
Adult Immigrant Learning Needs in Atlantic Canadian Communities

Report on a Series of Community Knowledge-Exchange Meetings

**Prepared for the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre
of the Canadian Council on Learning**

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May 2008



Adult Learning Knowledge Centre Centre du Savoir
Apprentissage chez les adultes

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PROJECT BACKGROUND & REPORT OVERVIEW

On March 29th-30th, 2007 the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre held a Community Connections Circle in Moncton, NB. This event was aimed at bringing together representatives from First Nations, Francophone, and other diverse communities from across Atlantic Canada to discuss the needs and issues related to adult learning among those groups. These groups constituted the beginning of a reference group model.

One of the issues identified by the diverse communities reference group was the concern that the concept of "diverse communities" was too broad and required further definition and break down. To that end, this reference group was divided into working groups focused on learners with disabilities, African-Canadian learners and immigrant learners.

In January, 2008 the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre was contracted to carry out reference group meetings with immigrant communities throughout Atlantic Canada. The meetings, termed by the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre as "community-based knowledge-exchange meetings" were designed to provide participants with an open and candid discussion forum in which they could express their experiences with adult learning since their immigration to Canada. The discussion and input from these meetings was documented and developed into this report, which will inform the response of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre to adult learning needs and issues of immigrants in selected Atlantic Canadian communities.

During February and March, 2008, immigrant reference groups were brought together in each of the four Atlantic Canadian provinces to discuss issues related to adult immigrant learning needs. Meetings were held in: Halifax, NS; Charlottetown, PEI; St. John's, NL; and Fredericton, NB. In each city, a local immigrant-serving agency was identified as a host for the knowledge-exchange meeting. The organizations that participated in this process were all members of the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA). The assisting organizations in each city were:

- Halifax – Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC)
- Charlottetown – Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI ANC)
- St. John's – Association for New Canadians (ANC)
- Fredericton – Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF)

Each organization brought together representatives from immigrant communities in their local area. During each meeting, participants identified issues and made suggestions related to their learning needs since immigrating to Canada. Though the issues presented at each meeting varied, the most common concerns were related to the following subjects.

- Learning about Language
- Learning about Culture
- Learning about Canadian Community and Society
- Learning about Working in Canada

The following document has been prepared for the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's Community Connections Working Group and contains an overview of the information presented at each knowledge-exchange meeting and the researcher's comments on each subject. It concludes with the following overviews: Resources that Help Immigrant Learn; Access to Educational Opportunities; and, the researcher's recommendations for support and concluding remarks.

This document will be distributed to all assisting organizations as well as to individual meeting participants as requested. Many helpful suggestions were made during each knowledge-exchange meeting. These suggestions should be useful to both immigrant serving agencies and to the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre in identifying adult immigrant learning needs within Atlantic Canada and ways to support those needs.

All individual knowledge-exchange meeting reports are attached as appendices to this document (see appendices C through F).

"The government and the people of Canada helped us to come and to live here. We need to learn how to contribute to this country and to its people. We need to learn how we can share."

St John's Participant

OVERVIEW OF THE ADULT LEARNING KNOWLEDGE CENTRE (ADLKC)

<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/KnowledgeCentres/AdultLearning/>

The following overviews have been adapted from information contained in the AdLKC's Community Connections Circle Report dated 29-30 March, 2007.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre is an initiative of the Canadian Council on Learning, a national, independent, not-for-profit organization, funded through an agreement with Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Working with government, educational institutes, and community organizations, the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre seeks to develop a culture of adult learning that is accessible, relevant, and responsive to the needs and interests of all Canadians, as individuals and as community members. The work builds on the long tradition within Atlantic Canada of linking adult learning to social justice and community development. The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre recognizes and is committed to overcoming systemic barriers to adult learning based on language, race, class, and ethnicity.

Based in Fredericton, NB, the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre serves as a national centre of expertise and action in adult learning. Working with an Atlantic Canadian consortium of adult learning stakeholders, AdLKC's mission is to develop a pan-Canadian culture of adult learning that is accessible, relevant, and responsive to the needs and interests of all Canadians. Adult learning is considered to encompass a broad field which includes community development, literacy programs, late-entry to learning programs, and professional and personal development. Adult learning has a positive impact on individuals and communities, as well as the nation.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS WORKING GROUP

The Community Connections working group is a volunteer committee established by AdLKC. Its mandate is to assist AdLKC in creating, fostering, and enhancing regional and national networks in adult learning. The Community Connections working group has focused its efforts on building reference groups organized around five communities who are under-represented and marginalized in Atlantic Canada: Francophones, Aboriginals, African-Canadians, Immigrants, and Learners with Disabilities. The reference groups are intended to serve as a conduit between the knowledge centre and the communities, ensuring that the communities' issues are represented within the knowledge centre's activities.

OVERVIEW OF THE HALIFAX IMMIGRANT LEARNING CENTRE (HILC)

www.hilc.ns.ca

The Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre is the largest immigrant language provider in Atlantic Canada and has provided language and orientation training to newcomers with federal, provincial and municipal funding for the past twenty years. HILC has designed and currently delivers a wide range of programs that address the language learning goals of immigrants, including community, family learning, literacy, profession/sector specific and on site in the workplace language.

HILC is recognized across the country as a leader in the development and delivery of learning programs for immigrants and is sought after for its expertise and knowledge in the area of English as a Second Language, immigrant employment integration, distance delivery and curriculum and learning resource development.

As part of its mission to act in an advocacy role for immigrants, HILC has also developed a wide range of reports.

The most recent can be found on HILC's website at: <http://www.hilc.ns.ca/resources.php>

Gerry Mills

Executive Director

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre

OVERVIEW OF ASSISTING ORGANIZATIONS

The Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAIISA)

The Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies Inc. (ARAIISA) was officially formed in 1994 as a regional body to represent the needs of settlements agencies throughout the Atlantic Provinces. ARAISA currently has twelve member agencies from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI ANC)

www.peianc.com

The PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada is mandated to provide a wide variety of short-term settlement services and long-term social inclusion and community integration programs for immigrants. PEI ANC is also involved in numerous cross-cultural awareness and public education programs.

The Association for New Canadians (ANC)

www.anc.nf.cc

The Association for New Canadians is a non-profit, community based organization dedicated to the provision of settlement and integration services for immigrants and refugees in Newfoundland and Labrador. For nearly thirty years, the Association for New Canadians has provided language training, settlement assistance and programs and services to support all aspects of newcomer integration.

The Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc. (MCAF)

www.mcaf.nb.ca

The Multicultural Association of Fredericton was formed in 1974 to facilitate communication and understanding between persons of various cultural backgrounds in Fredericton and the surrounding areas. The mission of MCAF is to “celebrate strength in diversity by enabling meaningful exchange and full community participation among people of all backgrounds and circumstances”.

INTRODUCTION

Scope

In February and March 2008, the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre organized four knowledge-exchange meetings in each of the Atlantic Canadian Provinces on behalf of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's Community Connections Working Group. These meetings were aimed at identifying the particular learning needs of adult immigrants within Atlantic Canada.

During February and March, 2008, immigrant reference groups were brought together in each of the four Atlantic Canadian provinces to discuss issues related to adult immigrant learning needs. Meetings were held in: Halifax, NS; Charlottetown, PEI; St. John's, NL; and Fredericton, NB. In each city, a local immigrant-serving agency was identified as a host for the knowledge-exchange meeting. The organizations that participated in this process were all members of the Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA). The assisting organizations in each city were:

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- Fredericton – Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF)

During each meeting, participants identified issues and made suggestions related to their learning needs since immigrating to Canada. Though the issues presented at each meeting varied, there were many common concerns and suggestions which are presented in this report. More specific information concerning each meeting is contained within the individual meeting reports which are included as appendices to this report.

Participant Recruitment

The participants in each meeting were identified by the individual assisting organizations. Most participants had used the services of the organization at some point since their immigration to Canada. There were no formal requirements for the participants who attended each meeting; however, it was requested by the researcher that participants were functional in English at approximately a Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 5 proficiency or above. Due to the limited time allotted for each meeting, and the complications of having interpreters at group meetings, this was a necessary requirement to ensure that a constructive meeting took place.

Project Limitations

The range of immigrants who had the chance to participate in the project was limited for a number of reasons. The following are the most prominent limitations identified by the researcher.

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1. Only immigrants living in the region's capital cities participated. Therefore the report does not necessarily reflect the need of immigrants living in other areas in the region.
 2. To participate, immigrants required some connection with the host organizations in each province. The needs of immigrants who may not have sought settlement assistance or language training are not necessarily represented.
 3. All knowledge-exchange meetings were conducted in English. Therefore, the needs of Francophone immigrant learners are not necessarily represented
 4. All participants were relatively high level language learners. Therefore, the needs of lower level learners and literacy learners are not necessarily represented.

Despite these limitations, a broad spectrum of learning needs, settlement issues and recommendations were identified by participants.

