack of time to meet needs (across all income levels); transportation to services for some families; limited employment opportunities, particularly parents without secondary or post-secondary education; the know-how to fit the services into a busy lifestyle; and the issue of isolation and finding time for families in an environment where the parents’ role is not supported.

While the centre also offers some programs to newcomers and their families, they often encounter language and cultural barriers in successfully delivering these programs. The lack of interpretation and translating services is acute.

Ms. Wotton encouraged the audience to read two recent studies on families that reflect the CFS’ and the Centre’s concerns – a Winnipeg study on stress on parents, and another study available online entitled *Vital Communities, Vital Support*.

The Elspeth Reid Centre has created a new coalition, the Healthy Families Team, which meets nine times a year to discuss issues related to families and parenting. This is an open organization and new members are welcome to join.

Greg Lupier-Roziere, 7th Street Health Access Centre

The 7th Street Health Access Centre has been in operation for approximately four years. The demand for services has increased, particularly over the past year, as is the increasing need for additional staff and resources. Services offered include: public showers, washers and dryers, phone, community voice mailboxes, fax, internet, partnerships with community service providers, and access to housing information. Clinical services include: service navigators, community health nurses, addiction counselors (AFM), community mental health workers, mental health support worker, domestic violence counselor, Aboriginal spiritual care provider, cultural facilitators (Spanish, Amharic and Mandarin), travel health nurse, community social worker, specialized supports facilitator, and a community volunteer income tax program.

The critical lack of affordable housing in Brandon is another major issue for the Centre and its clients. Many newcomers have very limited or no understanding of landlord-tenant agreements or what rights they have. Advocacy and greater awareness for newcomers are needed.

The demand for services and an increasing volume of clients are major challenges for the Centre. Programs continue to grow, often hindered by language barriers, as the Centre continues to adjust to a rapidly changing community.

Dean Munchinsky and Adrian Farijo, Youth for Christ (YFC)

Youth for Christ has operated in Brandon and area for fifty years and offers programs and resources to help youth build self-esteem and develop their potential in life. Their focus is on the physical, emotional, and spiritual well being of youth.

The organization conducts a number of programs for youth including Uturn, which provides semi-dependent homes for youth-at-risk; Vox, an employment-training program; The Back Alley, a drop-in facility that is currently closed but plans are in place to find a new location; and Gymblast, a program delivered in partnership with YMCA and the schools. The organization also coordinates trips for youth to expose them to different parts of Canada and recently coordinated a volunteering trip to the USA.

YFC is also reaching out to the immigrant population in Brandon and area. Adrian, a Spanish-speaking youth, works with the Spanish-speaking community and youth at schools and organizes a number of programs for newcomers. One of the most popular is the Soccer League for children aged 6 to 13. The Soccer League started with the Spanish-speaking youth in Brandon and has recently expanded to become a truly international venture with participating members from other parts of the world. Other activities from newcomers include Drop-In Nights for teenagers, trips to other parts of Canada, and pool tournaments (for male adults mostly).

YFC has recently participated in a training session from the Search Institute in Minneapolis on healthy development and encouraged people to visit their website for more information.

What can service providers do to ensure the well being of youth?

- Ensure that people have the information they need;
- Provide free, visible, well-communicated services and community resources;
- Provide opportunities for youth to volunteer; and
- Provide role models and mentors to youth.

Yvonne Hodge, Brandon School Division (BSD)

Aside from the regular schools operating within the BSD, the Alexander school is in the process of becoming an art school, and the Neelin Off-Campus School is attended by approximately 200 students who work at their own pace towards graduation.

The Brandon School Division facilitates a number of special programs within the school system including English as an Additional Language (EAL); Eco-Odyssey at Crocus High; Special Needs Programs; and Brandon Healthy Families (part of Special Needs programs directed at pre-school population). The BSD has also recently hired a full-time Occupational Therapist (continuation of the position is dependent on funding). A website with a list of school division programs is available at <http://www.brandonsd.mb.ca/>.

The BSD also coordinates a program that assesses what skills children bring to Kindergarten. The statistics show that one in four children in Manitoba is not ready for Kindergarten; in Brandon the ratio is two in four children or 50%.

The EAL program has been developed to assist children from immigrant families. The BSD coordinates an English Language Assessment program for children and EAL teachers work with curriculum teachers in classrooms. There are also lots of visual supports available for children from non-English speaking families. There is now more support available within the school system for children from immigrant families than there was during the first years of new immigration influx to Brandon.

