



RURAL
DEVELOPMENT
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Rural Immigration Welcoming, Settling and Retaining

Prepared by Marian Beattie

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Housing and Neighbourhoods.....	4
Service Provision	6
Culture and Diversity	7
Education and Employment.....	8
Indicators of a Welcoming Community.....	10

Introduction

As many rural, northern, and rural regional centres of Canada are exploring immigration as an option to address local challenges and opportunities such as labour shortages and re-population strategies, the need for welcoming community strategies is pivotal for building competitive regions. Unfortunately, the majority of communities in Canada do not have the partnerships nor the capacities to develop multi-sector partnerships to effectively discuss, design, and implement welcoming community strategies.

The Rural Development Institute of Brandon University has recently explored the impact of temporary foreign workers on the demographics of Brandon and has considered the community's ability to absorb and support newcomers. These foundational projects provided the impetus for the development of dialogue groups and networks that resulted in the gathering of information on what constitutes a welcoming community. The Rural Development Institute commenced a community development, participatory action research project entitled *Building Welcoming Communities: A Multi-sectoral Regional Collaborative Approach to Rural Immigration 2009-2010* in November 2009. This new project, funded by the Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, will drill deeper into the rural areas of western Manitoba as rural communities too are experiencing an influx of immigrants. Communities across southwestern Manitoba are beginning the process of inviting, settling and retaining immigrants. New collaborative groups are forming as a means of collective problem solving within this newer era of immigration.

A workshop was held in Brandon on November 16 2009 with approximately sixty participants representing local, provincial and federal government departments, service providers, academic institutions, and business/industry. The objectives of this workshop were two-fold. Firstly it was to share results of a survey¹ of approximately four hundred Brandon community residents to identify characteristics of a welcoming community. This survey was conducted during the *Brandon Welcoming Communities 2009* project funded by the Rural Secretariat, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada which developed multi-sector partnerships among community leaders, community-based organizations, the three levels of government, and industry to discuss Brandon as a welcoming community. Themes from the survey included multicultural ideology, tolerance/prejudice, appropriate public services and attitudes towards immigration. Those interviewed were long-term Canadian residents who were born in Canada and had resided in Brandon for at least five years and newcomers to Canada who had resided in Brandon for less than five years. New Brandon residents included in the findings reported at the workshop were from Latin America (Mexico, Central/South America) and China. Survey results relating to housing and neighbourhoods, service provision, culture and diversity, and education and employment were presented.^{2,3}

¹ Annis, R.C., Ashton, W., Bucklaschuk, J., & Gibson, R. (2009). *Exploring Brandon as a welcoming community: Discussion document*. Brandon University, Brandon MB.

² Bucklaschuk, J. (Nov. 2009). *Welcoming communities & community collaboration efforts in Brandon*. Presented at Brandon as a Welcoming Community Forum. Brandon, MB.

³ Bucklaschuk, J. & Annis, R.C. (Nov. 2009). *Exploring Brandon as a welcoming community: Sharing survey results for discussion*. Presented at Brandon as a Welcoming Community Forum. Brandon, MB.

The second objective of the workshop was to generate discussion of welcoming community indicators. This objective yielded information that will inform the *Building Welcoming Communities: A Multi-sectoral Regional Collaborative Approach to Rural Immigration 2009-2010* project. Participants of the workshop self-selected to participate in discussion groups relating to the topics of housing and neighbourhoods, service provision, culture and diversity, and education and employment. Discussion questions included: What are the central concerns/challenges? What should be done to address concerns/challenges? and Where do we go from here and who needs to be involved? Each discussion group reported key points of their discussion back to all participants in a plenary session. Following the plenary session, each workshop participant was asked to complete a worksheet indicating what they thought the three most important indicators of a welcoming community were pertaining to welcoming, settling and retaining.

Housing and Neighbourhoods

What are the concerns/challenges?