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

In total, sixty-two newcomers participated in the knowledge-exchange meetings. The participants comprised a diverse group coming from a variety of personal and educational backgrounds and were able to draw experience from the following thirty-two countries:

• Afghanistan	• Iran	• Rwanda
• Argentina	• Iraq	• South Korea
• Cameroon	• Israel	• Sudan
• China	• Jordan	• Suriname
• Colombia	• Lebanon	• Taiwan
• D.R. Congo	• Liberia	• Thailand
• Egypt	• Myanmar	• Turkmenistan
• Eritrea	• Nigeria	• Uganda
• Ethiopia	• Peru	• United Kingdom
• France	• Poland	• Palestine (region)
• Guatemala	• Romania	

The ages of the participants ranged from nineteen to fifty-seven years old, with a mean age of thirty-seven years. The participants' time in Canada ranged from two months to just over eight years, with the average time in Canada being approximately just over two years. Overall, there were twenty-two male and forty female participants. The participants' entry categories varied as outline below:

Entry Category	Number of Participants
Permanent Resident - Family Class	9
Permanent Resident - Skilled Worker Class	6
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Provincial Nominee	14
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Business	3
Permanent Resident - Refugee Class	20
Refugee Claimant	3
Quebec-Selected Skilled Worker	1
International Student	2
Work Visa	1
Visitor's Visa	2
Participant did not specify	1
Total	62

More information about Canadian immigration programs is available from Citizenship and Immigration Canada:

www.cic.gc.ca

Eleven of the sixty-two participants identified themselves as Canadian citizens (approximately 18 %).

The following is a breakdown of world regions represented by the participants at the meeting. Percentages are rounded. Participants' countries are divided into world regions as defined in accordance with the United Nations' World Macro Regions and Components which are available online at:

www.un.org/Depts/dhl/maplib/worldregions.htm

- Eastern Europe – 6%
- Western Europe – 3%
- South-Central Asia – 10%
- South-East Asia – 5%
- Eastern Asia – 29%
- Western Asia – 10%
- Northern Africa – 6%
- Eastern Africa – 8 %
- Western Africa – 6%
- Middle Africa – 3%
- Central America – 3%
- South America – 10%

An analysis of the information provided indicated that the participants were both a highly skilled and highly educated group of individuals. Forty-six (74%) of the participants had attended some type of post-secondary education program which ranged from college to the PhD level. Although four participants did not specify their previous education level, only five (8%) of participants indicated a formal education level below a high-school diploma. All of these participants had entered Canada as refugees. However, overall, there were no notable correlations between formal education levels and the participants' country of origin or immigration entry category.

The participants reported a number of motivations for deciding to immigrate to Canada. The following are the five most common responses. They are not listed in any particular order.

- To seek better opportunities for my children.
- To live in a free country and to build a better future.
- For high quality education systems.
- For personal safety / to escape conflict.
- To reunite with family

Over fifty percent of the participants indicated that they were currently employed. However, most did not believe that their work was equal to their level of education and experience and none were employed in their previous professional fields. The participants expressed great frustration with the lack of recognition of their previous education and professional experience. Most expressed a desire to return to formal education in Canada at the university level but there were notable barriers to making this a reality.

The table below indicates some of the participants' previous work experience and education corresponding to their current work in Canada. It also shows their aspirations for work and education in Canada.

Previous Employment	Current Employment	Desire Work / Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ telecommunications engineer ▪ university academic ▪ electrical engineer ▪ critical care nurse ▪ trader & interpreter ▪ school teacher ▪ assistant director of a university ▪ university professor ▪ computer programmer ▪ registered nurse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ call centre representative ▪ settlement worker ▪ computer technician ▪ unemployed ▪ housekeeping ▪ child care ▪ paralegal ▪ lab assistant ▪ photo lab worker ▪ nursing home worker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ not specified ▪ PhD adult education ▪ not specified ▪ PhD nursing ▪ business administration ▪ international human rights ▪ law ▪ not specified ▪ information technology ▪ nursing

Overview of Immigration in the Atlantic Provinces

In order to understand adult immigrant learning needs in Atlantic Canada, it is important for educators to understand and be willing to investigate the historical, social and economic factors that affect immigrants in the region. The following section provides a brief overview of immigration trends in Atlantic Canada. All data in this section was taken from Citizenship and Immigration Canada's "Facts and Figures 2006" available online at: www.cic.gc.ca

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in 2006 5,307 permanent resident newcomers settled in the Atlantic Provinces; approximately 2.1 percent of the total number of permanent residents settling in Canada that year. The numbers for each province were:

- Newfoundland and Labrador – 511
- Prince Edward Island – 565
- Nova Scotia – 2,585
- New Brunswick – 1,646

Nova Scotia has traditionally received the largest proportion of immigrants in the Atlantic Region with more than 50% more newcomers settling in that province than the province with the next highest percentage – New Brunswick. Most newcomers in Nova Scotia settle in or around the Halifax area. 75% of immigrants in Atlantic Canada live in the region's major urban areas.

The following table shows each province and territory's percentage of the total number of immigrants who entered Canada during the period of 1997 to 2006.

Province/territory	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Percentage distribution										
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Prince Edward Island	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Nova Scotia	1.3	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.7	1.0
New Brunswick	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.7
Quebec	12.9	15.3	15.3	14.3	15.0	16.4	17.9	18.8	16.5	17.8
Ontario	54.5	53.0	54.8	58.7	59.3	58.3	54.1	53.0	53.6	50.0
Manitoba	1.7	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.8	2.0	2.9	3.1	3.1	4.0
Saskatchewan	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	0.8	0.8	1.1
Alberta	5.9	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.5	6.4	7.2	7.0	7.4	8.2
British Columbia	22.1	20.7	19.0	16.5	15.4	14.9	15.9	15.7	17.1	16.7
Yukon	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Northwest Territories	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nunavut	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Province or territory not stated	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The numbers presented above show that Atlantic Canada receives a relatively low proportion of the total number of immigrants who come to Canada each year. Despite this low number, the need for immigrants in Atlantic Canada is no less great in the rest of the country – for population growth, for industry and for social development. To this end, the principles of adult education have a significant role to play in the recruitment, retention and education of immigrants in Atlantic Canada as well as in the education of the native-born population.

Collectively, the four cities chosen for the reference group meetings; Halifax, Charlottetown, St. John's and Fredericton represent approximately 60% of the total immigrant population in Atlantic Canada. In 2006, Halifax had the highest percentage of immigrants in the region with 36% of the total immigrant population.

Within the Atlantic Provinces, Nova Scotia was the first to develop an immigration strategy and a separate provincial Department of Immigration in January, 2005. At that time the current premier of Nova Scotia, Rodney McDonald, was sworn in as the province's first Minister of Immigration. This reaction was fuelled greatly by the government's concern to curb the natural rate of decline in the province's population. The major goal of the strategy was to set targets for retention and to more than double the number of immigrants attracted to the province by 2010 (Government of Nova Scotia News Release 26 Jan 05). All four Atlantic Provinces now have staff dedicated to immigration. Three of the provinces have developed immigration / population strategies. These are available online:

- New Brunswick – March 2008
<http://www.gnb.ca/3100/Promos/PS/index-e.asp>
- Newfoundland & Labrador – March 2007
<http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/immigration/pdf/strategydoc-mar07.pdf>
- Nova Scotia – January 2005
<http://www.novascotiainmigration.com/en-page7.aspx>

Population decline is arguably the most important factor driving immigration in the Atlantic Region so the development of concrete measures dedicated to immigration in each province is a positive advancement. The following excerpt from Ather Akbari (2004) provides a brief overview of population decline in the region.

The Current Atlantic Canada Trend

According to the 2001 Canadian Census, while Canada's population grew modestly, about 4.7 percent, during 1996-2001, population in Atlantic Canada during this same period declined by about 1.3 percent (30,000 people). While examining the factors contributing to such a decline we must consider three components of population growth. One is the natural component, measured as the difference between numbers of births and deaths. In 2004, the Nova Scotia government reported a consistent decline in the natural growth rate of provincial population since 1990...The second component is net-inter-provincial migration and out-migration. The Atlantic region lost about 38,000 people (native and foreign born) to other regions during 1996-2000. The third component of population growth is net immigration. While 5,420 immigrants arrived in Atlantic Canada during 1996-2001, about 8,415 of them left the region. To summarize, all three sources show declining population growth in Atlantic Canada, ultimately leaving our region with a significant challenge for the future.

Despite the problems indicated above, more recent statistics indicate that the immigration situation in Atlantic Canada has been improving. Immigration to all of the Atlantic Provinces has increased and all population growth in Atlantic Canada between 2001 and 2006 has been due to immigration. In addition retention rates have been steadily improving. The table below, prepared by Nabihah Atallah of Citizenship and Immigration Canada for the Atlantic Mayors Conference, 2008, shows that there has been notable improvement in the retention of immigrants in the region.

Retention of Immigrants 2001-2006

Province	Total Immigrants 2001-2006	Remaining in province 2006	Retention rate 2006	Retention rate 2001
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,745	1,440	52%	48%
PEI	1,598	855	54%	60%
New Brunswick	5,701	4,300	75%	67%
Nova Scotia	10,876	6,900	63%	48%
Atlantic Total	20,920	13,495	65%	52%

Source: Statistics Canada -Census 2006 & Citizenship & Immigration Canada - Atlantic Facts & Figures 2006

In his 2004 article, "Comings and Goings of Immigrants in Atlantic Canada" Ather Akbari provides a clear and concise overview of the historical immigration trends in the Atlantic region and also points to some of the issues related to immigrant populations settling and remaining in the area. A lack of diversity and a lack of economic opportunity are two reasons presented. However, he also notes, "...while most understand the need to increase immigration, a clear need remains to debunk myths about immigrants stealing jobs from the resident population and being a burden on public coffers." It is in the role of challenging myths and stereotypes, and of

promoting and developing cultural competencies in local populations and workplaces, that adult education can have a valuable role in Atlantic Canada.