There are a number of issues at Brandon schools that include:

- Behavioural problems among students;
- Keeping Aboriginal children in school;
- Ensuring that children are equipped with basic skills to enter Kindergartens; and
- Cultural differences and integration of the immigrant children in schools.

In terms of the support for teachers dealing with immigrant families, the BSD organizes workshops and provides consultants and visual support for classes. Also, there are regular group meetings of teachers and principals. The issue of inter-cultural training among students was raised and there is hope that this training could help address some tension and cultural issues among students, particularly in high schools.

Heather Sharpe and Colleen Erickson, YWCA Westman Women's Shelter

The Women's Shelter opened in 1978. The organization provides emergency and support services to women and children who are leaving abusive relationships. In addition to a temporary shelter, the organization offers education, empowerment, counseling services, childcare, crisis intervention and referrals as well as information on legal, medical, housing and employment needs.

The average age of women in the shelter is 18 to 32 and the majority of clients are Aboriginal women. The women can stay in the shelter for up to 30 days, which is an upper-limit set by the government. The YWCA funding is based on 'bed nights' or the number of beds occupied monthly. They rely heavily on private donations and also operate the Adopt a Room Program where businesses sponsor a room in the shelter. Additional programs organized by the YWCA include Power of the Girl Conference, 5th annual conference, focusing on self-esteem and leadership among young women.

The lack of housing, particularly low-income housing, adds lot of pressure on YWCA's operations. Women in the shelter get only 30 days to rebuild their life and find a new home; this time frame and an often limited income does not allow many women to find an apartment in Brandon. Some women end up returning to the relationships they left.

In terms of immigrant women, language factors often prevent YWCA from providing services to this community. In the past, other organizations have stepped in to help with language and immigration-related issues; however, the lack of translation services, language barriers, and unavailability of literature in other languages result in many immigrant women being unaware of the Shelter and its services.

Hope Roberts, Westman Immigrant Services (WIS)

WIS provides a variety of programs and services to the immigrant community in Brandon. With the growing immigrant population, Brandon is changing and WIS is looking for ways to link their work with all that is happening in the community. The organization is seven years old and has been growing rapidly. EAL is their primary program, along with settlement and employment. WIS employs thirteen teachers for their English classes. Their settlement classes and programs employ ten workers. In addition to Brandon, WIS also offers EAL support to programs in rural areas. WIS anticipates seeing an impact on their services due to increasing rural immigration.

The immigrant population seeking WIS's services are of various immigration streams including Maple Leaf workers, refugees through different sponsorships, business immigrants, family sponsorship, and others. In the month of September alone WIS opened 96 new client files (Ms. Roberts noted that this number does not include all family members.). According to WIS, 181 immigrants arrived to Brandon in 2005, 172 in 2006, and 642 in 2007. However, these numbers do not necessarily reflect the true, new immigrant population in Brandon; it is estimated that the numbers are in the thousands.

WIS has been consciously hiring workers with different language skills to provide services to immigrants with limited or no English language skills. They now employ staff fluent in Amharic, Spanish, Mandarin, and Tagalog. Aside from language and settlement services, Ms. Roberts noted that major needs arising in the community relate to issues with mental health and counseling services. WIS collaborates with a number of other organizations in town to develop and deliver new programs and services (i.e. Family Literacy and EAL, Sexual Health Promo Campaign).

New programs at WIS include Entry Program, which is a core orientation program for newly arrived immigrants and provides information on the city, health, education, employment and justice and legal issues. The WIS Assessment Centre conducts assessments for eligible students entering a government funded EAL program.

Ms. Roberts noted that one of the major issues at WIS is the risk of core service provider burnout. Also, some of WIS's programs depend heavily on volunteers.

Despite the ongoing demand for services, there are very few if any professional interpreters and translators in Brandon. The Program Advisory Committee to WIS has worked for over a year to build interpretation and translation pool in the community.

Ms. Roberts encouraged other organizations to address issues related to the growing immigrant population by developing programs and services that address their concerns and collaborate with other organizations to accommodate their clients. She noted that even large businesses like Future Shop, Canadian Tire, and Superstore have hired people from the immigrant community to better accommodate their customers.

