

The Changing Face of Kelowna

Best Practices for Creating a Welcoming Community

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Executive Summary

With “The Changing Face of Kelowna,” ISCO and its partners set the dual goals of creating a vision of a welcoming community for immigrants, and facilitating participation and support of that vision by diverse community groups. A welcoming community is based on an inclusive vision and willingness to change. Such a community recognizes that:

- growth and change are inevitable;
- meeting the needs of newcomers aids them to make a full contribution to the town;
- diversity is a source of strength and resilience;
- the needs of all groups can be progressively met if a city becomes more welcoming.

Best practices for welcoming communities include:

- A welcoming population that wants the newcomers
- Responsibility and commitment at the local level to meeting the needs of newcomers
- Strategic partnerships that bring together diverse groups and coordinate information and actions
- Widely-available language training and a welcoming linguistic environment
- Facilitating employment and creating welcoming environments for workers and clients
- Support for housing (appropriate and affordable) and transportation options
- Political support for the idea of immigration, publicity about the value of immigration, and integration of immigrants into the political and social life of the community
- A holistic approach that integrates the multiple elements of society and multiple aspects of immigrant services and service providers into a supportive network
- A long-term vision of community integration which drives transformational changes in service provision, social relations and community dynamics

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Best Practices for Creating a Welcoming Community

A. Introduction

With this project, “The Changing Face of Kelowna,” ISCO and its partners set the dual goals of creating a vision of a welcoming community for immigrants, and facilitating participation and support of that vision by diverse community groups. Regionalization of immigration in B.C. was formalized in the 2004 *Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-Operation on Immigration* (CIC), but the process has been going on for longer than that. Regionalization, and the multiple stages of immigrant attraction, retention and integration, continue to challenge cities across Canada.

B. What is a Welcoming Community?

Creating a welcoming community is a new focus of work on immigration success (Metropolis Halifax, 2008). Rather than emphasizing solely the responsibilities of immigrants – to meet requirements for immigration, then to do their best to adapt to a new country – the focus on “welcoming communities” brings in the reciprocal responsibilities of the receiving communities to facilitate the transition to life in Canada. A welcoming community “has a strong desire to receive newcomers and to create an environment in which they will feel at home” (National Working Group, 2007, p.65). When those anticipated newcomers arrive, a welcoming community then helps them meet their needs as well as draws on their capacities to enrich their new community.

Many services and supports are needed for a community to be welcoming. These range from practical services such as language training and help finding housing; through employment services which facilitate recognition of credentials, links into the hidden job markets and encouraging employers to hire from afar; and the way individuals interact with the new

immigrants on a daily basis, either welcoming them or treating them as unwelcome guests. The ways in which a community works to provide these services affects the degree to which immigrants can become assimilated into their community, and ultimately, affects the prosperity of the community as those immigrants contribute to its development.

It is hard to separate the concept of a welcoming community from the broader vision of provision of the services needed to facilitate the integration and full participation of immigrants in their new city, as residents and citizens. A half-hearted “welcome” that does not, first, recognize them as full citizens, according them respect, anticipating their contributions, and welcoming them as partners in the growth of the community; and second, provide the services needed to assist them in adjusting to a new society, will always contain that element of holding back that impedes the full interconnection and resultant community growth that could be possible.

Thus, a welcoming community needs to begin with the long-term vision of how these newcomers will become valued and equal participants in the progressive development of the city. Such a vision is based on respect for the newcomers as persons with skills, abilities and strengths that they will contribute, and as carrying new and valued perspectives and insights. These will, of necessity, challenge some existing beliefs and practices. However, their inclusion in the process of community growth will ultimately aid in creating a more dynamic region than would be possible otherwise. Immigration does not threaten the culture and identity of a region (“Minority accommodation,” 2008) but adds richness to it. It is through the interfacing of diverse cultures and ideas that innovation arises. Diversity provides a fertile ground of resources which increases the resilience and adaptability of a community. Taking a broader perspective opens a community to gaining and learning from the newcomers, and welcoming them with open arms.

