Prairie Skies
Integration Network

Report Summary:

Immigrant Settlement and Community-Newcomer Integration in South Central Saskatchewan

A Literature Review

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Prairie Skies Integration Network is a regional Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) operating in the Moose Jaw Region of Saskatchewan since 2018.

This is a summary of the full report prepared for Prairie Skies Integration Network by:

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Overview & Literature Review Approach

While the 90-page report is daunting at first glance, readers will be relieved to find that nearly half the document consists of references. In total there are about 56 pages to read.[1] The report was intentionally produced in plain language so that, in keeping with some of its findings (i.e. #5 and #6), the content will be as widely read and applied as possible.

While reading the entire report is thought-provoking and presents a holistic picture around the many intersecting themes, the report is arranged topically so that individuals with a specific area of interest can gain valuable insight even by reviewing sections most aligned with their interest.[2]

Literature reviews are intended to provide an overview or summary of findings and theories that exist within a literature base. The focus of this literature review was to shed light on the assets and needs presented by newcomers in South Central Saskatchewan in addition to identifying capacities or gaps in resources and services supporting newcomer settlement and community-newcomer integration.

This literature review drew from scholarly and grey literature. For this study, because exploring the local context and the local state of affairs was so important, the definition of "grey literature" was expanded to include community-based, "on the ground" reports (such as minutes from meetings and forums, work plans, etc.). This helps gain a true picture of what is happening in the region.

Demographic Overview of South Central Region

Starting on page 10, the report provides an interesting overview of demographics & trends in our region, with a focus on trends relevant to immigration. This section provides statistics and information on various populations and evidence for the importance of immigration to our region.

Framework

Local Immigration Partnerships tend to base their work on a framework called the 17 Characteristics of a Welcoming Community[3]. For our literature review, these 17 characteristics were condensed down to 9 key areas of newcomer integration:

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1 That being said, the List of Scholarly Articles with Abstracts (p. 68 – 90) includes a wealth of additional information that is helpful for those working towards greater community-newcomer integration.

2 Helpful approaches may be: 1) Review the Table of Contents and click through to relevant sections; 2) Conduct keyword-based searches (Ctrl +F and enter keyword).

3 Esses, V. M., Hamilton, L. K., Bennett-Abu Ayyash, C., & Burstein, M. (2010). Characteristics of a welcoming community. A report prepared for the Integration Branch of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Four *overarching themes*, in particular, featured prominently in the literature:

- Housing
- Employment
- Health & Well-Being
- Education

For each key area, related trends and themes are discussed, as well as references to key studies and papers. Findings from reports and other grey literature sources specific to Moose Jaw and South Central region, are also outlined, noting areas of congruence with and divergence from the academic literature. Finally, potential issues reported in the grey literature from other smaller centres and rural settings are considered for their potential applicability to the local context, and to Prairie Skies Integration Network's future planning.

Next, the 17 characteristics are reorganized into five categories or *"cross-cutting themes"*.

- Community Support and Attitudes
- Social Connections
- Transportation
- Newcomer-Specific Supports
- Language

The report highlights how these issues are present across each of the overarching themes. For example, transportation has an influence on where a newcomer might choose or be able to afford to live, their access to healthcare, education, and the services of a family doctor or emergency room.

Using this framework, the report provides a sort of "report card" on how our region is faring in regard to each theme, as well as offering promising practices from similar contexts for consideration.

Key Areas in Newcomer Integration: The Findings

1	Being able to find and secure suitable and affordable **housing** is a crucial first step in societal integration and inclusion for newcomers to Canada.
2	Immigrants experience higher rates of unemployment than non-immigrant Canadians. Gaining sustainable **employment** is a challenge for many newcomers.
3	The **health status** of newcomers is generally better than their Canadian counterparts during early settlement. Data showed that this shifted negatively over time.
4	**Education** has a significant role to play in helping newcomers successfully integrate into their new lives in Canada.
5	**Community support and attitudes** play a significant role in creating the spaces of interaction where new intercultural dimensions of the social, economic, political and material spaces can be adjusted to by the newcomers.
6	The strongest determinant given the greatest focus in the literature that spoke to successful integration into the community for newcomers was **social inclusion**.
7	**Transportation** issues determine where newcomers live and work, and whether they are able to access suitable healthcare, education, and support services.
8	For newcomers to Canada, **access to programs and services** facilitates integration into the main-stream Canadian society, and where newcomers have insufficient access they face marginalization and exclusion.
9	Limited English or French **language capacity** has been found to contribute to immigrants experiencing homelessness, unemployment and limited educational opportunities, and a higher likelihood of living in a precarious housing situation.