Panel Discussion 7:00 – 8:30pm

Panellists:

Marty Snelling, Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation
Laura Moar, Brandon Friendship Centre
Sandy Trudel, City of Brandon
Yvonne Hodge, Brandon School Division
Adrian Farijo and Dean Munchinsky, Youth for Christ

Shawn Ankenmann introduced individual panellists and each provided background information on their affiliations and involvement in the community. Shawn Ankenmann and Hope Roberts prepared the following questions.

QUESTION #1:

One of the issues that come up again and again is communication between the sectors. Often we create and operate within “silos” that become focused on our specific area of expertise and experience while inadvertently neglecting the formation of partnerships AND communication with other groups and agencies. Do you feel breaking free of these “silos” is important for Brandon as we face the challenges before us? And how have you and your office formed partnerships and cooperative alliances in recent months?

Laura/ Brandon Friendship Centre: The Centre regularly forms partnerships with different groups and organizations to meet needs in the community. It does so directly through development and collaboration on some programs, and also through client referral to other organizations and services. Some of the organizations with which the Friendship Centre collaborates include: Brandon Regional Health Authority; Community Health Matters; City of Brandon; Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation; Brandon University; Assiniboine Community College; Helping Hands; Youth for Christ; The John Howard Society; and others.

Adrian/ Youth for Christ: Youth for Christ is developing a network of partnerships with other organizations. Their partners include Westman Immigrant Services, the City of Brandon, Brandon Friendship Centre, Brandon School Division, and others.

Yvonne/ Brandon School Division: The Brandon School Division collaborates with a number of organizations on their pre-school and school programs. Their partners include: Manitoba Health; Child and Family Services; Elspeth Reid Centre; Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre; Brandon University; Assiniboine Community College; and University of Alberta. Some of the collaborative programs they operate include Kinderlinks, Roots for Empathy and FAST (Families and Schools Together).

Sandy Trudel/ City of Brandon: The ongoing challenge for the City is how to reach out to the various groups more proactively. The City does so by networking, effectively communicating and active program involvement.

Marty/ Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (BNRC): The BNRC facilitates new partnership and projects that bring different organizations together. Their most recent project is the transformation of the Massey building into a 54-housing unit that includes the collaboration of the BNRC, Habitat for Humanity and Brandon Friendship Centre.

QUESTION #2:

In our community we have numerous groups that have been in existence for a number of years, such as the Brandon Race Relations Network (BRRN), who have been tasked with the role of creating programming that promotes racial diversity and cultural understanding. These groups frequently are facing a lack of funding, a dearth of people committed to leadership and volunteers, and struggle to continue providing their services to the community. Why do you think that a group like this struggles in the city of Brandon? How do you suggest we as a community can address these challenges for groups like the BRRN and others?

Yvonne/ Brandon School Division: Staff within every organization gets busy and preoccupied with core activities. This may be overcome by fostering new partnerships and enhanced communication with the public. One of the biggest challenges that BSD faces is that 50% of Brandon five-year-olds are not ready/equipped for Kindergarten.

Sandy/ City of Brandon: There is a global decline in volunteers and today's volunteers often only offer their time and energy when there is some personal gain. Deepening cultural awareness and diversity will have a long-term pay-off. The majority of Brandon's population does not know about the immigrant experience and therefore are largely unattached to the issues arising. We should all begin by asking ourselves 'what can I do' creating personal connections and linkages. Increasing and stabilizing funding for non-profit organizations will alleviate some issues and assist in the development of volunteer programs. Sometimes volunteers are not treated with full respect and therefore, do not stay with an organization. It is important that volunteers are valued and accorded with the same respect that paid staff are.

Marty/ Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation: It is important to build on successes and emphasize the positive. The Brandon Race Relations Network is involved with organizing two events a year in conjunction with Human Rights Day (December 10th) and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 21st). The Multicultural Festival has been building on the new energy in the city and has been growing steadily. The BNRC still has project funding available that has to be allocated by December.

Laura/ Brandon Friendship Centre: The lack of volunteerism and participation in the community often goes back to the demands on families. Colleges, universities and workplaces need to create strategic plans for inclusivity and cultural diversity.

Adrian/ Youth for Christ: The lack of funding impacts the ability to promote change; continuity of activities and the capacity to develop new programs. Organizations should set aside funding for volunteers (i.e. for volunteer appreciation dinner, etc.). A lack of funding often impacts the desire to volunteer.