Another important aspect of welcoming communities is the question of who is doing the welcoming (T. Wideman, personal communication, June 11, 2008). With a focus on immigration can come reduced attention to the historic inhabitants of this land. To take the broader perspective described above requires acknowledging the Aboriginal community in the area, including them in welcoming the newcomers, and simultaneously working with them to make the community welcoming to the Aboriginal residents of the city.

In considering what a welcoming community is, it is important that the well-being of the receiving community also be considered as part of a holistic conception of “community.” Sylvie Martens, a manager with Canadian Heritage, said that “in providing services to Canadians, we ought to consider the risks but also the opportunities as well as the benefits of an all encompassing society” (Personal communication, June 24, 2008). We need to consider the well-being of all residents of a city as we continue to evolve. In addition, it is helpful to recognize not only how the city can welcome newcomers, but how they will benefit from the enrichment of diversity, skills, experiences, culture and many other attributes brought by the newcomers. Finally, it can be helpful to remember that taking this broad vision of a welcoming community can progressively create a place that is more welcoming for all residents, including long-term residents. As a community begins to address the needs of newcomers, it may become more attuned to special needs of existing residents, such as accessibility for those with disabilities (see *Measuring Up*, n.d.), safe play areas for children, social gathering sites for youth, and support networks for single parents. A vision of inclusion can ultimately create a place where all can feel welcomed, at ease and at home.

C. Methods

To develop a summary of best practices for welcoming communities, I used a variety of sources:

- At the Metropolis conference held at UBC Okanagan I gathered materials from BC agencies represented there, learned the names of exemplar programs to look into, and gathered copies of some academic research papers.
- I talked with key representatives at Multiculturalism BC to learn which communities to study for their practices of welcoming and anti-racist communities.
- I followed up on recommendations of resources and contacts provided by the Advisory Committee.

The data gathered were of four major types:

1) Government documents and policy pieces. These described plans, programs and policies for welcoming communities. Many of these are based on knowledge gained from past experiences, but a majority is theoretical guidelines rather than lived recommendations.

- *Attracting & Retaining Immigrants: A Tool Box of Ideas for Smaller Centres* from the National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies.
- *Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program Logic Model* from Welcome BC.
- Folder of materials *Immigration BC* from the Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch.
- Reasonable Accommodations, the Quebec report on immigration. There were three articles addressing this report.
- Canada-BC Agreement on Immigration Cooperation (2004).

2) Programs for creating open, inclusive, welcoming communities. Many of these were government funded.

- Measuring Up
- Safe Harbour
- BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network

3) Research articles, case studies and experienced leaders.

- Akbari & Sun; Chung, 2008; Dunk; Lai, 1998; Roy, 1990; Simard; Walton-Roberts, 2006, 2007.
- City of Red Deer (2007): their study explored how prepared two key institutions (the City and the College) felt to provide services to newcomers.
- Metropolis conferences in Halifax and at UBC Okanagan.
- Teaching and Learning Conference at UBC Okanagan.
- ISCO's Changing Face of Kelowna interviews and focus groups.

4) Community policies on being a welcoming and safe community.

- City of Red Deer (2007): based on research, this community policy piece describes what they will do next to become more welcoming and inclusive.
- Critical Incident Response Models from Abbotsford, Nanaimo and Terrace, B.C.
- Central Alberta Economic Partnership.

After gathering the information from these sources and tracking down the appropriate agencies, websites and contact people, I analyzed the policies and practices to identify those which were cited as significant in contributing towards a welcoming community, and those that were seen as barriers. I organized these into similar categories and compared them with the findings emerging from the interview and focus group data. The final set of categories for barriers and best practices for welcoming communities is found in sections D and E.

D. Barriers to Welcoming Communities

Some specific barriers to the creation of welcoming communities have been identified by researchers.