Housing

The challenge is to create accessible and affordable housing. How do you find lots that are affordable? How do you build a home at an affordable price? We need entry level housing for immigrants when they first arrive. When they first arrive they are not in a position to buy a house. There are different cultural expectations for housing, for example, the Chinese immigrants have no problem with multiple people living in their homes; we need to recognize the differing cultural needs.

Discussion centred on accessible, adequate and affordable housing suitable for immigrants. A representative from Brandon City Police stated that he had found in his interviews that most immigrants want to own a home and a car. It was pointed out by several of the discussion group participants that housing has to be adequate, not substandard. Affordable housing is in downtown. It was noted that immigrants may have different wants/needs such as some may want houses with no basements, others may want multi-generational housing. It was suggested that maybe contractors could build structures more suited for immigrants. Not only is there limited housing in Brandon but also limited availability of apartments. The Argyle Courts are popular apartment living options.

Neighbourhoods

Perceptions of neighbourhoods need to be changed to reflect the reality. Maple Leaf Foods has placed temporary foreign workers throughout the city so there is not a concentrated number in any one neighbourhood. There is a perception of downtown as being lower end, however, it was noted that with immigrants purchasing houses in the downtown area, the area has improved, the lots are cleaned up and houses improved.

What is being done to create opportunities?

Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal, Habitat for Humanity and partnerships such as the Massey Building Project were cited as examples of housing opportunities in Brandon.

What should be done?

Housing

Relationships have to be created to bring pieces of the puzzle together. Organizations should work together creating new partnerships for issues that we never had before. Organizations such as Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, Seventh Street Access, Advisory Community Homelessness Committee, COMS stat (Brandon City Police) and Westman Community Futures need to work together to address these challenges.

There needs to be increased levels of funding from all levels of government. After 1980 when the federal government cut transfer payments, the number of homeless people started to grow. We need to develop new progressive homeowners funding models (financing) – who will develop it? STEP (Solution toward eliminating poverty) housing is in place through CMHC which is a second mortgage model.

There needs to be zoning by-laws that require all development to support integrated housing, low-income, affordable housing to eliminate the attitude of downtown core. There should be a percentage of all municipal, provincial or federal lands set aside to support integrated housing. More access to co-operative building where the equity co-ops are built, then residents takes ownership after which co-ops are dissolved. We need to make it more worthwhile for developers by having a tax incentive for the developers to develop affordable housing.

Neighbourhoods

What are happening in community centres? Are people using them? The days of volunteering to run community centres are gone and that leads to the loss of a neighbourhood. The City could take control of community centres, offering activities through their recreational department. This would create neighbourhoods where community events are happening. We need to create more opportunities for youth within their neighbourhoods. If free recreational opportunities for youth are created, there is less crime. There is where the city could offer assistance. Volunteers are a difficult to recruit to keep things running. Many families cannot afford organized activities. We need to maintain infrastructure such as the Keystone Pool and the Sportsplex and create water parks, beach volleyball, tennis courts, basketball at all community centres.

Where do we go from here?

All levels of government, not-for-profit organizations and business/industry need to be involved in assessing and responding to what is needed. The federal government is in charge of immigration – when they are approving immigration, there needs to be a mechanism for developing housing for these immigrants based on income levels. The federal government is responsible for immigration; they should be funding the housing for immigrants.

Service Provision

What are the concerns/challenges?

There are plenty of services but not enough people to carry them out; there is a need for more service people. There is understaffing of interpreter services in the health field. Westman Immigrant Services does not have services for temporary foreign workers (TFW). Newcomers move straight to work and aren't able to take advantage of its services. The TFWs are often overwhelmed in their first year and lack information regarding literacy and services available. The challenge is how to get the information to them. Language barriers become a reason to decline services (e.g. medical concerns). Literacy programs are under-utilized because people are at work. Brandon School Division has gone from declining school enrolment year after year to increasing school enrolment now for the past two years. Schools don't know their numbers until the children are there in the classroom.