QUESTION #3:

Over the last couple of years, we've heard the immigration projections for our city and region. We are currently experiencing the reality of these numbers as Brandon is experiencing a

significant change in its population demographics. Many of our new immigrants are moving to the city with little or no proficiency in English. The sheer number of ethnicities now resident in our community, while offering a context for enriching our city by dramatically expanding our cultural diversity, presents enormous challenges to many sectors. What role do you as an organization or an individual have in responding to the needs that are now facing our community and your work?

Sandy/ City of Brandon: Between 1995 and 2003 there was an average of 62 new landed immigrants per year. That number more than doubled in 2004 to 130 a year. In 2005 and 2006 there were about 180 new landed immigrants each year. In 2007 the number increased to 642; in June 2008 the number of new landed immigrant in Brandon was 418, reflecting a half-year of growth. These numbers reflect newcomers with landed immigrant status only and they do not include Temporary Foreign Workers, dependents on visitors' visas, those waiting for landed immigrant status, and those that were destined elsewhere but are living in Brandon.

If all projections are realized Brandon will experience at least a 10% population increase by 2010. Projections are that by 2010, 10% of Brandon School Division students will be EAL learners. 'Community welcome' is important to encourage people to stay in Brandon after they receive permanent resident status, particularly temporary foreign workers and their families. It is important to note that arrivals through every immigrant stream are increasing in Brandon.

Adrian/ Youth for Christ: The Spanish Soccer Program started by YFC has developed into an international soccer league. Program goals include enhanced integration through networking, communication, introduction to new people in the community, and English language skill development through interaction with other children.

QUESTION #4:

How are Brandon youth being drawn into the community and the changes within it?

Adrian/ Youth for Christ: In high schools, youth often associate with separate cultural groups and there is a great deal of pressure to remain within groups. There are challenges related to interaction across groups.

Sandy/ City of Brandon: It is important to encourage people to view local immigration as a permanent reality, and not as a temporary phenomenon. An interpretation and translation model needs to be developed; the housing shortage needs to be addressed by developing affordable housing. The Brandon Police Service has organized a list of translators who will translate for BPS for an agreed upon fee. The City is currently coordinating a translation of the relocation guide into Spanish and bus schedules are available in multiple languages.

In terms of youth, activities that bring people from different cultural backgrounds together need to be encouraged. Integration only happens when there is a concentrated effort. It is important to develop personal connections with the immigrant community.

Marty/ Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation: Immigration is a great opportunity for the city. It is important to focus on the positive and build on what we have. Meetings are being held to establish a non-profit housing corporation in Brandon and introduce rent controls in the city. The numbers of students in Brandon schools are increasing rapidly with many ESL students needing special services.

Laura/ Brandon Friendship Centre: There is a need to raise awareness about different cultures coming to Brandon and introduce Aboriginal culture to newcomers. The issue of homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in Brandon must be addressed.

Dean/ Youth for Christ: There is not a great deal of interaction with newcomers. It is important to deal with integration and homelessness issues proactively. Some people coming from elsewhere slip through the cracks; sometime cultural norms do not translate well in a new environment. Newcomers come equipped with different tools to deal with challenges. YFC's program, U-Turn, organizes two workshops a month to assist the journey to independence.

The following community resources are available:

- Community Contact List (from Sandy/ The City of Brandon)
- Brandon Resource Guide (available on the BNRC website)
- Service Provider Guide (available from Sandy/ The City or WIS offices)

Appendix D – Final Report from Ethnocultural Organizations meeting

ENHANCING AND LINKING ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

January 23, 2009

Louis Riel Dining Room, Brandon University

INTRODUCTIONS:

Robert Annis, Rural Development Institute

RDI Background

The Brandon University Rural Development Institute (RDI) is a non-profit research and development organization with a mandate to promote and conduct academic and applied research on issues affecting rural communities. RDI provides an interface between academia, government, and community through the facilitation of research and activities designed to encourage and promote community involvement. RDI projects are characterized by cooperative and collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders.

RDI's involvement within the field of immigration is relatively recent. In 2005, RDI hosted a Think Tank, engaging participants from a variety of interests nationally and internationally, on immigration. Since that time, RDI has conducted several Manitoba case studies examining impact and change associated with the flow of immigrants into rural areas. Other research projects have focused on the impacts of temporary foreign workers on Brandon and associated demographic changes. Current initiatives explore the concept "welcoming communities" and seek to assess whether Brandon is a welcoming community. The main focus of RDI's immigration-related research conducted at RDI is to gain understanding and insight into how can stakeholders ensure successful immigrant attraction, settlement, and retention in small communities and rural areas.