External Barriers: Outside the scope of the community

1. Responsibility burden on local communities. The downloading of responsibilities from the provincial level to municipalities without the equal provision of funding makes it hard to meet the many needs of immigrants as well as residents (Walton-Roberts, 2006). The result is inadequate integration into the local community, with the resultant implications of greater stress, conflict and burden on the local community.
2. Limited services to temporary visitors. Agencies are rarely given funding for services to those on temporary visas (e.g., students, temporary workers). Communities take their money for tuition and services, but do not help them adequately to acclimate (Metropolis B.C., 2008).
3. Accreditation and job access. Accreditation is one of two key needs of new immigrants (Walton-Roberts, 2006). Many newcomers are not employed to their full potential, leaving both them and their surrounding communities at a disadvantage. Inadequate attention to credentialing is a major barrier to successful integration and retention. While immigrants are given points towards their immigration for being professionals, they are not told how difficult this process will be and are often frustrated once they arrive here.

Work is being done towards facilitating credentialing of foreign professionals at both the provincial and federal levels. The BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network (BCITP) was group of internationally trained professionals, working through a government funded partnership, who worked together to address these accreditation employment barriers for newcomers. Credentialing agencies exist, often connected with major professions (medicine, architecture, engineering, nursing, etc.) but their

processes are extremely time-consuming and expensive. A better connection needs to be made between Citizenship and Immigration Canada and these credentialing agencies to speed and streamline these processes.

4. Housing. Housing shortages, cost and suitability are all barriers to successful settlement. There is no link between immigration policy and housing policy, and thus, no effective form of federal or provincial support for meeting the housing needs of immigrants. In terms of funding, groups could apply for funding for immigrants through some B.C. Housing grants as vulnerable populations since immigrants, guest workers and foreign students are not specifically listed as groups to be considered in housing allocation (P. Chau, Metropolis B.C., 2008).

Internal Barriers: Within the scope of the community

1. Immigrant Deficit model: The existing models for working with immigrants do not recognize them as active contributors to the community. Instead, they are seen as a series of needs to be met by local communities (Walton-Roberts, 2007). The resulting perspective is negative (immigrants seen as a burden rather than a resource); disempowering (immigrants are treated as incapable rather than capable of meaningful contributions); and divisive (immigrants are not treated as full people and equal members of society, but as a separate group who are serviced by agencies).
2. Language training. Language training is the second key need of new immigrants (Walton-Roberts, 2006). While funding is provided by the province for the main ESL programs for immigrants (in BC, the ELSA program through the Ministry of Attorney General, Settlement and Multiculturalism Division), there is a lot that communities can do to promote ESL access. Conversation groups, buddy systems, volunteer classes, employer or community financial support for fee-based ESL programs are all options.

3. The expense and shortage of housing in Kelowna is a problem (Metropolis B.C., 2008). In terms of housing style, issues such as secondary suites, desire for different home styles, and the need for homes with more bedrooms have all been cited as areas that require flexibility and support from municipalities (Metropolis B.C., 2008).

As these specific barriers are replaced with positive strategies, a welcoming community can be created.

E. Programs Relevant to Kelowna

The following table lists some programs and strategies that create a welcoming community. Most of these exist in Kelowna or nearby cities. Others are government funded programs that do not current operate in Kelowna, or require travel to access. Many of these are funded by the provincial government, some through educational institutions, while others can be developed independently by community groups and interested individuals.

Education Sector Programs	Business/ Employment Programs	Agency Services	Other Activities (multiple partners)
Youth Ambassador Program: provide education in schools (KCR)	Safe Harbour: training for businesses on creating welcome, safe environments (funded by Min. of Attorney General)	Settlement services: referrals for needs (KCR – Min. of Attorney General)	Dialogues on multiculturalism sponsored in Vernon & Kamloops
Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS): program expanding to two school districts in the area, including School District 23.	BC Skills Connect for Immigrants: bridging program to match immigrants to jobs; focus on areas with skill shortages (Min. of Economic Dev't)	Culturally Welcoming Volunteer Program: encouraging newcomers to volunteer (KCR)	Taste of Home: sharing food and culture of the different groups in the city (KCR & ISCO)
Research on immigration, diversity, racism, cross-cultural relations and other relevant topics.	International Qualifications Program: address gaps in credential and skill recognition (Min. of Economic Dev't)	Interpretation services (KCR has 37 languages and over 200 interpreters. E. MacLeod, personal communication, June 30, 2008)	Mosaic 150 grant: documenting life of early Chinese settlers (ISCO/ KCR)
Creation and distribution of	Provincial Nominee Program, Strategic	Critical Incident Response Model - CIRM	Changing Face of Kelowna grant: assess