What is being done to create opportunities?

Associations are starting to establish. Church groups often fill in the gaps and provide resources to immigrants. There is interpreter training being held in Brandon.

What should be done?

We need greater education for the public and we need to understand the cultural groups immigrating to Brandon as each immigrant group has differing backgrounds, expectations and needs. We need to bring immigrant services to places where the newcomers feel comfortable such as churches and the food bank. We need to provide many opportunities for language enrichment and involve the community-at-large. We need to use plain language in all communications.

We need a stand-alone organization for coordination of services – we need to figure out what we need to figure out because we don't even know what we don't know. Services need to be available at times other than day time Monday to Friday - after hours and Saturday, Sunday and holidays. There needs to be an immigrant services presence at Service Canada.

Interpretive and cultural facilitation services need to be increased. We need a 1-800-phone interpreter service for health services such as HealthLinks and a mechanism for the medical clinics to have interpretive services. There needs to be a mechanism to identify who is here: the school division needs to be able to plan for immigrant children, the regional health authority needs to plan interpretive services.

Where do we go from here?

Persons with authority such as police and government workers need to go to immigrant groups as an agency to ease issues/concerns around people of authority. We need to move to 24/7 interpretive services provision.

Culture and Diversity

What are the concerns/challenges?

There is perceived discrimination, for example – landlords have told Chinese/Latin Americans that they will not rent to them – one reason given was the smell from cooking. Also the different materials used in Canadian buildings can be problematic. For example in China there is extensive use of marble tiling in kitchens so that hot pots can be placed on the counters with no damage – however in Canadian kitchens we have countertops that burn and there have been incidents where damage has occurred. This is an education issue – the new immigrants just need to be given information ahead of time. The entry program does not provide immigrants such as TFW's information on Canadian culture.

What is being done to create opportunities?

English for Trades course at is being offered at Assiniboine Community College. Churches in Brandon are an excellent resource and some 'work' is already being done by the churches, however the churches can also be problematic as 'outreach' organizations for non Christian newcomers. A Chinese Alliance Church has recently opened.

What should be done?

We need to move from 'multiculturalism' to 'interculturalism' as is the approach being adopted on a growing basis in Europe. We need to promote information sharing through intercultural bridges. We need to provide intercultural trainers to provide support to the community and trainers: a "Manitoba Diversity and International Training program". In many cases men come to Brandon and then their families follow. There should be support specifically for newcomer women. We need a central place through which resources and information can be provided. We need to tap into our senior's network. We need business advice available for newcomers.

Where do we want to go from here?

We need to expanded use of schools, libraries and community centres for cultural activities. Governments need to provide funding support for "interculturalism" processes and activities.

Education and Employment

What are the concerns/challenges?

Although information is available through government sites, it is difficult to access. There is lots of misinformation – someone receives information related to their circumstance and then shares it with others whom it may not apply to. The onus is often on the individual to find information but they need to be directed where to go. Sometimes newcomers hide information, thinking they are protecting themselves. Information may include professional or technical training or they may have indicated they have fewer children on their original application for entry.

Education

Learning English is the first need. However, if an immigrant gets a job, learning English falls to the background. It is a cycle - he/she needs a job but he/she needs the language skills to advance within the job. It is the same problem for skilled or professional workers – they need more than rudimentary English in order to upgrade. The same can be said for spouses arriving with expectations of jobs in manufacturing - they need to learn English before they are employable.

There are currently one hundred people on the waiting list to get into the English classes at Westman Immigration Services. People have lost jobs due to the slowdown in the economy so they are more available for English classes now. However, there are not enough trained teachers and there is a lack of space for training.

Immigrants come from different systems of education – differing perspectives and expectations. The Canadian norm is that we want everyone to graduate – this may not be the norm with other cultures – some leave early to get a job, some have really high educational expectations, creating of conflict with our norm.