Brandon has recently experienced profound growth both in population and in diversity. New immigrants are enhancing the cultural diversity of the city, contributing to cultural and social activities, and presenting potential for additional cultural initiatives. The recent influx of newcomers provides a unique and timely opportunity to develop links between established ethnocultural organizations, newcomers, and other organizations to share knowledge and resources with the purposes of contributing to a more vibrant community.

Ethnocultural communities have the potential to provide a number of social and economic resources to newcomers including employment, education, and social networks. Developing strong, resourceful ethnocultural communities contributes to successful settlement of newcomers and leads to more inclusive, active communities. Ethnocultural groups, communities, and organizations should be encouraged to build capacity as they have important roles to play in welcoming newcomers and building a stronger community.

This session will build on research conducted by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) at Brandon University in January – March 2008. The final report from Phase 1 of this project can be found at <http://www.brandonu.ca/organizations/rdi/ethnocultural.asp>. RDI is conducting a research project with Manitoba Labour and Immigration to increase understandings of ethnocultural communities and organizations in rural Manitoba. The principle objective of the project is to gain insight into the processes of establishment and development of ethnocultural

communities and organizations, the factors that contribute to their success, and what barriers may hinder these associations.

PARTICIPANTS

Frank Tacan, Sr., Cultural Worker, Brandon Friendship Centre

Richard McIntyre, Irish Association

Nellie Gillespie, Ukrainian Society

Dorothy McHarg, Westman Scottish Association

Manfred Wicht, The German Society of Westman

Craig Ebbers, Provincial Exhibition

Ryan Clement, Marquis Project

Lorraine Dooley and Immaculate Nabisere, WUSC, Brandon University

Lee-Ann Jaworski, Drew Caldwell's MLA Constituency Office

Naty Delbridge, Westman Immigrant Services; Filipino Community

Hope Roberts, Westman Immigrant Services, Brandon Race Relations Network

Benjamin Amoyaw, Manitoba Labour and Immigration

Lori Gould, Brandon Race Relations Network; Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation

Eileen Wang Yu, Westman Chinese Association

Ian He, Westman Chinese Association

Lonnie Patterson, Brandon Arts Coalition

Dave Barnes, Neelin High School

Esther Bryan, City of Brandon

Alison Moss, Rural Development Institute

Monika Sormova, Rural Development Institute; BU Community Outreach

Muguleta Haile, Westman Immigrant Services; Ethiopian Community

Cristian Chavez, 7th Street Health Access Centre

Robert Annis, Rural Development Institute

Presentation on Phase 1 of Project – Mapping Ethnocultural Communities and Organizations in Brandon and Westman Region, Presented by Monika Sormova

The Aim of Research

The aim of the research project was to develop an understanding and overview of ethnocultural organizations in Brandon and area. The intention was to explore the barriers and challenges faced by ethnocultural organizations and how those might hinder their development. The research also included an overview of non-governmental organizations in Brandon that work with the immigrant population.

Brandon Background

Brandon is a small prairie city with a population of 41,511 (Statistics Canada, 2007). Over the past few years, Brandon has been experiencing a population growth, which has been influenced by immigration. Between 2001 and 2006, Brandon's population grew by 4.5%, compared to a 2.6% increase of the province's total population. According to Statistics Canada, the number of immigrants living in Brandon between 2001 and 2006 almost doubled from the previous five-year period.

Historically, Brandon's population has been fairly homogenous, consisting predominantly of descendents of European immigrants. In recent years, there has been a gradual change in the demographic make-up of the city with new immigrants arriving from South and Central America, Asian, and African countries. The majority of these newcomers are coming through the federal government's Low-Skilled Temporary Foreign Worker program to address labour shortages at Maple Leaf Foods plant, a hog processing facility employing approximately 2,250 people in Brandon.

Ethnocultural Organizations

A literature review of ethnocultural organizations and communities suggested that these serve a number of purposes in the community. Ethnocultural organizations and communities

- Often emerge to fill a specific need in the community;
- In some capacity, act as service providers to their membership;
- Maintain and celebrate cultural identity; and
- Promote social relationships, networking, and integration within the group and the community at large.