The comments presented by participants during each of the knowledge-exchange meetings highlighted the fact that they had a great number of concerns about how native-born members of the community viewed them. Generally they felt that native-born Canadians did not understand immigrants, their role in the community and their reasons for immigrating to Canada. Adult educators have the tools and the responsibility to help both immigrants and native-born Canadians develop more cooperative and understanding communities.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

The major topics discussed at each knowledge-exchange meeting were:

- learning in the community
- learning about work
- educational experience and opportunities within Canada
- difficulties experienced since settling in Canada and barriers to learning

Due to the differing composition of participants at each meeting, certain topics received more or less attention depending on the discussions that resulted. In addition, due to evolution in the research process and because of different language levels and familiarity with particular concepts by participants, the questions posed to each group varied slightly or were rephrased to best represent the major topics listed above. The following eight questions provided the framework for each meeting:

- 1. What do you want to learn about your community?***
- 2. What do you need to learn about working in Canada?***
- 3. What has been difficult for you since coming to Canada?***
- 4. What people and organizations have been helpful to you since coming to Canada?***
- 5. What opportunities for learning / education would you like to have?***
- 6. What stops you from participating in learning opportunities?***
- 7. What does your community need to know about immigrants?***
- 8. What should be done to help immigrants learn?***

ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION GATHERED

The information presented during each of the knowledge-exchange meetings was gathered in a number of ways:

- The researcher took notes during each session.
- Each participant completed a short survey noting information about their personal background, education and immigration to Canada. This data was later compiled by the researcher.
- The sessions were video-recorded and later transcribed and combined with the researcher's notes.
- Each participant was given an afterthought sheet, which listed the major concepts that were being discussed during the meeting. These sheets gave the participants the option to take their own notes during the meetings and were collected and compiled with the transcribed information and researcher notes. (Participants at the HILC meeting did not complete afterthought sheets; this aspect was added after that initial meeting.)

The information gathered was divided by the researcher into categories which represented the major concepts discussed during each meeting. These concepts varied slightly at each meeting and are listed in the individual meeting reports. The overall concerns and suggestions of the participants, as determined by the researcher, are contained in this report.

In order to add context to the information provided, interviews were conducted with key service providers at MISA and HILC. Each section presented in the following pages includes a brief overview of the topic of discussion and is followed by the issues that were mentioned by the participants, and their recommendations. This is followed by the researcher's comments on the subject. In order to combine similar topics of discussion, the points gathered from participants have been rephrased by the researcher and are not direct quotes from the participants themselves.

The final two sections of this report contain a list of resources identified by the participants as being helpful in their learning to adapt to life in Canada, and the participants' suggestions for helping immigrants learn. Once again, all points have been rephrased by the researcher in order to combine similar topics of discussion.

LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE

"...the woman could not speak English very well....the man could not understand her, so I tried to help but I could not understand her either....For the woman, she could not tell us what she needed because she could not speak English. She could not communicate and she was left with that grief in her heart."

St John's Participant

The topic of language was discussed widely throughout each knowledge-exchange meeting. All participants noted the importance of learning English not only as a functional ability but also from a social and cultural perspective. Generally, English was seen by the participants as the lynchpin to gaining access to Canadian society, to the workplace and to their local communities.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- There is a high cost associated with taking some language training programs.
- Many free language training programs have waiting lists and restrictions on who can attend.
- The Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) assessment tool is unrealistic; testing is poorly implemented and is unfair.
- Learning about bilingualism is important but it is a strange concept. Learning French is important but it is not good enough. You must know English here.
- We need to learn about Canadian English. Learning English is not only hard for people who are learning a new language, it can also be difficult for people who already speak the language. Learning about accents and how to speak in the Canadian way is important so that you can understand each other.
- Learning to communicate is the most difficult thing. It is not just about learning English but about how to communicate in a new culture.
- ESL classes do not provide immigrants with the chance to learn from native speakers. Other students in the class do not provide an adequate opportunity to learn how to converse.
- Many immigrants require specific vocabularies for work that are not taught in many ESL programs; for example, learning about business or the medical system.
- We need to learn how to react to people in the workplace, what kind of speech is formal and informal, how to be kind to people and how to speak to everyone appropriately.

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- Learning a language takes a long time, especially for older people. Canadians need to have patience with immigrants. Also, classes should focus more on ways of teaching adults.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Using conversation groups is an excellent way to both practice English and to learn about your community and more culturally based aspects of the language (idioms, small-talk, slang, etc.).
- Immigrants often feel too shy to communicate with English speakers. They need places to practice.
- Learning English should be the number one priority for immigrants. It's not just about learning the language but also about participating in your community. All immigrants should take ESL classes.
- Involve native English speakers in ESL training programs to help immigrants learn about the culture. Volunteers are helpful.
- Provide English programs that are focused on conversational English.
- Provide English programs that are rooted in specific work places and professions.
- Provide opportunities for classes where people are closer in age.
- Provide more free language training programs.

“...in the beginning, language is a barrier that has to be crossed. Immigrants must gain confidence to cross that barrier, to overcome their fears and get out and start talking to people.”

Halifax Participant

RESEARCHER COMMENTS

Learning English as a Function of Culture

When discussing the concept of learning a new language, it must be noted that learning a language is never simply about learning a functional skill. Language is a function of culture; it is intrinsically intertwined with history, social and cultural norms and subaltern understandings. The ways that we communicate are not only related to the words that we speak, but also to a number of other factors including body language, tone of voice, our choice of vocabulary, level of formality and assumptions about a person's previously held knowledge. For a person attempting to learn a new language, learning about these other factors is just as important as learning the language itself. A person's understanding of the culturally specific aspects of a language can have a significant effect on their ability to interact with other people and to actively participate in society.

A topic of continuous discussion by participants in the meetings was the issue of being able to communicate with native born people in their community. Engaging in 'small talk' was one of the most commonly identified barriers to making friends, participating in the workplace and engaging in social activities. The concept of 'small talk' is both difficult to define and virtually unquantifiable; sports, politics, family matters, jokes, and the weather are all parts of 'small talk'. It is the way that we communicate in our communities, families and workplaces. However, without having a fundamental understanding of the background and cultural relativity of many of these topics, participants generally felt that they were unable to achieve full integration into the community.

While it would be virtually impossible to teach someone about all of these cultural factors, learning opportunities that go beyond the functional aspects of English are required for immigrants who are seeking integration into their local communities. These opportunities can be sought out in a number of ways. Both formal and informal learning opportunities can have a great effect on an immigrant's level of comfort and interaction within their community. Organizations could be encouraged to offer activities, programs and services that support immigrants in their community.

In formal language training programs, instructors who encourage the discussion of informal and social topics and the cultural aspects of language will serve their students much better than those who do not. For immigrants themselves, seeking out learning opportunities within the community is an important step in this process. During the knowledge-exchange meetings, participants noted a number of sources within their community that helped them to both improve their English and gain cultural knowledge which included the following:

- parent support groups
- conversation groups
- professional associations
- community centres
- volunteering at schools, hospitals, and for community events
- faith groups

Learning English for Work

Just as immigrants have specific language learning needs associated with community and culture, they also face a number of challenges linked to learning English that are specific to work. The participants noted a number of concerns that ranged from learning functional skills related to terminology and profession-specific vocabulary to more informal skills, related to interaction with customers, clients, co-workers and employer-employee relationships. Mastering these skills is often dependent on learning about the use of language; tone, inflection, word choice and stress are all a part of this skill set. For many immigrants, learning these subtleties is one of the most difficult challenges in the workplace.

Communication is one of the particular challenges that immigrants face in the workplace. It may be that they do not want to ask questions because they are embarrassed that they did not understand something, while in some cultures to question may be seen as disrespectful or as a source of shame. Programs for immigrant learners that facilitate communication skills can give immigrants and their employers the space and the tools they require to discuss and resolve problems related to their work.

A number of participants noted that the informality and the perceived lack of structure of Atlantic Canadian workplaces was a change from their previous experience and contributed to their difficulties communicating in the workplace. In Canada, workplace hierarchy is often not a rigidly structured system; employers and employees call each other by their first names and work discussions take place in both formal and informal settings. The use of small talk and the ability to understand figures of speech were also topics of discussion. Many participants noted that learning English was not enough in itself to learn how to navigate the workplace but that they needed to learn these other aspects of language to be able to find meaningful employment within Canada.

The ability to understand idioms is another hurdle to overcome when learning language. For example, phrases like; meet you half way, tightening our belts, eyes on the prize, and I have a lot on my plate represent only a sample of the expressions that Canadians use every day in their workplaces. Not only are they commonplace but they can often dominate a conversation. Without a strong cultural grounding, these phrases can be meaningless; they are not found in a dictionary nor necessarily taught in traditional language training programs. They are part of a skill set that is usually learned over a great deal of time and through experience and represent just one of the language-related challenges that immigrants face in the Canadian workplace.

During each meeting, participants discussed the need for learning programs dedicated to educating them about language specific to the workplace. This type of language training was particularly important to internationally educated professionals such as medical professionals and engineers. There were a variety of suggestions about how to help immigrants learn these skills, which included programs in workplaces and classroom language training programs. Participants noted that learning these skills was crucial for immigrants to gain access to their fields of experience within Canada.