We teach English as an Alternate Language to the children in schools and then send them into the mainstream school population – classroom teachers have no preparation for children whose first language is not English.

Employment

Economic pressure makes it so that most families cannot afford to live on one income. Some professionals need upgrading to achieve their professional status. Costs are involved and they have to go to Winnipeg for the upgrading. Canadian workplaces need to work more as a team – employer and employee. The newcomers need some help with the “work culture” - e.g. water cooler talk.

What is being done to create opportunities?

Westman Immigration Services acts as somewhat of a clearing house for information; they assist newcomers with filling out applications, provide them with information about their rights and responsibilities and provide referral services. Westman Immigration Services also offers “Ready for Work” orientation courses for spouses who are waiting to get jobs.

Assiniboine Community College offers the Teaching English as Second Language (TESL) training and targeted English as Alternative Languages (EAL) classes for technical and professionals. Fact sheets are available at www.immigratemanitoba.com for how to achieve licensing in a professional or regulated body (look under work in Manitoba, list of professions). The Province will reimburse for some of the TESL training if the person teaches EAL enough.

Assiniboine Community Collage is currently working with Westoba Credit Union to develop English language ability for bank tellers – this project ends with a practical component in the workplace.

Maple Leaf Foods offers some EAL classes but it is hard to get funding for them. International students have access to English for academic purposes at Brandon University, but the courses are costly. E-learning is available for the learner who is a good at self learning and is available through Service Canada. The learner is paired up with a tutor. Learner must have at least level 5 language skills to function in an e-learning environment.

What should be done?

It was suggested that Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives (MAFRI) be a starting point for information – perhaps via website and then face-to-face? Citizen and Immigration Canada is piloting Newcomer Information Centres in Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan. These centres provide a case worker for the newcomer and face-to-face assistance. The newcomer can come back as their needs change. The service is holistic in that it considers the whole family's needs and not just the applicant.

Could the worksites provide mentors to help newcomers adapt to the work culture experience? We are doing more and more to work with the newcomer – perhaps we need to work with the employer?

It would be appropriate for classroom teachers to take the TESL course but it is costly. It would be good if the cost could be offset by some funding. Perhaps retired teachers and other retired professionals could be financially reimbursed and encouraged to take the TESL training and teach language classes.

We need to help people invest in self-learning and support building the skills for independent learning. We need to provide create solutions such as videoconferencing for the upgrading for the professionals to eliminate the need to travel to Winnipeg. Perhaps Assiniboine Community College could provide language classes to smaller communities through videoconferencing.

Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) should be created so people can be directed appropriately for licensing, registration, upgrading and retraining Perhaps Assiniboine Community College and Brandon University could offer credential upgrading.

There are economic pressures for the immigrant women to work as well. There needs to be improved access to child daycare so spouses can participate in English classes, upgrading and employment.

Where do we go from here?

We need to network to bring people together to work on the issues. Employers, professional regulatory associations, educational institutions, governments, service providers and the immigrants need a structure and process for dialogue and solution seeking. The Welcoming Communities Dialogue Group, facilitated by the Rural Development Institute, is an example of a means for dialogue and discussion of the multiple stakeholders.

Indicators of a Welcoming Community

Twenty-nine participants completed a worksheet on indicators of a welcoming community. Those completing the worksheet represented local government (1), provincial government (4), federal government (5), business/industry (2), service providers (8), university (1) and other, which included representatives from Brandon University nursing students, Brandon Regional Health Authority, community development, non-profit and personal interest (8).

Seven participants indicated their knowledge of the challenges of building welcoming communities was at the beginner level, seventeen participants indicated they were at the intermediate level, four participants indicated they were at the advanced level and one participant declared his/herself an expert.

When asked to indicate their knowledge of the challenges of building rural welcoming communities, twelve indicated they were at the beginner level, fourteen indicated there were at the intermediate level and two indicated they were at the advanced level.