curricula and training materials.	Occupations Stream: accelerated immigration for skilled workers (skilled workers, health professionals & international graduates) & entrepreneurs (Min. of Economic Dev't)	(CIRM) at KCR: 3-step community response to racism and hate activity. Being developed in Kelowna (Min. of Attorney General)	level of cultural awareness and willingness to accept diversity here (ISCO – Heritage Canada)
ESL: provided by public schools (free for immigrants; fee-based for international students); public and private college; and agencies	Business counseling and investment advice: services available in multiple languages for those interested in working here through the provincial government.	ESL at Kelowna Immigrant Services (KIS) ELSA at the Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society (Min. of Attorney General)	Community fora, presentations, workshops, trainings & conferences on diversity, immigration, multiculturalism.
	Return to Nursing Fund: training for non-practicing international and Canadian nurses to return to work (Min. of Health)	Bridging program: match newcomers with a host family or a buddy (KCR – Min. of Attorney General)	
		Welcoming and Inclusive Communities (T. Wideman, June 11, 2008: program is under development now)	

Other groups can provide leadership in support of integration of newcomers: MPs and MLAs, City Council and Mayor, media, religious groups and individuals of prominence.

F. Best Practices for Welcoming Communities

The following best practices draw on insights gleaned from all the resources cited above and in the reference list. Because so many of the elements were found in multiple programs, this section presents a synthesis of these practices rather than a break-down of each program.

Where appropriate, particular examples are cited.

1. A Welcoming Population

The foundation of a welcoming community is a welcoming population. Attitudes of city residents towards newcomers give rise to policies and behaviors that welcome or reject. As well, positive and negative encounters with individuals affect whether a newcomer

experiences a city as welcoming or otherwise. As was emphasized at the Metropolis conference at UBCO, a welcoming community is “the sum of all the newcomer’s experiences,” including their daily encounters with the residents of their new city (B. Downie, Metropolis B.C., 2008).

Roy’s (1990) historical study compares the differing reactions of Kaslo and Kelowna to Japanese residents during WWII. Kaslo’s residents, overall, had an expectation that the immigrants were good people who would add to the town even if they changed things. Kelowna, on the other hand, experienced active protests and negative media coverage of the potential newcomers. Positive attribution of the immigrants, a desire to welcome them, a recognition of the benefits to the town from their residence there: these all created a climate where the forcibly resettled Japanese could be respected, appreciated and integrated into community life.

Educating for a welcoming climate.

If exclusionary or prejudicial attitudes exist in the city, there are many things that can be done to shift those views. Educational and training possibilities include:

- Making active efforts to bring people on board to create a welcoming community (M. Chung Yan, Metropolis B.C., 2008).
- A welcoming, diversity or anti-racism committee, which both welcomes newcomers and works with the public to dispel myths about immigration, replacing prejudice with positive information and connections with newcomers (National Working Group, 2007).
- Educating the public about value of immigration (B. Downie, Metropolis B.C., 2008).
- Informing people about the existing diversity within the city (B. Downie, Metropolis B.C., 2008).