Ethnocultural Groups and Organizations in Brandon

There are several ethnocultural organizations in Brandon that have a long history and established roots in the community. Several new organizations are in the process of forming and some operate on a less formal level.

Challenges Faced by Ethnocultural Organizations

The influx of newcomers to Brandon is a fairly recent phenomenon and, given that the city has a small population, the size of specific ethnocultural communities is smaller than that in larger cities. Therefore, many of the ethnocultural groups in Brandon do not have enough people to form organizations and have not been in the area long enough to establish formal ethnocultural organizations. Another barrier to forming ethnocultural organizations is the familiarity with the process and available resources.

Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) Serving Newcomers in Brandon

The newcomers to Brandon brought with them unique cultural resources and greatly expanded the cultural diversity of the city. This diversity also introduced new challenges for service

organizations operating in Brandon who have expanded and added new programs and services to accommodate the needs of newcomers in Brandon.

Common Challenges Faced by Ethnocultural Groups and Organizations Serving the Immigrant Population

The lack of volunteers and human resources has been commonly identified as a challenge for both ethnocultural groups and NGOs. The threat of core volunteer and staff burnout is an ongoing threat faced by many organizations. Limited financial and human resources also bear impact on capacity building within organizations. Some organizations identified challenges in building links and establishing collaborations with other groups, and attracting new and youth membership to their groups.

Discussion Session, facilitated by Bob Annis

This discussion session brings together ethnocultural groups, non-government organizations, and service providers to discuss how ethnocultural organizations and communities can become or remain active contributors to the cultural diversity of Brandon. Discussions will focus on identifying opportunities to enhance ethnocultural communities and developing links between ethnocultural groups and other organizations in Brandon.

A number of issues and challenges affecting ethnocultural and non-governmental organizations were raised during roundtable introductions of workshop participants. Among these, some common emerged around the following themes:

- Ways of sharing information across individual groups;
- Member recruitment and retention;
- Lack of volunteers for newcomer support services and special events;
- Threat of burnout of core volunteers within groups;
- Member participation in organizations and their events;
- Engagement of community at large; and
- Ways to form new partnerships among organizations.

The after-lunch discussion session focused on sharing information between organizations and addressing the challenges and issues raised during the roundtable introductions.

The discussion was initiated along the following questions:

- How to share information across organizations and foster discussion on issues affecting them?
- How can ethnocultural groups or organizations be more involved in the community?
- Are there opportunities to make links between various organizations and ethnocultural groups in Brandon?

The group discussion raised a number of important points and new questions for future discussions. They are listed as follows:

- *How to establish information exchange among organizations and foster discussion on issues affecting them?*

- It was agreed that Westman Immigrant Services (WIS) would be the most suited hub for communication between ethnocultural groups and other organizations. Established connections could raise the profile of all organizations involved. However, this introduces challenges regarding WIS's human and volunteer resources and their ability to cover all demands.
- Also discussed was the unavailability of a mutual, collectively owned space that could provide a venue for future meetings. The Westman Multicultural Centre provided such venue in the past, but without governmental support, the space has disappeared.
- A question was raised about how to establish a link between specific communities with the purposes of sharing services and establishing a form of cooperation that would help alleviate the stress and demands on some organizations.
- *Volunteer and member recruitment and retention within organizations*
 - The Provincial Exhibition is interested in organizing another cultural celebration event in the summer. The aim is to add to what is already happening in Brandon rather than compete with existing multicultural events. The event would be mostly volunteer-driven; it would depend on the will and availability of volunteers from various ethnocultural groups.
 - Volunteers within established ethnocultural organizations are often older and recruiting new volunteers is a challenge. Some established ethnocultural organizations are seeking the involvement of younger people who otherwise are not learning their cultural traditions. However, this is a challenge as younger people have limited available time between work and family commitments.
 - Language training and education on the norms of the adopted country and its culture are in constant demand. The increased volume of these demands in recent years contributes to volunteer burnout within organizations.
 - A question was raised about what existing organizations should offer to newcomers and new members in order to secure their involvement and participation. An example of member recruitment was offered from the Westman Chinese Association which was formed in part to address the needs of Chinese-speaking Maple Leaf workers who have limited English language skills and often face difficulties connecting and communicating with Brandon agencies and residents. It was noted that in Chinese society, the concept of volunteerism is not the same as in Canadian society, and for this reason not fully understood by Chinese newcomers. To foster cross-cultural understanding and establish a reciprocal relationship between individual and organizations requires time and patience.
- *Fostering cross-cultural understanding*
 - Language barriers limit many newcomers when engaging in the broader community, which often leads to isolation. Some immigrant groups tend to be more insular due to cultural barriers.
 - There is still difficulty in understanding newcomers' needs. It was suggested that organizing local educational or informational events (i.e. how to buy a house, how to live in a wooden house) in conjunction with local agencies and organizations would help connect newcomers to the community. There is a need within the newcomer community to become familiar with the Canadian system and learn how to make a positive, healthy transition to their new