Further Investigation of the Findings: Topical Subheadings

Housing	Employment
How Immigrants Locate Housing Availability of Housing Affordability of Housing Role of Services Role of Governments Housing in South Central Region Potential Issues and Promising Practices (in the Grey Literature)	Foreign Credential Assessment Employment and Earnings of Women Canadian Work Experience Discrimination Government Employment Bridging Programs Community-Based Employment Mentorship Employment in South Central Region Potential Issues and Promising Practices
Health and Well-Being	**Education**
Health Upon Arrival Monetary Remittance Behaviour Gender Family Separation and Dynamics Role of Belonging Food Insecurity Openness about Health Issues Ability to Access Services and Supports Health and Well-Being in South Central Region Potential Issues and Promising Practices	Education and Credential Recognition Soft Skills Schools as Spaces for Social Inclusion Student–Teacher Relationships Language Learning Education in South Central Region Potential Issues and Promising Practices
Cross-Cutting Themes	
Community Support and Attitudes Social Connections Transportation Newcomer-Specific Supports Language	

Next Steps: Strategic Planning

The key findings are then fleshed out through additional findings that emerged from the data, in order to enhance our understanding of settlement and community-newcomer integration in the region. For the 4 key themes, challenges and barriers are explored: those things that are typically faced by newcomers to Canada who settle in rural and semi-rural locations. Second, effective practices are identified: concepts likely to be relevant to the Network's developing strategy & plan.

1	Being able to find and secure suitable and affordable **housing** is a crucial first step in societal integration and inclusion for newcomers to Canada.

Barriers contributing to any gaps in achieving this outcome, and relevant local factors to consider, include:

- Newcomers might not know where to go to get help with finding somewhere to live.
- Securing a suitable house is dependent upon financial independence which is a significant barrier for some newcomers who have not secured employment.
- Housing can be prohibitively expensive for newcomers.
- Where housing can be found it might be precarious or of poor quality.
- Many immigrants do not access the formal (or professional) sources of support available.
- Recent conversations in Moose Jaw with newcomers as part of the Vital Community Conversations series (29, 30) have confirmed housing availability and affordability is an issue.

Mitigating and helpful factors for the Network to consider:

- Know your local context - what housing is available, and who are the newcomers seeking housing.
- Newcomers find support from their ethnic networks helpful - seek ways to facilitate such networks.
- Where newcomers have family already established in the same locale, they are a supportive structure in the first few months. However, after a more prolonged period they can become a compounding effect on the newcomer when combined with unemployment, language struggles, etc. At this point support services continue to be of value. Cooperation between multiple services is desirable.
- Housing can also serve to attract newcomers to smaller centres, where housing prices and rental markets may be affordable compared to major cities.

| 2 | Immigrants experience higher rates of unemployment than non-immigrant Canadians. Gaining sustainable **employment** is a challenge for many newcomers. |

Barriers contributing to this, and significant local factors to consider, include:

- Lack of recognition of foreign credentials.
- The requirement from many Canadian employers for Canadian work experience.
- Discrimination.
- For women, they face an additional barrier of lower wages than male counterparts hired in equal job positions.
- Caregiving roles of women also contributed to levels of precarious employment.
- Insufficient employment opportunities.
- Moose Jaw has an ageing workforce which is posing a risk for the future economy (37). There has been moderate immigration to Moose Jaw, however immigration is still the lowest amongst Saskatchewan's 10 urban centres.
- Moose Jaw also has an ageing population amongst its entrepreneurs. There are over 1,700 self-employed people in Moose Jaw and 40% of them are over 55.

Mitigating and helpful factors for the Network to consider:

- Government Bridging Programs, however policy development is uneven across provinces with Ontario leading the way with initiatives.
- A few examples of individual organizations adopting interesting practices to support newcomer integration, for example, McCain Foods supports their local employees and recruits foreign talent. The organization reports greater acceptance amongst staff and increased promotion of cultural diversity of which the whole community feels the effects.
- Facilitating connections between newcomers and established Canadian professionals through mentorship.
- Utilising community engagement efforts like forums similar to the Vital Community Conversations (29, 30) to support newcomers to engage with employers and address differing perceptions of Canadian work experience.
- Examining the role of social enterprises and cooperatives in providing work-integrated learning and experiential learning (internships).
- Job fairs that promote opportunities in rural areas.
- Attracting a new generation of entrepreneurs to Moose Jaw to help drive growth in agriculture and value-added processing, transportation, tourism, and healthcare services would be beneficial.

| 3 | The **health status** of newcomers is generally better than their Canadian counterparts during early settlement. Data showed that this shifted negatively over time. |

Barriers contributing to this, and significant local factors to consider, include:

- Immigrants sending money back home to family members face increased likelihood of emotional health problems and financial stress.
- Particular stressors on women have social, emotional, and cultural consequences.
- Impact of family separation and dynamics.
- Role of belonging.
- Food insecurity.
- Cultural impact on willingness to discuss and share information about private health issues.
- Ability to access supports and services.