- Public and curricular education on diversity. This should teach about diversity and communicating with limited English speakers, and provide experiential learning about interacting with diverse cultures. Such education can teach while also celebrating (ISCO focus groups, 2008; Lai, 1998).
- Programs for businesses and service providers on working with diversity and cross-cultural sensitivity, such as the Safe Harbour program (Lai, 1998; National Working Group, 2007; Safe Harbour, 2008) or diversity training for local businesses (ISCO interviews, 2008).
- Helping local service organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, Lions Club) to invite diverse speakers to share about their culture and experiences, both internationally and locally (National Working Group, 2007).
- More training and research at the university and college to address the problems of racism (ISCO interviews, 2008).
- More university and college programs for faculty and students –international, visible minority and mainstream – on diversity, difference, racism and intercultural communication (ISCO interviews, 2008).

Leisure activities.

Elements which celebrate diversity and provide social and leisure opportunities for newcomers are vital. Possibilities include:

- Groups or individuals who reach out, welcome and befriend newcomers (National Working Group, 2007).
- Programs, activities, arts and sports events that are publicized, accessible and affordable (National Working Group, 2007).
- Public celebrations of diversity, culture, arts and athletics which highlight the contributions of the diverse inhabitants of the town, and bring together newcomers with

long-time residents. Continue with programs such as Parks Alive, Canada Day, Harmony Day and Global Citizen Week (ISCO interviews, 2008).

Welcoming and orientation.

The first moments and weeks of arrival in a new city can be particularly demanding, emotionally, financially and socially. Best practices to ease this transition include:

- Greeting new arrivals at their point of arrival in the city. This can be done by connecting with agencies that funnel newcomers into the city (National Working Group, 2007).
- Arranging complimentary or inexpensive housing for the first period until the newcomers can find accommodation. Hotel costs in the first month can significantly deplete a newcomer's savings (National Working Group, 2007).
- Welcome package that includes diverse information about the city: transportation, safety concerns, employment support, interpreters, shopping, places of worship, and much more (National Working Group, 2007).
- Systematic distribution of such a welcome package to newcomers, both prior to their arrival and after they are here. This should be accompanied by personal connections that can explain the information and assist with finding out things which are not addressed (National Working Group, 2007).
- Partnering programs to connect with those newcomers who are interested through their first months after arrival.

Many cities have found that a central coordinating agency can get information about these multiple resources to those who need it. Such a central agency should be staffed with multilingual workers and volunteers, and be well-advertised so that newcomers as well as the general public know where to go and where to refer people. This agency should be able to assist with essential needs, and provide referrals for all other essential services.

In providing support and services, the needs of town residents need to be acknowledged as well. Making some of these services available to them can help avoid possible backlash if these welcome services are perceived as preferential treatment.

Protecting newcomers' rights.

In addition to education and celebration of diversity, a welcoming community needs to set up policy and legal principles that will provide recourse in those cases where discrimination occurs (National Working Group, 2007). This includes:

- Education for government officials, those in businesses, agencies and schools, the general public, and newcomers, about the laws and legislation (from the international through the local level) that prohibit discrimination, and the steps to be taken in cases of discrimination, racism or hate crimes.
- Institute and publicize policies on fair hiring, firing and employment conditions in local businesses, the municipality and the regional district.
- Institute and publicize policies in schools to address discrimination in teaching and bias in curricular materials.
- Develop city by-laws and policies which prohibit discriminatory treatment in public areas and recreational activities.
- The Critical Incident Response Model (CIRM: see Terrace, Nanaimo and Abbotsford for examples) provides detailed protocols for how cities can respond to significant incidents of discrimination or hate crimes. Such protocols allow the community to mobilize and respond rapidly, helping the victim and following through to address the situation and its repercussions.

While the educational component moves the city towards progressively more welcoming attitudes, laws and policies provide protection in those cases where individuals have not yet fully embraced diversity.

A reciprocal aspect of welcoming communities is the responsibility of newcomers to share – to be open to getting to know Canadians, share their culture and perspectives with Canadians, and be willing to learn about Canadian culture. This two-way street, if both sides are working to learn and share, creates a positive and welcoming dynamic in the community (Changing Faces interviews, 2008).

2. Local-level Responsibility and Commitment

Take on responsibility.