home. Events and workshops that promote the understanding of life in Canada (i.e. obtaining a credit card, building a credit history etc) could help newcomers with this transition. Financial and human resource limitations of many non-governmental and service organizations create a challenge to take on new programs and events.

- *Family reunification and challenges facing immigrant families*
 - Issues were raised relating to family reunification and their integration within Brandon society. In some cultural contexts, 'family' includes the extended family of newcomers.
 - Some newcomers face the challenge of separation from family and spouses for up to two years, which in some cases contributes to alcohol abuse and extra-marital affairs.
 - The lack of housing, especially affordable housing, is a community issue that also negatively affects immigrants and their families.
- *How do ethnocultural organizations keep value in communities over time?*
 - While first generation immigrants keep close ties to their home countries and want to remember their homes, this need lessens over time. A question that remains for ethnocultural organizations spanning several generations in Canada is how to highlight the value of remembering and maintaining cultural traditions.
 - "Know the history, know the culture." There is a need to teach history to people and incorporate all people's histories including Aboriginal, African, Asian, etc. Educating people about other cultures could help stop racism in communities, foster inclusiveness, and encourage cooperation.
 - Encouraging communication, education, and valuing young people and their ideas could encourage their involvement in organizations and help promote building diverse, inclusive societies.

Concluding remarks – observations and suggestions from participants, Roundtable discussion

The session offered a venue for participants to share experiences and challenges, exchange ideas, establish communication, and raise awareness of other ethnocultural groups and organizations working or seeking to work with immigrant communities in Brandon.

Many participants expressed interest in holding another discussion session in the future with a focus on specific issue affecting the newcomer communities and ethnocultural organizations. For some, the session was an assertion that issues and challenges faced by their specific organizations are echoed in other groups, and took the opportunity to ask questions and gain insight from other participants on how to address these challenges.

It was noted several times that making contact with other groups and organizations by opening a venue for discussion opens a door to communication among groups and prospects for future collaboration. A shared forum also provides opportunity to inform and learn from each other about the roles of specific organizations. It also raises awareness about other organizations' programs and services. A contact list with e-mail addresses of all participants was circulated to all partaking in the session.

The importance of communication, keeping in touch with grass-roots issues, and mobilizing a common strategy was discussed. Questions were raised on how to:

- Establish links;
- Open communication;
- Share services with other organizations;
- Link with Aboriginal communities;
- Meet and combat divides;
- Share volunteer resources; and
- Find the right people for specific tasks.

These and other issues can become topics for future discussion forums.

RDI ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Scott Grills, Chair
Brandon University
Brandon, MB

Mona Cornock
Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
Brandon, MB

Larry Flynn
Public Health Agency of Canada
Winnipeg, MB

Kim Beilby
Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
Brandon, MB

Reg Helwer
Shur-Gro Farm Services
Brandon, MB

Elliot Hewitt
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Calgary, AB

Ben Maendel
Baker Hutterite Colony
MacGregor, MB

Jonathon Maendel
Baker Hutterite Colony
MacGregor, MB

Darell Pack
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Winnipeg, MB

W.J. (Bill) Pugh
Meyers Norris Penny
Brandon, MB

Fran Racher
Brandon University
Brandon, MB

Doug Ramsey
Brandon University
Brandon, MB

Frank Thomas
Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce
Brandon, MB

Larry Wark
MTS Communications Inc.
Brandon, MB

Dion Wiseman
Brandon University
Brandon, MB

Robert Annis, Director
RDI, Brandon University
Brandon, MB

The role of the RDI Advisory Committee is to provide general advice and direction to the Institute on matters of rural concern. On a semi-annual basis the Committee meets to share information about issues of mutual interest in rural Manitoba and foster linkages with the constituencies they represent.