Each of the twenty-nine participants described the three most important indicators of a welcoming community and then placed a checkmark under the aspects of welcoming communities where they considered the indicator applied. Some checked more than one aspect. The aspects were welcoming (some awareness), settling (some experience) and retaining (experience). The participants were also asked to state a measure for the indicator. Not all participants stated measures.

The following table is an amalgamation of the indicators for each aspect according the priorities indicated by the participants. There is no particular order in the way they are listed.

Indicators of a Welcoming Community

Welcome			Retain			Settle		
#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3
Service providers-resources available in the appropriate language groups.	Ability/ease of securing accommodation	Immigration newcomer information centre-set out resources and give direction immediately after moving to the community.	Immigrant services address immigrant needs	Increase in ELA classes for immigrants.	General treatment of newcomers and families once in the community (by ? and general public)	Service providers-resources available in the appropriate language groups.	Increase in ELA classes for immigrants.	Timely services for TFWs (not waiting 6 mths)
Service availability (NIC, cultural facilitators, healthcare, employment)	Formalized associations	Availability of ELA teachers and classes	Home ownership	Interculturalism	Business	Immigrant services address immigrant needs	Coordinated services and clear links to main stream services	General treatment of newcomers and families once in the community (by ? and general public)
Immigrant services address immigrant needs	Community support (increased daycare)	Timely services for TFWs (not waiting 6 mths)	Connections to community for families	Coordinated services and clear links to main stream services	Affordable and accessible housing	Home ownership	Ability/ease of securing accommodation	Affordable and accessible housing
The hiring of newcomers (TFW) (permanent) residents employment opps for their spouses	Interaction with locals and other newcomers/cultures	Centralized space for <u>any</u> newcomer to Brandon	Strong diverse networks	Formalized associations	Employment for immigrants (labour ? interesting)	Affordable housing	Employment commensurate with education and background.	Available transportation
Available language/translation services	Cultural awareness	Open institutions	Economic opportunity	Community support (increased daycare)	Employment opportunities-employer engagement	Neighbourhood receptivity	Interaction with locals and other newcomers/cultures	Open institutions
Access to services (transportation, ?, credential recognition)	Social barriers - Welcome into Canadian society	Recreational facilities	Break down economic barriers - services available and low cost	Sufficient meeting spaces	To ensure Bdn is a community suitable to raise a family	Access to services (transportation, ?, credential recognition)	Safety and security	Recreational facilities
Available/suitable housing	Availability of services/in representative languages	Cultural barriers - Long term Brandon accept cultural diversity	Have culture diversity awareness	Political involvement	Recreational facilities	Strong diverse networks	Education, ELA and ? for service providers	Cultural barriers - Long term Brandon accept cultural diversity

Welcome			Retain			Settle		
#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3
Economic opportunity	Welcoming communities-volunteer	Housing	Immigration retention	Interaction with locals and other newcomers/cultures	Cultural barriers - Long term Brandon accept cultural diversity	Break down economic barriers - services available and low cost	Cultural awareness	Have enough employment opportunities
Break down economic barriers - services available and low cost	Diverse and enriched cultural activities	Educational resources	Low income housing-safe	Safety and security	Available/affordable housing	Low income housing-safe	Social barriers - Welcome into Canadian society	Available/affordable housing
Low income housing-safe	Ability to secure accommodation	More housing	Retention of newcomers	Social barriers - Welcome into Canadian society	Language training	Language services	Have enough housing to choose	Language training
Language services	Connections are made	Changes in service provision	Adequate affordable accessible housing	Welcoming communities-volunteer	Housing	Access to services (knowing where to go and having in own language)	Availability of services/in representative languages	Housing
Networks exist that provide information to allow for successful integration	Ability/ease of securing accommodation	Immigration newcomer information centre-set out resources and give direction immediately after moving to the community.	More immigrants in workplaces	Community involvement in retention of (ability/building capacity to retain) newcomers	Enough affordable housing	Adequate affordable accessible housing	Welcoming communities-volunteer	People of all groups are working in their chosen profession
Access to services (knowing where to go and having in own language)	Formalized associations	Availability of ELA teachers and classes		Sharing of cultures	Small business development	More immigrants in workplaces	Community involvement in retention of (ability/building capacity to retain) newcomers	Educational resources
Volunteers interested in working with immigrants	Community support (increased daycare)	Timely services for TFWs (not waiting 6 mths)		Ability to secure accommodation	People of all groups are working in their chosen profession	Service providers-resources available in the appropriate language groups.	Reduced language barriers	Changes in service provision