English for work programs are offered by organizations in Atlantic Canada in a variety of capacities, the majority as classroom learning programs to prepare immigrants for work, while one operates in immigrants' actual places of work in coordination with their employers. Pre-

employment, classroom-based language training programs teach immigrants skills that are related job-searching, networking, writing e-mails and language specific to professions. While post-employment programs work to respond to challenges immigrants have in the workplace such as communication. Examples of some of these programs offered by the organizations that assisted in this project can be seen in Appendix B.

Literacy Education

Though it was not mentioned specifically by meeting participants, who were not at a literacy level, the needs of literacy level immigrants should not be overlooked. Literacy programs for immigrants exist throughout the Atlantic Region, but each organization's ability to provide programming varies. Immigrants participate in literacy programs for a variety of reasons; they may have little or no formal education, they may come from an oral tradition and have therefore never developed reading and writing skills. For whichever reason, literacy programs are an important resource for immigrants living in Atlantic Canada.

Often, immigrants participating in literacy programs have unique challenges. Students who have never attended school, or have no experience with written text may have to learn certain skills before even approaching a learning program. Holding a pencil, learning to memorize and recognizing symbols in and out of context are parts of this skill set. Literacy is a necessary skill for living in Canadian society, but there is limited support for immigrants who are participating in these programs. Many immigrants have to balance their home and work life with school. They are often working full-time jobs and attending school on their time off. Taking time off for school, child care programs, and other resources that may help in their learning are often not affordable to these immigrants as they are often in low-paying jobs because of their lack of literacy skills.

Additional support is required to provide adequate access for immigrants to literacy programs and for organizations to more fully develop their programming in this area. See Appendix B for some examples of literacy programs in the region.

LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE

"I always wonder why any Canadian you meet is smiling and greeting you even though he does not know you. I think it is a sign of hope, peace and stability."

St. John's Participant

The discussions surrounding the topics of culture and cultural integration were perhaps the most varied during the knowledge-exchange meetings. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds and, depending on the nature of their previous cultures and their experiences in other countries, they noted difficulties with a variety of topics. These included; Canadian food, lifestyle, media and family relationships. A notable concern was the difficulty in learning to balance one's previous beliefs with adapting to Canadian values.

The following points put forth by the participants represent their concerns related to learning about Canadian culture and becoming active participants in their communities. Many of the participants noted that learning to adapt to life in a Canadian community is the most difficult learning process during settlement and the one that takes the most time. The following points represent both the participants' current learning needs and those that they experienced upon arrival in Canada.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- Learning to adapt to new social standards is often difficult and confusing. Codes in the community are different than in our home countries. We have to learn new ways to communicate and to behave.
- Social networking is a major obstacle. Even after years in the community it is difficult to develop strong ties. It is difficult to make friends outside of the immigrant community. Canadians are often not open to immigrants.
- There are very few community and social activities here. People are focused only on the computer and the TV, especially children. This makes it difficult to interact in the community.
- For many immigrants, learning to live in an individualistic society is a very difficult obstacle to overcome. It requires a complete reorientation of your outlook on living.
- Discrimination in the community can be a problem. Sometimes people are not open to immigrants or are not used to living in a diverse community.
- The television and radio are very hard to understand for lower level language learners, but even for more fluent people because there are so many cultural things involved.

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- We need to learn about what topics are taboo, what we should and shouldn't talk about with people in our community (e.g. religion and age).
 - We are concerned about the values that our children will grow up with and how they will differ from our own.
 - We need to learn how to deal with older children as they become adults. In my country children stay with their families until they are married. Here, many want to move out or to live with their friends. This is a difficult thing to understand.
 - Dealing with food is a very difficult thing. It is very different from our home country and takes a lot of time to get used to how to buy it, prepare it and eat it.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immigrants should have the chance to teach other immigrants what they have learned. They should be able to teach each other subjects that are relevant to their lives in the community.
- Immigrants need to be willing to let go of old assumptions. You cannot assume that you know everything and you need to be willing to adjust.
- Don't be shy. Participate in your community, community centres, schools, and town or city events.
- Learning about culture takes time. You need to be patient, but Canadians need to be patient with immigrants too.
- We want people to be willing to learn about us, so that they will have a better understanding of immigrants in the community. In a country that needs immigrants, people should be more educated about immigration in Canada.
- There should be more organizations to help facilitate immigrants' inclusion in the community.
- Immigrants have different views and different ideas. Organizations should host more conferences to allow them to express what they feel and what they think and provide places where they can express themselves.
- Provide forums for immigrants to gain access to their communities. For example, volunteering can provide opportunities for immigrants to access cultural knowledge.
- Provide access to workshops and information on discrimination and immigrants' rights and responsibilities.

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- Access to conversation groups and volunteer tutors is very useful in learning about a variety of topics about Canada; the community, news, sports, and politics. All of these things are important to know to be able to participate in the culture.

"The community should help immigrants integrate into the Canadian society and help train them in what they want to do because immigrants have a positive attitude toward learning."

Fredericton Participant

RESEARCHER COMMENTS

For most immigrants, learning about Canadian culture is a long process. It would be virtually impossible to design a learning program that is intended to teach someone solely about culture. Cultural knowledge is gained through personal experience. Interacting with Canadians, watching television, reading the news, socializing in the community and workplace are all contributing factors to developing cultural knowledge. That being said, there are great opportunities for local organizations, businesses and communities to integrate immigrants into their programs. Putting effort into attracting, recognizing and including immigrants in the community and the workplace can have a great effect on their ability to learn to cope with and adapt to life in Canada. Organizations could be encouraged to reach out to immigrants in their community and to promote programs aimed at the immigrant population.

In each of the knowledge-exchange meetings, participants noted that volunteering was perhaps the best way to gain access to their local communities and to gain cultural knowledge. Volunteering gave them the chance to meet Canadians, to practice their English skills, to interact with people in their community and to have the opportunity to learn about and discuss a variety of topics. In addition, volunteering was seen as a way to begin to develop social networks and Canadian work experience. Increasing interaction in the wider community is an important step for adult immigrants to develop the social and cultural capital that is an important part of their integration and settlement in Canada.

LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY

“Canadian society is not based on community. At home, the community is a communal society. For example, if my child made a mistake or did something bad, a neighbour could speak to him about it. We help each other. That is not the way things work here. Everyone is an individual.”

Fredericton Participant

The following points concerning community have been identified by the researcher as the points related to adapting to life in Atlantic Canadian society, as opposed to learning about culture. These included topics such as Canadian law and the legal system, school systems, insurance systems, dealing with business people, and dealing with conflict. Many of the points represent learning needs that are associated with using Canadian public and business services. They are, for the most part, settlement related concerns.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- Learning about Canadian law is hard to do (court systems, laws and by-laws, the police, etc.). There are not many resources available to get information on these topics. Most people know what crimes are, but not how to interpret the rules.
- We need to learn about how insurance works for many things; personal, medical, house, and car insurance and for starting a business. There are few resources to learn about how systems like insurance work.
- Immigrants have a hard time identifying social standards for dealing with people; helping others, resolving disagreements, trying to find a job, knowing what you are allowed to do.
- Learning about how the community works e.g. how to shop, what road signs mean, and how to use public transportation systems. These are difficult processes to understand.
- There is not enough information available about social systems and how they work (health care system, school system, government services, etc.).
- There are very few interpretation services available. There is interpretation available in some hospitals but it is by appointment only. This is only useful if you are having a planned procedure.
- Learning about scheduling and being on time for appointments is a very difficult thing to understand and to get used to. Time management in the Canadian way is a skill that we have to learn.

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- We need to learn how to do household chores in Canada; how to use the stove, clean the house, and use the telephone book.
 - There are very long waits for medical treatment and we need to learn about the difference between medical resources such as walk-in clinics, family doctors and specialists. What is the difference and which is better? The medical system is very difficult to understand and confusing to deal with.
 - We need to learn how to live as a family in a new country.
 - We need to learn about different weather and how to cope with it here. We need to know how to determine what the proper clothing to wear is.
 - Canadians are not always willing to help immigrants. They are often easily frustrated.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Most problems in the community can be remedied with time, but immigrants must be open to change and willing to see mistakes as learning opportunities. You need to be patient when learning to live in a new place
- Provide reading materials about Canadian law in multiple languages. It is something that immigrants need to learn about as soon as possible and can not necessarily wait until they are fluent enough in an official language to read about it in English or French.
- Provide education to people in service industries about helping immigrants.
- There is not a lot of consistency in settlement services. There should be national standards for newcomers after they come to Canada. There are a lot of resources available when immigrating to Canada but after you are here, services are not equal.
- Increase programs that are available at immigrant serving agencies and increase the availability of programming for immigrants in the community.
- There should be more community involvement in the immigration process and more immigrant associations within the community.
- Offer programs for immigrant parents at local schools, explaining the systems that their children will be involved in.

"Learning about the community is a long process. It takes time and you need to experience things first hand to be able to deal with situations and learn different parts of it."

Halifax Participant

RESEARCHER COMMENTS

Overall, the participants' comments concerning community and society were linked primarily to settlement issues. For most people, moving to a new community can be a difficult experience in itself. Many immigrants come to Canada where social, legal, medical and education systems are often completely different from their past experiences and in some cases, Canada offers immigrants their first experience with established public services. This can be an extremely disorienting experience.

For many of the participants, adapting to life in Canada has meant letting go of a number of their assumptions and previous social experiences. Many immigrants are required to learn an entirely new set of skills and in some cases learn to adapt to new social norms. Assumptions about culture, gender, language and race can all play a part in this process.