Mitigating and helpful factors for the Network to consider:

- Ensuring healthcare providers have access to interpretation and translation services to appropriately use with newcomer clients.
- Continue to partner with local initiatives in regard to health-equity research (e.g., the partnership with Saskatchewan Polytechnic)
- Consider entire family approaches providing the entire family with support. Children often have the capacity to act as translators, however this has positive and potentially negative outcomes and should be managed appropriately.

| 4 | **Education** has a significant role to play in helping newcomers successfully integrate into their new lives in Canada. |

Barriers contributing to any gaps in achieving this outcome, and relevant local factors to consider, include:

- Many skilled workers find that upon their arrival in Canada, their foreign academic credentials are not fully recognized by provincial accreditation agencies, education institutions, and Canadian employers.
- Newcomers who are qualified to work in regulated professions in their home nations often experience significant downgrading of their foreign credentials in Canada.

- Some newcomers' experiences of school practices discouraged, thwarted, and limited their aspirations, with some teachers communicating to newcomers they were somehow less intelligent than Canadian-born or long-term resident youth.
- Language skill is repeatedly identified as an important factor that facilitates access to the intended occupation and determines the occupational outcomes of skilled immigrants.
- Education, including language learning, was raised as an important local issue in both the Vital Community Conversations and South West Saskatchewan reports

Mitigating and helpful factors for the Network to consider:

- Schools are central institutions of community life and play an important role in the social inclusion of newcomer youth.
- When newcomers settle in the smaller communities in Canada, the role of schools is important as a facilitator with learning either English or French language.
- Partnering with employers to provide occupation-specific language training, such as was done in Brandon with a local credit union, can help to re-create a "virtuous cycle" between language development and employment.

Next Steps: Recommendations for Further Investigation

In closing, the report emphasises the importance of continued research to support the Network's work. Readers are reminded that "context matters immensely", and that with Canada being such a geographically vast and diverse nation, one of the limitations is that the knowledge is "in the main, context specific". Thus, it's important to avoid the temptation to paint the issues and circumstances with a broad stroke (i.e. newcomer needs and access to appropriate support in large urban centres have a different structure and flavour in comparison to rural counterparts). Further research to support Prairie Skies' ongoing strategic work is encouraged in order to confidently and clearly identify the specific needs of the newcomer populations residing in and migrating to Moose Jaw & the South Central Region of Saskatchewan.

Finally, the report offers recommendations as to what we might investigate next, through data collection and other research. This section will help guide the Network in furthering its research mandate. These 7 recommendations are:

1	**Education**
	• What potential pathways are there for credential recognition and additional skills upgrading for newcomers (e.g., language training through adult education)?
	• How are youth being supported in schools (or not?)

2	What are the **housing** needs of newcomers? How do general housing trends in the region affect newcomers? (e.g., primary research to establish size, location).
3	What brings **international students** to the Moose Jaw area? Do they seek potential for staying in the region post-graduation? Primary data could be collected here.
4	Be mindful of **how health connects in with other areas** (social determinants of health). Explore potential for multi-municipal and multi-agency cooperation (information sharing) and leverage Saskatchewan Polytechnic's research project on Patient-Oriented health care.
5	What is the impact for newcomers of settling in smaller and remote locations within Canada, compared to larger centres? How have newcomers to Moose Jaw in the past navigated specific settlement challenges? What **location-specific** barriers have they faced? Consider primary research to examine the "user journey" to identify friction points in newcomers' settlement journeys.
6	Given the employment environment and entrepreneur demographic of Moose Jaw, it would be worthwhile to investigate levels of interest in **entrepreneurship** and barriers to business start-up for newcomers. Primary and secondary data might be useful here.
7	Further information on **secondary migration** would be useful. Newcomers may initially settle in one region in Canada (the primary destination) and later move elsewhere for any number of reasons. Is Moose Jaw attracting newcomers who settle in larger centres first, including both major cities such as Toronto and Vancouver that attract newcomers as well as other prairie centres (Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina)? What attracts these secondary migrants to the region? On the other side of the equation, do newcomers who choose Moose Jaw as their intended destination stay here? If they undertake secondary migration, where do they go and why? Primary or secondary data might be useful here to understand the "push" and "pull" factors which bring immigrants to and from the region.

References

For all references, please refer to the corresponding number in the full report.