Welcome			Retain			Settle		
#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3
Compassionate service	Interaction with locals and other newcomers/cultures			Immigrants purchasing a home	Immigrants wanting to become Canadian citizens	Immigrant services address immigrant needs	Ethnic diversity	Timely services for TFWs (not waiting 6 mths)
Educating community	Cultural awareness			Business being started by immigrants	Accessible family recreation	Home ownership	Ability to secure accommodation	General treatment of newcomers and families once in the community (by ? and general public)
Service providers-resources available in the appropriate language groups.				Connections are made	Feedback and evaluation of services	Affordable housing	Immigrants purchasing a home	Affordable and accessible housing
Service availability (NIC, cultural facilitators, healthcare, employment)				Increase in ELA classes for immigrants.	Changes in service provision		Effective communication of services available to immigrants	Available transportation
Immigrant services address immigrant needs				Interculturalism	General treatment of newcomers and families once in the community (by ? and general public)		Creation of settlement services	Open institutions
The hiring of newcomers (TFW) (permanent) residents employment opps for their spouses				Coordinated services and clear links to main stream services	Business		Business being started by immigrants	Recreational facilities
Available language/translation services				Formalized associations	Affordable and accessible housing		Connections are made	
Access to services (transportation, ?, credential recognition)				Community support (increased daycare)	Employment for immigrants (labour ? interesting)		Increase in ELA classes for immigrants.	

	Welcome			Retain			Settle		
	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3
Available/suitable housing				Sufficient meeting spaces	Employment opportunities- employer engagement			Coordinated services and clear links to main stream services	
Economic opportunity				Political involvement	To ensure Bdn is a community suitable to raise a family			Ability/ease of securing accommodation	
Break down economic barriers - services available and low cost				Interaction with locals and other newcomers/cultures	Recreational facilities			Employment commensurate with education and background.	
Low income housing- safe				Safety and security	Cultural barriers - Long term Brandon accept cultural diversity			Interaction with locals and other newcomers/cultures	
Language services				Social barriers - Welcome into Canadian society	Available/affordable housing			Safety and security	
Networks exist that provide information to allow for successful integration				Welcoming communities- volunteer				Education, ELA and ? for service providers	
Access to services (knowing where to go and having in own language)				Community involvement in retention of (ability/building capacity to retain) newcomers				Cultural awareness	
Volunteers interested in working with immigrants				Sharing of cultures				Social barriers - Welcome into Canadian society	
Compassionate service				Ability to secure accommodation				Have enough housing to choose	

	Welcome			Retain			Settle		
#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	
				Immigrants purchasing a home			Availability of services/in representative languages		
				Business being started by immigrants			Welcoming communities-volunteer		
							Community involvement in retention of (ability/building capacity to retain) newcomers		
							Reduced language barriers		
							Ethnic diversity		
							Ability to secure accommodation		
							Immigrants purchasing a home		
							Effective communication of services available to immigrants		
							Creation of settlement services		
							Business being started by immigrants		
							Connections are made		
							Increase in ELA classes for immigrants.		

	Welcome			Retain			Settle		
#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	#1	#2	#3	
							Coordinated services and clear links to main stream services		

