

Community Engagement & Settlement Services in Smaller Centres in Southern Alberta

Successes and Challenges

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Community Engagement & Settlement Services in Southern Alberta

A CCIS Initiative Since 2007

Why?

- Increased number of newcomers settling in the area
- Community needed to respond to new trends
- For the past 30 years, CCIS has been involved to a certain degree with the communities in the area
- CCIS has the relationship and capacity to assist the communities

How the Engagement Began

- Received requests from the High River & Foothills area to map the existing diversity in their communities.
- The results of the mapping was an eye-opener for the community. They didn't realize how diverse they had become.
- The report was presented to the community, including town council, school board, faith groups, United Way, health board and many other stakeholders.
- The community requested CCIS to establish permanent settlement services.
- Funding was provided by CIC.
- In November 2007, Foothills Immigrant Services was created.

Expansion of Services in Rural Southern Alberta

- 2009 – Brooks and County Immigrant Services (BCIS) was created.
- 2010 – The community of Okotoks went through the same process as the High River & Foothills area and an office was established.
- 2011 – 2014 – The project began to expand significantly into communities across Southern Alberta, providing SWIS and settlement services. Regular services are offered High River, Okotoks, Foothills, Cargill Foods, Brooks, Drumheller, Chestermere, Airdrie, Cochrane, and Strathmore. Through partnerships with three school systems (Christ the Redeemer School District, Foothills School Division and Rocky View Schools), services are provided to students and parents.

Future Directions

CCIS has launched a five-year strategic plan for the area in 2014, in collaboration with the stakeholders in the area.



Opportunities

- Smaller communities are faced with increased settlement of immigrants in their area, especially temporary foreign workers
- Communities are well aware of the importance of newcomer retention
- Communities recognize that they need high quality expertise in settlement and integration
- Communities are committed to creating a welcoming environment

Challenges

- Lack of clear vision from CIC and Province of Alberta on how to address the need in the long-term.
- We are looking at a large area with numerous communities
- Lack of public transportation to access services
- Pressure on public sector (health, education, housing, etc.) to provide resources to meet growing demand

CCIS Relationship and Position

- Well trusted and has a history / experience in small communities
- Designed / catered a different approach in engaging different communities
- 210 staff and over 2,000 volunteers provides a holistic approach with minimum cost
- Acted as important facilitator to take the communities through a community development process
- Started providing services when the community requested
- Provided resources and expertise at the time of crisis

Forward Looking

- The trend of immigrants moving into smaller communities is here to stay
- Communities are recognizing the importance of creating a welcoming environment
- CIC and province of Alberta are looking into providing resources for these areas
- CCIS is committed to continue providing high quality services, as long as the community is supportive and seeking engagement

About CCIS...

- Dedicated team of 210 experienced staff and 2,000 volunteers
- 12 convenient locations
- Collectively speaking over 70 languages
- Served over 11,000 newcomers in 2013

Contact Us!

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