



The Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership is an indirect service project that supports and strengthens the community's capacity to welcome, settle and integrate newcomers.

**Supporting the Community Since 2014**



# **PROGRESS REPORT 2023/2024**

**PREPARED BY: RRLIP PROJECT STAFF**

## STRUCTURE

The RRLIP is guided by a multi-sector Partnership Council and informed by an Immigrant Advisory Table. The IAT is comprised of individuals with lived experience as newcomers, in varying stages of settlement and integration. Working Groups and/or Advisory Committees support the implementation of the priorities, leveraging their skills and expertise, community connections, and passion to address the challenges and gaps. A small staff of three support the project, overseeing the implementation of the local priority activities, along with the RRLIP's daily tasks and operations.

## PRIORITY AREAS

In 2023-2024, the RRLIP focused on five key priority areas

identified by RRLIP-initiated research (the Newcomer Survey 2022), the Mental and Emotional Wellness Survey (2023/2024), and on-going community consultation with a diversity of community partners and other stakeholders.

- Cultural Bridging
- Social Connections
- Mental and Emotional Wellness
- Housing Education Support
- Employment

Please keep reading for more details on the RRLIP's activities under each of these priority areas.

**The RRLIP works in collaboration and partnership with organizations and individuals to advance the identified local priorities.**



## Cultural Bridging

This priority is supported by the RRLIPs Anti-Racism/Discrimination Working Group (AR/DWG).

The AR/D working group partnered with the RPL (Main Branch) to bring in two short films about refugees settling in Canada, which were shown on June 22, 2023. The showings were followed by informal small group discussions, with AR&D members mingling and assisting where needed to get discussions going. This provided opportunity for people to meet those they hadn't met to help develop relationships and knowledge.

The films shown were:

- *19 Days*
- *Everybody's Children*

RRLIP staff continued to support the Anti-Racism/Discrimination Working Group's efforts to present another film screening event, which took place on November 25, 2023 (during Multicultural Week). The award-winning film that was presented is called *The Newcomers*. This event was in partnership with the Regina Public Library (RPL) - also a working group member - and the Regina German Film club. The event poster was a combined effort of Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan (MCoS), the RPL and RRLIP. A panel discussion followed the film screening; one of the panelists was the film producer (who is also a newcomer to SK), and the other panelists were local residents who are familiar with the newcomer settlement journey.

RRLIP staff and AR/DWG members discussed the possibility of applying for funding through the Canadian Race Relations Fund (CRRF). While the changeover in RRLIP management limited the RRLIP team's capacity to lead such an application, the RRLIP affirmed support for any working group member agencies who decided to apply.



## Social Connections

### **SHA Pilot Project:**

Knowing that older newcomers frequently experience isolation and loneliness, RRLIP staff collaborated with Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) staff as they developed a pilot project to provide free training (25 hours) for volunteers who can lead *Forever in Motion* exercise sessions for seniors in their cultural communities in their own language, to reduce barriers. *Forever In Motion* is a FREE physical activity/education program for older adults (55+) to maintain or improve their health, that is supported by Sask. Parks and Recreation Association. RRLIP staff continued support of the SHA staff organizing these trainings, to make connections with members of various cultural groups in Regina.

### **MOSAIC Festival:**

RRLIP staff participated in MOSAIC festival attending 10 pavilions over 3 days. During this event they distributed RRLIP promotional merchandise, share project contact information and *Forever in Motion* information to the representatives from the cultural groups, and make commitments to follow up. All contacts have been added to the Community News mailing list. Many expressed their interest in leaning more about the resources available for newcomers

### **Research Project Support:**

The RRLIP contributed a Letter of Support to a community partner's application for Saskatchewan Health Research Fund (SHRF) funding of a research project that will focus on preventing and addressing social isolation in elderly immigrants, refugees and other newcomers. RRLIP staff met virtually with the Primary Applicant to learn about the proposed project and assess our capacity to support, and also shared information about this project with the Mental and Emotional Wellness Working Group.

### **Film Screening:**

The abovementioned film screening of *The Newcomers*, hosted at the RPL Film Theatre on Saturday Nov 25th, also provided opportunities to strengthen social connections among attendees. Numerous people commented on how much they learned, and how positive this event was, and that the small group discussion was a really important part. One particular participant with lower language skills was thrilled with the opportunity to practice his English in this setting and would like to have more opportunities. The RPL has indicated that they would like to continue to partner to plan and promote these types of events, as well as come up with some innovative ideas in future.



## Social Connections, cont'd

### Community E-Newsletter:

RRLIP staff developed a semi-monthly community e-newsletter called *Community News*, intended to increase awareness and access to relevant programs, services and events that enhance and support newcomer settlement in Regina. Highlighted in the newsletter were free/low-cost events for families and individuals of various age groups, cultural/ethnic celebrations, cross-cultural programs, educational info, grant opportunities, etc. Changes in RRLIP management and team capacity resulted in the discontinuation of the *Community News* e-newsletter at the end of December, 2023; however, an archive of past *Community News* issues can be accessed [here](#).