Cities are as responsible for the success of immigration as immigrants (J. McRae, Metropolis B.C., 2008). The BC Immigration Agreement (2004) on immigration incorporates the realization that regionalization cannot be imposed; to be successful, it has to come from communities (M. Walton-Roberts, Metropolis B.C., 2008). Immigrants can integrate better in smaller centres than in big cities, but only if we can welcome them appropriately (T. Carter, Metropolis B.C., 2008). Blaming immigrants for a lack of success implies an immigrant deficit model (M. Walton-Roberts, Metropolis B.C., 2008), rather than considering our municipal-level responsibility to identify and dismantle barriers to success.

Supportive infrastructure.

The two main reasons immigrants choose what community to settle in are family and community infrastructure (G. Eston, Metropolis B.C., 2008). Thus, building up appropriate, supportive infrastructure is a key way to attract and retain new immigrants. One aspect is finding more resources over time to support immigrants, such as with advocacy, awareness of rights, and other issues (J. Drolet, Metropolis B.C., 2008). Such funding can be available from the provincial or federal government. In other cases, municipal money can be reallocated to

meet priority needs. Businesses and fundraising efforts may also provide the funds to build up necessary infrastructure.

Some aspects of this infrastructure that has been found in useful communities include:

- Daycares with culturally appropriate and affordable care.
- Programs for seniors.
- Prenatal and parenting classes and activities.
- Information about public safety and connections with police officers to increase feelings of security in the community.
- Resources through the public libraries.

Leadership.

An important aspect of commitment is leadership. The community needs individuals who will adopt the cause of promoting immigration and integration, inspiring others to work with them. This leadership can proactively recognize the need of the community for immigrants and work to make it happen (National Working Group, 2007). Ways of expressing this leadership include:

- Vocal support of immigration by community leaders.
- Promoting your city as welcoming and inclusive (National Working Group, 2007).
- Regular, informational and positive reports in the media about the benefits and realities of immigration and how the city is changing.

3. Strategic Partnerships: Coordinate and Collaborate with Diverse Groups

Involve diverse groups.

Building strategic partnerships among diverse groups is a key to becoming a welcoming community. The first element is involving a wide variety of agencies, community organizations and individuals. These can include the range of service agencies that work with immigrants; educational institutions from public schools through higher education and skills providers; religious organizations; business groups; research centres; and committed individuals and neighbourhoods who want their area to be welcoming. This diversity is needed because immigrants will interface with all aspects of their new community. Each sector needs to prepare itself to meet these new needs and be open to adapting to the newcomers. In addition, involving diverse groups promotes buy-in to the concept of immigration by those associated with the groups, thus helping shift attitudes in the community. Finally, the greater and more diverse the resources marshaled in support of the newcomers, the greater the likelihood of successful retention and integration.

Involving people who have themselves been immigrants is vital to building an effective partnership. They will understand the unique barriers of immigrants and have valuable insights into how to facilitate their welcome in the community.

Some key agencies that have been involved in successfully welcoming communities include:

- Immigrant serving agencies
- Public transportation bodies
- Aboriginal organizations
- Law enforcement agencies
- Media: print, radio, television

- Schools and learning institutions
- Businesses
- Community organizations
- Disability and access organizations
- Faith communities
- Government (municipal, regional, provincial)
- Culture, sports, parks and recreational organizations
- Libraries

Coordination.

The next stage is coordinating services among the different groups. Building a team is essential: a team that can spearhead activities, and also coordinate and liaise with the diverse groups involved. Agencies can also share information with each other and tap into the resources of other groups to meet their clients' needs (ISCO interviews, 2008).

For example, the Waterloo Region held an Immigrant Skills Summit in 2005. A broad collection of stakeholders and groups worked towards "a comprehensive set of action plans to attract and retain immigrants." They created the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) which includes "immigrant service providers, public and private sector employers, community-based organizations, governments and educational institutions" (Walton-Roberts, 2007).