In Canada, many of our social systems are very complex and bureaucratic and take most Canadians a lifetime of learning to grasp. For immigrants entering Canada, these systems can be very difficult to understand and to navigate. The amount of knowledge that immigrants are required to assimilate when entering Canada, coupled with the added pressures of settlement, finding a job, and orienting children to a new community, makes learning about Canadian society an even more difficult process.

These learning experiences vary widely amongst immigrants, depending on their country of origin and previous experiences. An immigrant who has entered Canada as a refugee and who has spent the last ten years of his life in a refugee camp has vastly different learning needs than a skilled worker coming from Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, throughout the knowledge-exchange meetings, participants with differing backgrounds noted many of the same concerns and learning requirements about life in their communities.

Throughout the meetings there was confusion about what settlement programs were available to newcomers. Many participants were unaware of the programs and services that were available to them in the community and noted that their desire to engage in learning opportunities, especially post secondary education and professional training, was inhibited by a lack of information about available programs. A number of participants recommended that more standardized settlement programs should be offered within each province.

Immigrant serving agencies are best suited to deal with these concerns but community and government support for these organizations varies across the region. Multicultural organizations, settlement agencies and other immigrant serving organizations in the region are generally, deeply connected to the immigrant population and are often staffed by immigrants who have been through the immigration process themselves. They are well suited to articulate the learning needs of immigrants and to deliver learning programs that help to both acclimatize and integrate immigrants into life in Canada.

Schools can also play an important role in this process. While in Canada, many immigrants will come into contact with the school system at some point, either personally or through their children. Using the school system as a starting point to provide information to immigrant

parents about community resources, social systems and cultural standards could be a viable way to engage adult immigrants in this learning process. In addition, providing immigrant parents with information about aspects of the Canadian education system such as school and social standards, disciplinary systems, curriculum, and the parent-teacher relationship, is a way to help immigrants adapt to their new communities and to understand the education that their children will be receiving in Canada.

LEARNING ABOUT WORKING IN CANADA

"We need to learn skills that can help us to have a good level in the workplace, to be able to achieve our goals in life and to be able to help people in the community."

Newfoundland Participant

The topic of employment was discussed widely throughout the knowledge-exchange meetings. Virtually all of the participants agreed that finding meaningful and adequate employment is the biggest challenge for immigrants coming to Canada.

Immigrants come to Canada with a variety of personal and educational backgrounds and finding employment opportunities that match their experience can be a major hurdle to cross. The participants noted a number of obstacles to this goal. These ranged from learning the norms of working in Canada such as wage systems and application procedures, to more specific issues such as accreditation, dealing with professional associations, computer skills and labour laws. Overall, the participants' primary concerns about employment were linked to their concerns about integrating into the Canadian community and by extension, into the Canadian workplace. Many of the participants were not yet employed, which may have contributed to their focus on learning about the workplace.

Depending on their background, immigrants have a variety of learning needs related to working in Canada. These needs range from the basic skills-related requirements for finding employment to advanced learning needs related to topics such as Canadian economics, tax-laws, processes for starting and maintaining a business and professional accreditation.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- Too many immigrants are working in jobs that are below their level of experience and education.
- The information provided to immigrants prior to immigration about the Canadian job market does not show the true picture.
- Standards and expectations for work and professional behaviour are very different in Canada than in many places and they are hard to learn.
- The use of resumes and cover-letters is different in Canada than in many countries. In Canada you need to learn how to sell yourself; this is a difficult concept to grasp.
- There are very few places that provide adequate, low cost support to immigrants to help them understand how to use and produce useful work documents such as resumes, cover-letters and e-mails.

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- There are many barriers to developing the social networks that can help your job search.
 - We need to learn about workers' rights. Employers sometime take advantage of immigrants because they don't know all of their rights and aren't sure how to fight things such as lay-offs.
 - Canadian employers do not see the value in immigrant labour. Immigrants' experience and qualifications are not recognized.
 - Learning to 'sell yourself' is very difficult for many immigrants. It is a constant learning process. This is not how many of us learned to approach an employer. There are few resources to help you learn how to do this.
 - We need to learn how to apply for jobs, how to prepare a resume and how to prepare for interviews.
 - We need to learn what education and experience is required for each job and profession.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Speaking to job counsellors and other immigrants who have already gone through the process of finding a job in Canada is very useful but there are not a lot of places where we can do this.
- Immigrants must be willing to learn constantly. They should seek out opportunities to learn about the Canadian job market.
- Provide workshops and training focused on specific professions.
- Provide workshops and training focused on Canadian workplace culture and operations.
- Increase support for programs that educate immigrants about the Canadian workplace, identifying skills, selling oneself and producing good applications.
- Provide opportunities for Canadian employers to learn about immigrants' motivations for coming to Canada and the value of immigrant workers and professionals.
- Provide programs that increase access for professional immigrants to their fields of training and experience.
- Provide clear pathways and resources for immigrants who are seeking recognition for their previous work and educational credentials.

RESEARCHER COMMENTS

For many immigrants, learning about the Canadian workplace is a process that is intertwined with their previous experience, education, and qualifications as well as with a number of social factors. In many cases, these issues can be compounded by assumptions, attitudes and stereotypes that are held by both immigrants themselves and native-born Canadians.

In Atlantic Canada, many immigrants enter under the “Provincial Nominee Program” or as a “Skilled Worker”. Generally speaking, these newcomers are highly skilled and highly educated people. Nevertheless, once they arrive, many hold educational and professional qualifications that are not recognized by Canadian employers. In most cases, professional accreditation is guided by government regulation and is defined and administered by professional associations within each province. There is a need for programs to address this issue and to assist immigrant employees in adapting their previously acquired skills to the Canadian environment.

For employed immigrants, a lack of knowledge about language, culture and professional standards can cause misunderstandings and friction in the workplace. In each of the meetings, participants noted that they wanted to do the best jobs that they could in Canada, but because they were unfamiliar with Canadian norms they were often hesitant in their actions and afraid to make mistakes. In many cases, they also felt trapped in low paying jobs because employers believed that they were not familiar enough with ‘the Canadian way’ of doing things. Collectively, these issues suggest a need for learning programs directed at both immigrants and Canadian employers.

For unemployed immigrants, and for immigrants working in jobs outside their fields of experience, learning programs are required to assist them with employability skills, certification and accreditation. Many participants noted that working in Canada was very different from their previous experiences; communication skills, dress standards, interview and computer skills, resume writing and information on job markets were all topics that were discussed during the meetings.

Programs that offer learning opportunities and cultural training for both immigrants and native-born Canadians are important steps in creating more understanding workplaces. In Atlantic Canada, immigration is seen by provincial governments as one of the primary ways to address employment shortages and to advance local economies. Programs that facilitate immigrants’ access to Canadian workplaces have the potential not only to advance adult immigrant learning but also the broader goals of immigration and immigrant retention in the region.

“We need to learn about the employee-employer relationship in Canada. In our country the relationship is very strict, here it seems to be very casual and friendly but it is hard to know where those lines are drawn.”

Fredericton Participant

RESOURCES THAT HELP IMMIGRANTS LEARN

During the meetings, participants identified a number of groups, organizations and people within their local communities that had been helpful in addressing their learning needs since immigrating to Canada. Many of these were specific to their local areas but the following were most commonly mentioned by participants.

A common theme in each of these examples is their community-centred and voluntary nature. Volunteerism was discussed at each of the meetings as something that was very important to immigrants in Canada. The following is a summary of the discussions about community volunteer programs

- they allow you to access your community
- they make you feel like you belong to the community
- colleagues are often willing to help you learn and give you information
- they provide a place for people to learn about small talk and about the culture
- people are willing to give you references
- they help you learn about life and organizations in your community
- they can help you learn about being a parent in the community

The following groups, organizations and people were the most commonly mentioned by participants:

- ***Immigrant Serving Agencies***
 - these organization are very helpful in learning about settling in the community
 - provide you with information about living and working in your community
 - provide programs and workshops focused on specific topics like finding a job
 - provide language training
- ***Canadian Friends and Other Immigrants***
 - in general, Canadian people are very helpful as compared to other countries; you just have to be willing to open up, to talk to them and ask questions
 - help you learn how to deal with Canadians and social situations
 - help you learn how to live in Canada
 - help you learn about organizations in your community
- ***National Group Websites and Local, National Community Groups***
 - often have discussion groups in your native language and about a number of topics
 - provide a place for you to share your experiences and frustrations
 - provide a place for you to connect to other immigrants in your community
 - provide a place for you to learn from other immigrants who have already gone though the process of moving to Canada

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- ***Community Centres***
 - are very helpful to families
 - help you and your children meet people in the community
 - provide resources for helping you with your kids
 - give parents a chance to volunteer with other parents in the community
 - offer programs focused on parenting and personal growth
 - some provide free taxi-service that helps people to attend their programs
 - a place where you can discuss problems you are having and the staff can help you to learn to deal with those problems
 - are comfortable environment that help you to be less shy and to talk to Canadian people

 - ***Faith Groups***
 - some bring immigrants to Canada
 - the people are very friendly and willing to help you adapt to life in the community
 - some support immigrant families
 - can help you learn to communicate with other people in Canada
 - can act as your tutors to living in Canada
 - help you with problems or when you are confused about something
 - some act as a local national community group

ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

For many of the participants, accessing educational opportunities was a difficult process. While many participants mentioned that there were a number of educational opportunities available, and that they were appreciative of that fact especially for their children, there was a feeling that for adults many programs were inaccessible. The following points provide an overview of the comments expressed by participants during the meetings.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Barriers to Accessing Educational Opportunities

- The high cost of post secondary education.
- There is a lack of recognition of our previous experience.
- The high cost of some ESL programs / free programs sometimes have long waiting lists.
- It is difficult to know about what programs are preferable and which organizations are the best ones to go to.
- Child care is very expensive. It makes it difficult for school and work.
- Some classes are not accessible unless you are unemployed. Some do not accept employed immigrants, while others happen during working hours.
- It is difficult to access opportunities to upgrade skills without going back to school for a full-fledged program.
- Some immigrants are required to get a job as soon as possible, which does not leave time to return to school.
- Discrimination in the school system and in post-secondary education is a problem.