### Cross-cultural connection events promotion:

The RRLIP also promoted cultural and cross-cultural connection events through different channels including in the RRLIP blog, Facebook page and RRLIP-convened meetings, community partner meetings, etc. Examples of the events are: Pipe Ceremonies, Muslim Education Events, Chinese New Year, etc.),

### RRLIP blog posts:

Out of 70 project blog posts, approximately 38 focused on **cultural and cross-cultural connection**. Other blog topics included: surveys, special awareness days, funding opportunities, the #ImmigrantsWork initiative, federal government immigration news, Newcomer Services Information Sessions, Aboriginal Storytelling Month, IRCC's Updated Fact Sheets available in multiple languages, Black History Month, International Women's Day event, International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination event and Employment Programs and Event.



## Mental and Emotional Wellness

Please note that the RRLIP uses the term “mental and emotional wellness” in place of “mental health” on the advice of its Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT) and other community partners. This is part of our efforts to decrease the stigma and confusion that can sometimes be attached to “mental health.”

The *Mental and Emotional Wellness priority* is also supported by the RRLIP’s **Mental and Emotional Wellness Working Group (MEWWG)**. It is comprised of members from settlement organizations, umbrella organizations, mental health service providers, etc. If you or your organization has an interest in the topic of newcomer mental and emotional wellness and would like to join this working group, please contact the RRLIP.

In this fiscal year, MEWWG members gave valuable input to RRLIP staff around the coordination of a virtual **Community Forum** on Mental and Emotional Wellness Supports for Past/Recent Newcomers in Regina.

This fiscal year, the RRLIP also conducted a major **Survey on Mental and Emotional Wellness Supports for Past/Recent Newcomers in Regina**. The survey was open from June 2023 to February 2024.

A full Forum Report and a Survey Report are available on the RRLIP website under RRLIP 2023-2024 Reports.

The RRLIP produced a **resource on stigmas around mental health** in brochure and one-sheet handout formats. Both formats include a list of locally available supports and services. While these were initially translated into several languages other than English by a professional translation service, the RRLIP was later made aware that some errors existed in some of the translations, so we were unfortunately forced to remove all but the English versions from publication.

A **Quick Reference Sheet** was also developed and offers a more comprehensive (though not exhaustive) listing of available services and supports for newcomer’ (and others’) mental and emotional wellness.

Both of these resources are available on the RRLIP website under Resources.



## Housing Education Support

This priority continues to be supported by the long standing RRLIP-convened **Canadian Housing Advisory Committee (CHAC)**. Members include settlement agencies, housing service providers, a local realtor, provincial and municipal housing authority representatives, and local shelter staff.

### **Provincial Government income assistance programs:**

In response to CHAC's continued concerns about Saskatchewan Income Support (SIS) Programs and other Provincial Government benefit programs, the RRLIP staff coordinated an Income Assistance Programs Information Session for local and provincial settlement partners, along with other sectors and interested individuals. Around 26 participants, including settlement sector staff and interested individuals, attended this virtual session.

### **Educational Toolkit for Rental Housing Providers:**

To further the housing education support priority, RRLIP staff and CHAC members worked closely with the Saskatchewan Landlords Association (SKLA) to develop a *Renting to Newcomers Toolkit: How to Create Successful Tenancies* - an educational module for rental housing providers (formerly “landlords”) around the considerations and benefits when renting to newcomers. The toolkit draws extensive insights from the RRLIP/CHAC-developed Housing Adaptation Checklist resource and was officially introduced at the SKLA conference held in late September 2023.

### **Special meeting with City of Regina’s representatives:**

A special meeting of CHAC was convened, featuring City of Regina Mayor Sandra Masters, and Audra Young, the City of Regina’s Director of Indigenous Relations. The purpose of this meeting was to gather input from local housing and settlement sector service agencies regarding the feasibility and potential benefits of a rent-to-own option for newcomers (including those who were previously newcomers) in Regina. The central premise was whether such an option could facilitate their entry into the housing market as homeowners. Looking ahead, the CHAC aims to strengthen its collaboration with City of Regina staff, particularly in addressing housing-related issues. Housing remains a significant challenge in the resettlement process and other sectors.



