



# Connecting Communities

## Background

- Population of province of Saskatchewan was declining and so was the economy.
- Created by the government, Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP), 2004, signals revitalized economy and population growth.
- The sudden change in demographics and the associated resettlement process brought new challenges that effect newcomer families as well as host community including First Nations and Métis.
- While change in the population supported the economy, the issues related to settlement and integration has remained unattended.

## Needs Assessment

- Sudden change in demographics in Saskatoon has disturbed the sense of cohesion and belonging in the community.
- A significant percentage of Newcomer and First Nation youth and their families are continuing to struggle with isolation and depression related to resettlement process.
- Historical evidence as well as research confirm that positive connection of community members and focus on strength and common ground are a great support for the wellbeing of a community.

## Objective

- To connect Newcomer communities with Local and Aboriginal communities.
- To support the sense of Belonging and Connecting aspects of the integration by providing opportunities for positive interactions.
- To enhance the sense of community in Saskatoon.

## Settlement and Community Support Services (SCSS) in Saskatoon Open Door Society (SODS)

- Saskatoon Open Door Society (SODS) has been a non-profit settlement service provider in Saskatoon since 1981.
- SODS provides support for the settlement and integration of Newcomers in the community through a wide range of programming in the area of: Settlement and Family Support (SFS), Language Training (LTU), Employment Training (ETU), and Settlement and Community Support Services (SCSS).
- To enhance and support the sense of community, SODS develops and facilitates connections between the Newcomer and the Host communities more specifically connecting with First Nations and Métis cultures through a wide range of partnership programs and integrated activities, promoting cross-cultural awareness.

## INTEGRATED PROGRAMS

**Creating Youth Culture:** through presentations & storytelling, High school newcomer and First Nations students share their experiences with elementary students in schools and learn about each other.

**Digital Storytelling Project:** using the power of storytelling, newcomer and First Nations youth and seniors/elders will connect on many levels: cultural, relational, social, personal. Seniors & elders will share their experiences in traditional form while youth will use modern digital media to record and capture those experiences forever.

**Youth Empowerment Workshops:** Integrated afterschool activities such as woodworking, drumming and art workshops aimed at developing skills and building confidence. Delivered in collaboration with first nations communities and in partnership with White Buffalo Youth Lodge.

**Youth Hosting Youth:** Newcomer youth are connected to local youth including First nations and Metes youth to connect, learn about Canada, community resources, social activities and to practice English.

**Youth Civic Engagement:** Immigrant and Aboriginal youth are introduced to the three levels of government and the concept of lobbying, advocacy and civic Engagement such as We Day.

**Annual Youth Summit:** Organized by youth for youth; brings together Aboriginal, Canadian and immigrant youth and community decision makers to discuss issues that have a direct impact on youth.

**Connecting Our Cultural Communities:** CCC connects Saskatoon's diverse culture groups including newcomers, First Nations and Metis, and raises cultural awareness and understanding amongst people. Cross cultural collaborations are encouraged and opportunity is provided for groups to come together to celebrate each other, learn to respect each other and enhance the sense of community.

**Cultural Bridging:** The program focuses on encouraging and facilitating positive intercultural interactions within and between communities by providing culturally responsive programming and services. Enhanced Cultural Responsiveness provides presentations, information sessions, and workshops to community agencies and institutions in the areas of cultural awareness and responsiveness to more accurately reflect the cultural diversity in the community. Topics include cultural competency, cultural diversity intercultural communication workplace diversity cultural specific information.

**Volunteer Based Community Programming:** various volunteer-led programming provides opportunities for newcomers and the host community including First Nations and Métis to connect and learn about each other. Programs focus on mentoring, conversation circles, storytelling, learning about Canada and community volunteer placements.



Community connection is a mutual endeavor which must include members of various communities in order to be successful.