I would be more likely to engage in educational opportunities if...

- there were more low-cost and free ESL training programs.
- there were programs that allowed immigrants to access educational opportunities within their fields of experience.
- there were better systems for recognizing immigrants' educational credentials.
- there were spaces for immigrants to meet to discuss issues.

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- it took less time to upgrade my skills.
 - there were better guarantees for a job after finishing school.
 - the cost was not so high.
 - there were government programs or incentives to support immigrants who want to upgrade their skills.
 - my previous achievements were recognized.
 - child care was cheaper/ there were better programs/ was more readily available.
 - there was better or consolidated information about university programs available.
 - I had a better understanding of the programming that was available.

RESEARCHER COMMENTS

In addition to the barriers mentioned by participants, conversations with service providers indicated that there can also be social and psychological issues that affect immigrants' participation in learning opportunities. For example, for those who have immigrated because of war, post-traumatic stress can make focusing on education a difficult process. In other cases, gender can play a role. For immigrants who come from countries where the rights of men and women are not equal, accessing education for women can often be more difficult. In addition, the stresses associated with settlement itself can be significant barriers to accessing and engaging in adult learning opportunities. Language is perhaps an obvious barrier, but many newcomers are also coping with other issues such as work and family life or perhaps they have come to Canada and left family members behind.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING ADULT IMMIGRANT EDUCATION

The following areas of support are presented as the researcher's recommendations for advancing adult immigrant education within Atlantic Canada. Details of each recommendation follow.

It should be noted that there are a number of programs that address these concerns already in existence in the Atlantic region. For an overview of some of the programs offered by the organizations that assisted in this project see Appendix B.

- 1. Support immigrant serving agencies that are already operating in local communities.**
- 2. Support community centres and other community organizations.**
- 3. Support local, national and cultural community groups.**
- 4. Support language training programs that supplement Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programming.**
- 5. Advance parent-support groups and immigrant self-help groups.**
- 6. Support immigrant workplace apprenticeship and mentoring programs.**
- 7. Encourage the development of welcoming communities and support education about immigration and diversity.**

Support immigrant serving agencies that are already operating in local communities.

Immigrant serving organizations in Atlantic Canada have a long standing relationship with both newcomers and their local communities. They, perhaps more than any other entity, know what the learning needs of newcomers in the community are and are well suited to represent the needs of immigrants. In most cases in Atlantic Canada, these organizations have developed working relationships with local partners and have well established programs that are dedicated to helping newcomers and their families integrate into the community. Nevertheless, programming throughout the region is uneven and organizations generally rely on project-based funding; thus, there are no guarantees of consistency or program development. In addition, funding is normally granted for a year at a time, making long-term planning difficult.

There is great opportunity to advance adult learning principles and activities for adult immigrants through these organizations and they should be seen as a venue to promote adult learning and especially lifelong learning within local communities. Their previously established relationships and networks with the local immigrants make them the perfect starting point to support adult immigrant learners throughout Atlantic Canada.

Support community centres and other community organizations.

Most community centres have a tradition of providing both formal and informal educational programs for both children and adults. Child care programs and groups, tutoring programs, support groups, and classes and information sessions on a variety of topics are common features of these organizations. Their mandates are generally intrinsically linked to creating a better community and providing a space for learning and cooperation.

Gaining access to the local community is a top priority for adult immigrants who have settled in Atlantic Canada and community centres can provide an entry point for that access. Community centres provide a place for adult immigrants, especially those with children, to interact with other members of the community, meet other families and parents, have their children meet new people, participate in classes, seminars and learning programs and begin to engage in community issues and processes in a meaningful and participatory way. Encouraging established community groups to support immigrants and their families can be an avenue for advancing adult learning opportunities and can serve as conduits for settlement, integration and learning on the part of both the newcomers and the local community. Encouraging similar programs focused on participation in schools, hospitals and other community organizations could also be an important source of support.

Support local, national and cultural community groups.

National and cultural community groups include any group that is comprised of people from a particular cultural or national background; for example, an African-Canadian Association or a Korean community website. National and cultural community groups exist within Canada and within local communities in a variety of configurations. Some may be formally established associations or societies, some may be linked with other multicultural associations while others

may be informal associations simply coming together for particular holidays or may exist only as a forum on the internet. Faith groups can also serve this role. In whatever configuration, national and cultural community groups can provide immigrants with a link to their previous home, cultures and communities. They provide a space for newcomers to share experiences and information, to compare and contrast best practices and to learn from one another. They can also provide newcomers with a sense of belonging and support when they are struggling to create a new life in Canada.

Throughout the knowledge-exchange meetings, participants mentioned these groups as being important sources of help in their learning to adapt to life in Canada. In addition to being educational tools for immigrants themselves, national and cultural community groups can provide an important source of information and education to the larger community by promoting diversity, cultural understanding and familiarity with the practices, holidays and events of other cultures.

Support language training programs that supplement Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programming.

A common theme that arose throughout the knowledge-exchange meetings was the need for immigrants to have access to language training that supplements LINC programming. The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program is the federally funded language training program that provides free basic French and English language training to adult permanent residents (www.servicecanada.gc.ca/en/goc/linc.shtml).

While this program is an invaluable tool to assist immigrants in learning a new language, it does not address the specific needs for newcomers to learn language skills beyond those required for settlement. In addition, LINC programming is only available to permanent residents. Once immigrants achieve citizenship, they are no longer eligible for the program.

Many immigrants require learning programs that supplement the LINC program. Programs related to work, to particular professions, or to understanding social and cultural norms in Canada are examples. In addition, many newcomers may come to Canada already having a functional understanding of English and require programs that will help them to advance their skills or adapt their language abilities to workplace requirements.

To varying degrees, organizations throughout Atlantic Canada have introduced programs of this sort within their communities. However, organizations rely on project-based funding and they have no guarantees to continue or advance these programs

Gaining access to equitable and meaningful employment is perhaps the number one issue for immigrants and represents an important part of ensuring their retention and participation in local communities. Support for language training programs that focus on workplace language and culture is an important step in addressing adult immigrant learning needs in Atlantic Canada.

Advance parent-support groups and immigrant self-help groups.

One of the primary reasons for immigrating to Canada noted by meeting participants was the search for better lives for their children. However, for a number of reasons, immigrant parents often face particular challenges in raising their children in Canada. There are countless learning curves and challenges associated with raising a child in an unfamiliar place. Often, immigrant parents are attempting to raise their children in a culture that they, themselves do not fully understand. They are sending their children to a school system that they did not attend, and they are faced with the difficulties associated with learning about the Canadian medical system, child-care services, community organizations, police and legal services, etc. Coping with these issues, while at the same time attempting to navigate a new language, can be a daunting task. It is evident that immigrants who are raising children can suffer from a considerable amount of stress and anxiety associated with these factors.

At the same time, immigrant parents can be faced with a form of role reversal within their families. A number of the participants noted that their children often learn more quickly than them, that they are more adaptable, more resilient and more immersed in the community due to the fact that they are attending school in Canada. This reality can force a situation in which immigrant parents are no longer the experts. While in some circumstances this can be helpful, in others it can cause additional stress within the family. Immigrant parents want to maintain themselves as authority figures and want to have the ability to teach their children and to do what is best for them. In addition they often struggle to maintain and promote indigenous cultural values with their children that may be contrary to what their children are learning.

Supporting groups that provide immigrant parents with help in raising their children is an important avenue for advancing the needs of adult immigrant learners. Education services that are related to school, medical, and social systems, Canadian culture and society and virtually any other topic related to settlement are important programs to provide immigrant parents. Cost-effective child care can also provide immigrant parents with the chance to attend school themselves. Immigrant support groups or immigrant self-help groups may also fall into this category. Many participants expressed a desire to have a space to discuss a variety of issues with other immigrants. Providing them with the space and resources to solve their own problems is also an important area of support.

This type of programming could be available from a number of sources including immigrant serving agencies, local police forces, libraries, community centres and public schools, and does not have to be directed solely to immigrant parents. Advancing this type of programming not only serves to support immigrant communities but can also help to foster greater social and cultural integration and promote multilateral learning within the local community.

Support immigrant workplace apprenticeship and mentoring programs.