## Housing Education Support, cont'd

### RentEd program:

The Canadian Housing Advisory Committee (CHAC) has long been committed to the idea of tenant education to support newcomers in securing and retaining housing in Regina. In the fall of 2023, RRLIP staff met with staff of Camponi Housing Inc., a non-profit organization that offers trainings in the RentEd program – a Renter's Education Course that supports renters in maintaining successful tenancies. Camponi also trains trainers to deliver the RentEd course. In subsequent CHAC meetings, members had an opportunity to hear from Camponi staff, ask questions about the RentEd program and showed interest in the program offerings. In the February 2024 CHAC meeting, a CHAC member from the Regina Housing Authority provided more details on the RentEd program in Regina, which RHA manages in collaboration with RTSIS and the Friendship Centre. While it is unclear whether private landlords universally recognize the RentEd certificates, some do. The program has been running successfully for approximately one year. Due to current staff capacity, RHA is limited to scheduling one training session per month. RHA could offer train-the-trainer programs if other agencies express interest. Another CHAC member agency expressed interest in both enrolling some clients in the tenant training and having a staff member trained as a trainer.

### Survey of Rental Housing Providers:

Following discussions with the SKLA, the RRLIP developed an online survey for local rental housing providers (RHPs) to identify the challenges and barriers they experience when renting to newcomers. The survey was open from July to October 2023. 73.33% of survey respondents were private rental housing providers and 26.67% were property managers. Notably, only 40% had rented to newcomers in Regina. When asked what supports would be helpful to receive from settlement service providers when renting to newcomers, responses included **supports for rental housing providers** (e.g. information on considerations when renting to newcomers; rental insurance, better screening tools); **supports for renters** - e.g. language assistance (translation of lease/rental documents, signs in rental units, community information, etc.; interpretation in interview or while completing documentation; English classes/conversation groups); affordable rent and decent housing in a safe neighborhood; information on banking setup, community involvement and programs, garbage vs recycling vs compost, what is considered 'sanitary' and healthful/unhealthy housing conditions; provision of 'help services' or other in-home emergency support contacts, networks of support people/community encircling the new arrival family for several months after arrival; and **some items that RHPs want renters to provide to them when applying for tenancy** (e.g. ID, proof of past job experience and details of employer and housing).



## Employment

The Employment priority is supported by the RRLIP's Labour Market Working Group (LMWG), which has been consistently active in its efforts to support newcomer employment since the first years of RRLIP's existence. Group members include representatives from local employment services providers, including settlement agencies and others. This fiscal year, the group continued to meet on a regular basis and expanded with the addition of the South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre (SSILC). The group actively engaged in coordinating events, sharing updates, and discussing strategies to support newcomer employment in Regina. Meetings have focused on planning activities, debriefing on past events, and facilitating collaboration among member organizations.

### **Newcomer Employment Readiness Week:**

The LMWG organized a Newcomer Employment Readiness Week event in November 2023 at the George Bothwell Library in Southland Mall. This in-person event featured a series of workshops on resume and cover letter writing, job search, interview preparation, and more. Feedback from LMWG members affirmed the event's success and recommended increased promotion for future events to enhance participant turnout.

### **Employment E-newsletters:**

In collaboration with the LMWG, the RRLIP team released quarterly e-newsletters about Employment Programs for Newcomers in Regina. RRLIP discontinued publication of this newsletter at the end of December, 2023, due to changing staff capacity.

### **Blog posts:**

In lieu of the Employment Newsletters, RRLIP staff published a series of blog posts in February and March 2024 to highlight the diverse array of local programs offered by employment agencies and community partners. These blog posts supported the LMWG in improving communication channels.



## Employment cont'd

### #Immigrants Work Project

Last fiscal year, the RRLIP was chosen - along with four other communities in BC, MB, and ON - to participate in Phase 2 of the #ImmigrantsWork initiative, in partnership with World Education Service (WES). Phase 2 extends and builds on the success of the earlier #ImmigrantsWork pilot phase which was activated in 3 communities, with the launch of the program in new communities that have different needs and capacities.

In Regina, the #ImmigrantsWork initiative is guided and supported by a multi-sectoral group of local Foundational Partners, including:

- the City of Regina
- Regina & District Chamber of Commerce
- Regina Open Door Society - Employment Services
- Regina Public Library
- Regina Work Prep Centre
- Saskatchewan Polytech - LINC
- South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre (SSILC)
- University of Regina - UR International

These organizations are partnering with the RRLIP and WES to activate local employers and facilitate the co-creation of practical and easy-to implement community-driven solutions that help identify, recruit, hire, and retain local immigrant talent. A social media communications campaign was launched March 12th, 2024 and extends until October 2024. Other deliverables currently under development are:

- Training Series - for service providers (Session #1) and employers (#2-4)
- Video Series- short clips highlighting employer “champions” and promising practices
- Employer Navigator - online self-assessment tool with human concierge support to help navigate to algorithm-suggested resources, to take employers’ inclusive HR practices to the next level (beta testing beginning summer 2024)

For more on #ImmigrantsWork in Regina, see the [#IW webpage](#) or contact the RRLIP.