4. Language Training and Support

Language training has been cited as one of the two key needs of newcomers, along with employment opportunities. Language training is usually offered through diverse agencies. Central coordination of all language learning opportunities can enable more people to find

times and locations that fit their schedules. As well, expansion of language training into the evening and weekend hours allows newcomers to continue working while improving their English (ISCO interviews, 2008). Coordination among ESL providers (see 3, Strategic Partnerships) will allow more full coverage of services (ISCO focus groups, 2008). More training allows newcomers to become more comfortable with their new community and speeds integration.

Linguistically welcoming environment.

All “best practices” services described here need to be available in multiple languages. The languages chosen depend on the main languages used in the city, and the availability of resources. Key elements of this linguistic welcoming include:

- Universal signage and the use of symbols or plain language in signs (Measuring Up).
- More inclusive advertising, representing diverse cultures and services and using inclusive language (Changing Faces interviews, 2008).
- Websites for the city and city services translated into other languages.
- Signs and flyers translated into some of the main languages used in the city.
- Multilingual employees or interpreters at key government agencies.
- Businesses staffed with some proportion of speakers of other languages.
- Advertising outside each business and agency that has diverse languages available so that it is easy to find where these languages are spoken.
- Sharing of translated materials among businesses and agencies in town to avoid duplication of the work (ISCO focus groups, 2008).

Education and health care.

A diverse linguistic environment is particularly important in schools and medical facilities. Best practices include:

- TESL training for public school teachers, and more training in using clearer language and culturally welcoming methods with students (Changing Faces interviews, 2008).
- Training for interpreters and those who use interpreters at a local level.
- Availability and advertising of the services of professional interpreters at hospitals.
- Registry of doctors who speak languages other than English and French, with referrals for newcomers to these service providers.
- Expanding ESL offerings to the workplace and bridging programs to fast-track internationally trained professionals into successful employment.

5. Economic and Employment Factors

Importance of employment.

Access to appropriate employment opportunities is essential to being a welcoming community. Employment is often the first draw to an area, though the quality of the working experience will affect whether newcomers stay in the area. If the jobs are good, with good pay and positive working conditions, and the newcomers are provided with other essential supports (e.g., language training), retention and integration are highly probable. Assistance with finding jobs for spouses is another important consideration that follows soon after the first spouse finds a job. Without work opportunities for the whole family, they are less likely to be settled in the community.

More work needs to be done at a national level to integrate immigration requirements with information about the job market in Canada, and the requirements of credentialing agencies.

More training for immigration officials, both in Canada and abroad, on skills and job requirements will help them ease the transition for newcomers (ISCO interviews, 2008).

A final, key aspect of employment is educating the general public on importance of immigration for meeting our employment needs. Myths still exist in the public about immigrants taking jobs away from Canadians. Active attempts need to be made to correct these misconceptions with facts about the qualifications of immigrants, the quality of their work, wage equity for all workers, and others. The Kelowna Capital News has carried a number of stories over the past several years about the work of the Economic Development Commission and the values of immigration to this region.

Finding jobs.

Some strategies that have been used to help newcomers find appropriate work more rapidly include:

- Education for business owners on the benefits of hiring newcomers and of having diversity within their staff. Encourage them to consider hiring those who are not familiar to them, and provide training on culturally sensitive interviewing techniques and working with diversity (ISCO focus groups, 2008).
- Training for businesses on the laws about employment equity and the unconscious ways in which “business as usual” approaches may keep them from providing equitable employment for immigrants (ISCO focus groups, 2008).
- Immigrant employment services. These can provide a range of supports including resume development, interviewing practice, matching job seekers with appropriate placements, and help navigating the requirements for credential recognition.
- Opportunities to gain Canadian work experience through job shadowing, internships, mentor programs, volunteering, and other (ISCO focus groups, 2008).

- Promotion of alternatives to job references for those who have international experience.
- Centralized job bank which coordinates job postings across the city.
- Regular encouragement to businesses to post their job openings at a centralized job bank. A large proportion of jobs are never advertised, but newcomers often lack the social networks required to find out about these jobs.