One of the most important aspects of the settlement process for immigrants is accessing meaningful employment. This fact was noted by virtually all participants in the knowledge-exchange meetings. Intrinsicly linked with this process is the ability for newcomers to gain access to knowledge about their particular fields of work experience. Three primary concerns were noted: receiving recognition for their previous education; receiving acknowledgment of

their work experience; and having the opportunity to upgrade or adapt their skills to Canadian standards. The majority of employed participants noted that they were working in jobs that were below their level of education and experience. Most attributed this to the fact that Canadian employers and institutions were not willing to accept their previous academic credentials and/or work experience. While many participants admitted that they would have to learn about Canadian work and professional standards, they indicated that there were few, if any, ways to access learning opportunities related to their professions without returning to a full fledged post-secondary education program. This option was generally seen as an unacceptable or unattainable choice.

The primary suggestion to improve this situation was to implement work-related apprenticeship or mentoring programs where immigrants could have the opportunity to work in their professional fields and at the same time learn about Canadian workplaces, professional standards, and labour markets. Providing learning opportunities of this sort within local communities could be beneficial not only to the immigrants themselves but also to local businesses as well. Integrating immigrants into the workplace could provide not only an increase in available labour but also valuable resources including international connections and the opportunity to incorporate a great deal of international experience and education into the local business community. This type of programming is available in some centres in Atlantic Canada but in a limited capacity. See Appendix B for examples of this programming.

An essential requirement is to have a concrete system of credential recognition and prior learning assessment available to immigrants that will be recognized and accepted by both professional associations and the business sector. The Multi-Stakeholder Work Group developed in Nova Scotia is one possible avenue for addressing these concerns. See Appendix B for further details about this initiative.

Encourage the development of welcoming communities and support education about immigration and diversity.

Creating a welcoming community for immigrants can be instrumental in advancing adult immigrants' interest and participation in adult education activities. The more accepting, accommodating and interested communities and organizations are in the immigrant population, the more likely immigrants will be drawn into both formal and informal educational activities.

However, the somewhat homogeneous composition of Atlantic Canada can produce barriers for immigrants in the region. The practice of discrimination whether intentional or simply from a lack of understanding, can produce negative effects for immigrant learners and for communities as a whole. It is the impact, not the intent of their actions that community members and employers must consider when interacting with newcomers.

Supporting educational programs that inform residents about the realities of immigrant populations, and about the benefits and contributions that they provide, are important steps in advancing adult education within Atlantic Canadian communities. There may be many ways to address the specific needs of adult immigrant learners. However, the only way to create an equitable community and a culture of understanding about immigration is to educate the broader population of Atlantic Canada about the benefits of encouraging immigrants to settle in

the region. Adult education in Atlantic Canada has a long history of being linked with social justice and the advancement of individual communities. Providing educational opportunities about immigration and diversity fits well within this tradition.

Included in this, is the role that adult educators can play in dispelling stereotypes about immigrants; for example, that they are a drain on public resources. In his introduction to the Atlantic Immigration Conference (not dated), Halifax Mayor, Peter Kelly noted, "...immigrants are hard working, educated people who are interested in making a contribution to their new home. In fact, recent immigrants are more likely to have a university education than the general population of Atlantic Canada. We want this kind of citizen in Atlantic Canada". The fact that immigrants are often very educated people was also noted by participants throughout the knowledge-exchange meetings. In addition, recent statistics indicate that most immigrants currently living in Atlantic Canada are in fact employed since those who cannot find work tend to leave the region. On average immigrants have higher employment rates than native-born residents (Atallah, 2008).

As previously noted, adult immigrant education is in many ways linked with settlement. Thus, advancing participation and integration into the local community is a vital step in the learning process. However, the process of creating a welcoming community is not something that can be achieved by one organization. It must be a multilateral approach by all entities in the community. Politicians, policy makers, employers, schools, community organizations, and public institutions all have a part to play. Welcoming communities foster cooperation amongst community members, they respect diversity, make newcomers feel at home and recognize the contributions that immigrants can make.

RESEARCHERS CONCLUDING REMARKS

Supporting immigrant adult education is not a process that can take place in isolation. It can not be a process that is focused solely on immigrants themselves. As evidenced by the reports from each community knowledge-exchange meeting, one of the primary concerns of the participants was achieving effective integration into their local and national communities. Adult immigrant learning should be seen as a process that is intrinsically linked to settlement and by association, retention in Atlantic Canadian communities. In order for this process to be successful, learning must take place on both sides – on the part of the immigrants and the community itself.

Adult immigrants are engaged in a constant learning process. Although immigrants come to Canada with a variety of personal, educational, professional and financial resources, whether an individual has immigrated as a refugee or as an investor, they are in a constant process of adaptation, trial and error, and learning to cope with life in a new society. In the words of one participant:

"Coming to Canada was like getting up from a dream, everything was different and you don't know what anything is, even how to behave. There is a lot of confusion and you are disoriented. You are not familiar with the system, you need to learn about the society and that is very difficult but you need to learn your own way to discover everything that is around you."

Fredericton Participant

The Atlantic Region Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (ARAISA) has said that immigrants are, "...healthy people who require some assistance in making their way in a country where the 'rules of the game' are different." (Atlantic Immigration Conference, p.9). While the experiences of individual immigrants can vary greatly, it is not hard to imagine the disorienting effect of beginning a new life in a country that is unfamiliar. Learning about new social and economic systems, cultural norms, possibly a new language, while at the same time resettling your life and your family is a process that requires a great deal of trial and error. Personal adaptation can only be achieved through a process of continual learning. Learning to participate in a foreign culture is, for most individuals, a truly lifelong learning process.

It is important to remember that immigration is essentially about people, and in Atlantic Canada it is also about retaining people. It is important to encourage community support for immigration and settlement processes that foster diversity and inclusion within local communities.

Community adult education programs and activities have a key role in this process. The participants in this study all expressed a strong desire to engage in both formal and informal learning programs in their communities. However, the majority felt excluded from many opportunities for a variety of reasons. Creating immigrant-focused services, welcoming communities and welcoming workplaces plays an important role in mitigating

these feelings. If the goal is to increase participation in one's community through adult education activities, the approach of organizations and business must be broadened to support cultural differences and to be adaptable and aware of the needs of an increasingly diverse community.

Creating a welcoming community must go beyond drawing new immigrants to Atlantic Canada. Working together, Atlantic Canadians must create an environment that encourages new immigrants to choose to stay in the region; to put down roots; and to make Atlantic Canada their new home. Providing opportunities for immigrants and supporting them as they settle into their new environment are key elements in encouraging newcomers to stay in the region.

Atlantic Immigration Conference, p13

SOURCES

In addition to the web links provided throughout this paper, the following resources were used to inform the comments presented in this paper.

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Atallah, N. (2008). Update on Immigration, Prepared for the Atlantic Mayor's Congress.

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www.halifax.ca/council/mayor/AtlanticImmigration.html

Government of Nova Scotia News Release (2005, Jan 26). Premier Launches Provincial Immigration Strategy.

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Ibbitson, J. (2004, August 20). Why Atlantic Canada Remains White and Poor.

Mills, G. & Sheppard Kutcher, J. (2007, June 5). Multi-Stakeholder Work Groups – a Model for Change.

Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (2006, July). 2nd Nova Scotia Immigrant Women's Round Table: A Summary Report.

Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (2007, Nov 6). Key Immigration Terms: Nova Scotia Immigration and Information Fact Sheet.

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Appendix A



Informed Consent Form **A Study of Adult Immigrant Learning Needs in Atlantic Canadian Communities**

I have volunteered to participate in a study about adult immigrant learning needs in Atlantic Canadian communities. I consent to participate in this study and to complete a background questionnaire. The time to complete the questionnaire and focus group session is about two hours. I understand that I will receive \$50.00 for agreeing to participate in this focus group. Beyond payment for my participation I will probably not benefit from my participation in this study. However, the knowledge gained from this focus group will help with understanding adult immigrant learning needs in Atlantic Canadian communities.

My privacy will be protected in many ways:

- My name will not appear on any documents
- All results will be reported in group form
- If I say anything that could reveal my identity it will not be included in the report
- Anything I say, will be kept confidential
- Participation in this study will not in any way affect my involvement at (applicable organization).

I understand that the focus group session will be video recorded for the purposes of documenting the information presented. That recording will be destroyed after the information has been written.

I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any question and that I am free to stop participating in the focus group at any time. If I stop, I will still receive a \$50.00 payment for my participation. The research project and the contents of this consent have been explained to me and I have received a copy of this consent (if requested). I agree to participate in the study as outlined.

Participant (written signature)

Participant Printed Name

Date

Researcher (written signature)

Researcher Printed Name

If you wish to obtain information about the outcome of the study it can be obtained from:

(researcher's contact information)

Adult Immigrant Knowledge-Exchange Meeting Questionnaire

1. What is your age?

2. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

3. What was your country before coming to Canada?

4. What is your first language?

5. What was your date of arrival in Canada?

6. Why did you decide to come to Canada?

7. What was your immigration category when you came to Canada?

Permanent Resident – Skilled Worker

Permanent Resident – Business Class

Permanent Resident – Provincial Nominee

Permanent Resident – Refugee Class

Permanent Resident – Family Class

Work Visa

International Student

Refugee Claimant

8. Are you now a Canadian Citizen?

Yes

No

9. Did you have family or friends in Canada before coming to Canada?

Yes

No

10. Did you come to Canada with family members?

Yes

No

11. What is the highest level of education that you have achieved?

12. Where did you achieve that education level?

13. Have you studied in Canada? If yes, what classes did you attend?

Yes

No

14. Do you want to study in Canada? What would you like to study?

Yes

No

15. Did you work before you came to Canada? If yes, what work did you do?

Yes

No

16. Do you work in Canada? If yes, what do you do?

Yes

No

17. If you work in Canada, do you think that your work in Canada is at the level of your education?

Yes

No

Not Applicable

Appendix B

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

The following programs are offered by the organizations that assisted in the completion of this project. The examples have been divided to sample programs that are focused on language or cultural training, employment services, and support programs. However, many of these programs have overlapping objectives. Information on these, and additional programs, can be gathered by contacting the each organization or from the organizations' web sites. Links are provided below.