# Day to Day at the RRLIP Project

In 2023-2024, RRLIP staff...

- sent and responded to thousands of emails as part of conversations with individuals and organizations related to settlement and integration in Regina, in SK, and beyond.
- met with community partners and other stakeholders on 178 occasions, through 1-to-1 meetings, small and large group meetings, community events, conferences and other gatherings, both virtual and in-person.
- received over 70 community inquiries through our website from individuals and organizations, requesting assistance or information on local service agencies and other supports.
- RRLIP's funder, Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC), launched the 2024 Call for Proposal (CFP) on Nov. 1st, and both the retiring and new RRLIP Project Managers worked through the holiday season and through a complete transition in management, during this reporting period, to complete the process of developing the RRLIP's application for the 2025-30 grant agreement IRCC. RRLIP successfully submitted the CFP application, and await IRCC's decisions on which projects they will support for the next five year funding cycle.
- until the end of December 2023, continued the promotion of programs and services in 22 e-newsletters (semi-monthly Community News and quarterly Employment Newsletter), in order for newcomers to receive timely and relevant information about local programs and services.
- developed over 70 project blogs that highlighted IRCC funded programs and services and other pertinent local programming to support newcomer settlement in Regina.
- RRLIP also held several team meetings to plan and execute the project deliverables.
- maintained the project website as a tool of support for the community. The website can be accessed at: [www.rrlip.ca](http://www.rrlip.ca)



## Day to Day at the RRLIP Project cont'd

- the retiring manager of RRLIP conducted interviews for both the RRLIP Manager and Assistant Manager positions. Both candidates were offered the positions in December, with the start date set for January 8, 2024.
- the RRLIP retiring Manager conducted knowledge transfer sessions to the RRLIP. These sessions covered various topics including RRLIP historical highlights, proposed revision of the Community Plan, more in-depth about the status of Working Groups, reporting duties, meeting with RRLIP Manager about CFP, RRLIP convened meeting, Schedule A, revised details about Working Groups and Committees, RRLIP deliverable for funders etc.
- supported the work of the Canadian Housing Advisory Committee, Labour Market Working Group, Anti-Racism & Discrimination Working Group, Mental and Emotional Wellness Working group, and also the on-going efforts of the RRLIP Partnership Council and Immigrant Advisory Table.
- provided on-going support to the local settlement sector through the coordination of meetings (bi-weekly, then monthly) for settlement staff to share information, discuss challenges, and provide support to one another.

All of these activities are part of the RRLIP's work to strengthen and support the community of Regina's capacity to welcome, settle and integrate newcomers.





# NAARS Evaluation

In June, 2023 IRCC requested that the RRLIP coordinate an evaluation activity regarding a pilot project called the Saskatchewan and Manitoba Centralized NAARS Model with ZONE Referral Protocol. As a result, the RRLIP mobilized an evaluation committee consisting of settlement agencies from Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg (where the NAARS and Zone pilot project was implemented), coordinated evaluation committee meetings to discuss the evaluation project details and processes, provided support to the evaluation committee in their task of choosing an evaluator for the project. The chosen evaluation team conducted consultations with the agencies (and some of their clients) who have implemented the pilot project, to understand if the intended outcomes were met.

- January 2024: Benchmark incorporated any needed revisions into the Interim Report.
- February to March 15th, 2024: Benchmark researchers incorporated the findings from the frontline survey and the client focus groups into the final report.
- March 15th, 2024: Revised report submitted by the researchers. IRCC provided some feedback, the report was also forwarded to the evaluation committee for their review, the deadline for the final submission deadline was extended to April 4, 2024
- IRCC also recommended for a follow-up meeting and researcher's presentation on the finding of the report. RRLIP will coordinate this meeting in May, 2024



# Annual Evaluation Survey

The Regina Region Local Immigration Partnerships Project does not directly provide services, it is the organizations and individuals we support and partner with, that evaluate the impact of the RRLIP Project on an annual basis.

Sample feedback from the RRLIP's 2023-2024 evaluation survey include:  
While at an RRLIP-convened table...

- 72.73% of respondents reported they learned new information from other individuals and/or organizations that furthered their work with newcomers.
- 81.82% of respondents reported they collaborated with other individuals/organizations that furthered their work with newcomers.

**100% of respondents reported they believed it is important to have a Local Immigration Partnership in our community.**

**Survey Respondent Comment: "RRLIP is doing its best in bringing together community partners to work on one platform for the betterment of newcomer immigrants."**

**Vision:** Regina welcomes newcomers, values and celebrates diversity and supports the integration of all residents.

**Mission:** The Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP) and its member organizations will educate, collaborate and partner for the benefit of newcomers in Regina.



**We acknowledge the financial support of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.**

**The RRLIP would also like to thank its host agency, Regina Open Door Society Inc.**