Creating a safe and welcoming work environment for both workers and clients is key to a welcoming community. It also has the effects of enhancing productivity and financial returns.

6. Housing and Transportation

The availability, quality, cost and style of housing are all relevant in creating a housing market that welcomes newcomers. Even if a newcomer has found a good job, she or he is not likely to stay if affordable and appropriate housing is not available.

Availability and ease of use of public transit play a key role in helping newcomers feel at ease and independent in their new community. Those who do not drive or own a car require public transit to be able to hold down a job. Those who are not working still need effective transportation to access the services they need (grocery shopping, attending ESL classes) and getting out into the city to reduce isolation and begin to integrate into the life of the community.

Successful initiatives in housing and transportation include:

- Modifications of new rental requirements such as references, which can be difficult for international immigrants to procure (National Working Group, 2007).
- Alternate arrangements for fees such as damage deposits, which can be a significant initial barrier to finding housing (National Working Group, 2007).

- Making available discounted or free passes on public transit for newcomers for their first period in the city.

7. Political Support and Integration

There are two important aspects of political life that facilitate integration: government support for immigration and newcomers, and their involvement in the political and social life of their new community.

Government support.

Government support is essential for immigration success. Governments allocate resources, support by-laws and promote the development of the city. Government can also provide leadership by actively involving newcomers into the life of the city: seeking their feedback on proposals for by-laws and development; encouraging diverse community members to run for elected office; appointing representatives of different subgroups to city committees and task forces. Municipal government can provide leadership in creating jobs; hiring visible minorities and immigrants; and facilitating diversity on committees and panels.

Recognition of international credentials is a significant barrier to many newcomers, and often makes them feel disrespected and undervalued. While credential recognition occurs at a provincial and federal level, municipalities can present their views to the relevant agencies, pushing for more streamlined and fair systems.

Political involvement.

The political inclusion of immigrants is a key factor in successful settlement (M. Walton-Roberts, Metropolis B.C., 2008). The political role of newcomers needs to extend beyond providing them with services to facilitating their active involvement in the political and public

life of the city. The Waterloo Region network recognized need for immigrants to become leaders in the region and worked on plans to make this happen (Walton-Roberts, 2007).

8. Holistic and Integrated Approach

For immigration and settlement to be successful, these approaches need to be addressed in an integrated manner. As was stated by Walton-Roberts, "... sustainable immigrant settlement in smaller communities will only succeed if it is community driven and entails a long-term and broad-based model of incorporating immigrants into communities as community builders and stakeholders" (2007). These many tasks need to be addressed by a coordinated team effort, working with newcomers over a period of years until they are full, contributing members of the local community. A second aspect of this approach is recognizing the need for an integrated vision of the development of the city which considers the needs of the many groups and individuals involved.

9. Long-term Vision

Need for vision.

While successful immigration depends on meeting the immediate needs of newcomers and addressing the many challenges that arise in their first months and years in Canada, it also requires keeping present the bigger vision of full integration. While immediate needs are more pressing, the long-term vision is vital. It is the basis of a truly welcoming attitude; and it influences plans of action, facilitating such things as working with immigrants over a longer time-period and focusing on deeper levels of integration such as shared social activities. This is an area that still requires work in many places (Walton-Roberts, 2007). This longer-term vision could drive significant enhancements in city life, such as alterations to traffic patterns to enhance neighbourhood connections (Chung, 2008).

Ongoing research.

A second aspect of a long-term vision is ongoing research and evaluation of progress (Lai, 1998; City of Red Deer, 2007). A long-term vision will give rise to long-term goals. The city and participating groups need to conduct regular evaluation of how the city is moving towards immigrant integration and developing welcoming behaviors. Regular evaluation will help ensure that the city is moving in that direction, and guide adjustments to activities needed to better reach that goal.

A key element to this research is gathering regular feedback from newcomers about all aspects of their experience. Gathering their views and integrating them into planning will help ensure that the city progressively refines its practices and gets closer to becoming truly welcoming.

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