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC)

www.hilc.ns.ca

** Note: HILC is co-located with the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Agency (MISA). Many programs are joint initiatives between these two organizations. www.misa.ns.ca*

Language or Cultural Training

- Labour Market Language Courses
 - Labour Market Language courses provide newcomers with specialized language training and with the vocabularies they require for working in specific professions within Canada. Currently, the following programs are being offered by HILC: English for Work and Business; English for Healthcare Professionals; English for Engineers; English for Managers; English for Financial Purposes; and Orientation for Internationally Educated Teachers.
- Family Learning Program
 - The Family Learning Program helps newcomer parents who have little or no formal education with language and literacy skills. The program helps newcomer parents to learn with their children and support their children's language and literacy education.

Employment Services

- Work Placement Program
 - The Work Placement Program is a six-week, full-time, unpaid, on-the-job experience that provides newcomers with Canadian work experience, local references and professional contacts as well as the chance for host employers to assess the qualification of the participant in a workplace setting. This program is offered by MISA and is part of a menu of options in the Work in Nova Scotia (WINS) program, a joint MISA-HILC bridging program.

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- English in the Workplace
 - English in the Workplace (EWP) is an English language training program for newcomers who have a job or who have their own business. Language instructors go into the workplace and help newcomers with the language they need to do their job as well as possible. This can happen on a one-to-one basis, with groups or at a distance using a computer and the internet.

Support Programs

- Family Counselling and Parenting Support Program
 - This program offers individual and family counselling, parent support group and workshops on family life. The goal is to support immigrant families in their settlement process, by providing means of empowering them and enhancing their skills in building healthy and violence-free families that are well integrated in their communities.
- Crisis / Outreach Services
 - These programs provide support and information to, and act as a liaison between, service providers and newcomers who need help in overcoming crisis situations. At the same time, the program promotes partnerships and raises awareness of newcomer issues, encouraging service providers to make services responsive to immigrants' needs.

Prince Edward Island Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEI ANC)

www.peianc.com

**Note: Second language training in PEI is provided primarily by Holland College. For more information please see their website: <http://www.hollandc.pe.ca/>*

Language or Cultural Training

- Multicultural Education Program (MEP)
 - The Multicultural Education Program provides workshops, presentations, and training materials to schools and to the community at large. The program focuses on the areas of diversity education, cultural sensitivity training, and awareness in combating racism.
- Settlement Program for Francophone Immigrants
 - This program is a project that is managed by the community sensitization staff. This purpose of this program is to provide settlement services to French-speaking immigrants and refugees and to support the efforts of French-speaking organizations to attract and retain Francophone newcomers.

Employment Services

- Employment Assistance Service (EAS)
 - This service helps newcomers to Canada overcome barriers in their search for work. An employment counsellor works with newcomers individually to determine their employment related strengths and goals. The newcomer and counsellor decide upon an action plan for finding work.
- Internationally Educated Health Professionals Program (IEHP)
 - The goal of this program is to assist Internationally Educated Health Professionals overcome barriers so as to find employment within the Health Care System on PEI.

Support Programs

- Immigrant Student Liaison Program (ISL)
 - The Immigrant Student Liaison Program provides support and assistance to immigrant students in their integration into the Canadian school system on PEI.
- Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP)
 - The objective of ISAP is to assist immigrants in settling and integrating into Canadian society. It includes the delivery of direct services to immigrants such as orientation, translation, interpretation, referral to community resources, para-professional counselling, and general information.

The Association for New Canadians (ANC)

www.anc.nf.cc

Language or Cultural Training

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Language Training Programs
 - Instruction is provided for levels ranging from the Pre-benchmark level to CLB Level 7. Students at Level 7 would be preparing to go into the workforce or to further their studies at the college or university level.
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Preparation Course
 - These classes are offered on a regular basis to help clients prepare for these examinations. The successful completion of one of these examinations is a pre-requisite for many post-secondary programs or for licensure in particular professions.

Employment Services

- Enhanced Language Training Program
 - This program provides assistance to internationally trained professionals, combining advanced language training with initiatives to support labour market attachment.
- Strategic Transitions & Employment Partnerships (STEP)
 - STEP is a career placement program connecting local businesses with job-ready international clients. Local businesses gain access to a wide range of motivated and experienced workers through hosting a skilled worker in a 5 - 10 week unpaid career placement. Newcomers are provided with the opportunity to gain Canadian work experience, network with colleagues in their field of expertise, and enhance their marketable skills for today's knowledge-based economy.

Support Programs

- Connections Women's Group
 - This program provides newcomer women with the opportunity to improve their English language skills while participating in educational, recreational and social activities.
- Family Reunification Group
 - This group provides support to individuals and families who are separated from relatives. The group meets regularly to provide support and assistance to those who are awaiting reunification. A parallel support group is offered for children.

The Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc. (MCAF)

www.mcaf.nb.ca

Language / Cultural Training

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Language Training Programs
 - MCAF second language classes assist permanent residents to attain second language skills in order to settle in Canada.
- Cultural Competency Workshops
 - This is a formal program focusing on cultural competency for the workplace and for schools.

Employment Services

- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Language Training Programs
 - Levels 7 to 9 work with newcomers on labour market language training, employment preparation, assertiveness, computer skills and work placements.

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- The MCAF employment staff provides assistance for newcomers in finding employment in Fredericton. They provide group sessions and workshops on various employment topics such as résumé and cover letter writing, interviewing and networking.

Support Groups

- Parenting Support Group
- Immigrant Women’s Support Group
 - This program provides support to immigrant women and focuses on topics such as healthy living, Canadian culture and public legal education.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUPS

In Nova Scotia, Multi-Stakeholder Work Groups have emerged as a model for change in recognizing international qualifications, work experience and education. These work groups have brought together representatives from immigrant-serving and government agencies, professional associations and practitioners to find ways to ensure fair and equitable processes for recognizing internationally qualified professionals.

The primary focus of these work groups concerns International Qualification Assessment and Recognition (IQAR). The goals of the program are as follows:

- To ensure fair, transparent, accessible and equitable processes for the assessment of international qualifications in particular professions.
- To provide training and supportive programs to assist newcomers with the assessment process and preparation for practice.
- To develop employment and bridging programs to facilitate the workforce integration of skilled newcomers.

Currently, there are active work groups for the following professionals

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• internationally educated engineers• international pharmacy graduates• international medical graduates• internationally educated teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• internationally educated dentists• internationally educated nurses• medical laboratory technologists• working group for skilled trades
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This model has met with great success and support within Nova Scotia, has created a great deal of interest across the country and has motivated employment sectors in Nova Scotia to initiate discussions concerning newcomers' access to the labour market. Each group involves stakeholders for each profession, including immigrants themselves. Nova Scotia's smaller size means that key stakeholders may be readily identified, and meetings are manageable in size and logistically feasible. In a number of cases, the approach has resulted in systemic change in licensing procedures.

Adult Immigrant Learning Needs in Atlantic Canadian Communities

Halifax Knowledge Exchange Meeting Summary Report

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Participant Overview

Analysis of the Information Gathered

Learning about Language

Learning about Working in Canada

Learning about Canadian Culture

Learning about Community

Access to Educational Opportunities

Resources that Help Immigrants Learn

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

The first knowledge exchange meeting was held in Halifax at the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) on February, 18th, 2008. The group was composed of fourteen participants, thirteen of which were current or former students at HILC. The participants were a diverse group, coming from a variety of personal and educational backgrounds.

The age of the group ranged from twenty-one to fifty-seven years old, with the average being thirty-seven years. The overwhelming majority of the participants were from Asian origin with 50%, 21% and 14% of the participants originating from Eastern, South-Central and Western Asia respectively. The final 14% of participants identified themselves as being of Latin-American origin. There were ten female and four male participants.

Twelve of the fourteen participants identified themselves as having post-secondary education ranging from college diplomas to masters degrees. However, of those that are currently employed in Canada none of them identified themselves as being employed in a job that is equivalent to their level of education. Virtually all participants had attended classes of some sort since immigrating to Canada ranging from ESL classes to university.

The participants' time in Canada ranged from two months to just over five years with the average time being approximately two years. Participants immigrated to Canada under a number of different entry categories which are listed in the table below.

Entry Category	Number of Participants
Permanent Resident - Family Class	2
Permanent Resident - Skilled Worker Class	5
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Provincial Nominee	4
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Business	1
Permanent Resident - Refugee Class	2
Participant did not specify	0
Total	14

Three of the fourteen participants identified themselves as Canadian citizens.

The participants reported a number of motivations for deciding to immigrate to Canada. The following is a summary of the responses:

- To seek better opportunities for children.
- To reunite with family already in Canada.
- To learn more about the world / lifestyle change.

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- To live in a free country.
 - To live in a modern country.
 - For security reasons / United Nations refugee.
 - Because Canada is beautiful and friendly.

While there were a variety of responses to this question, it is notable that over 50% identified better opportunities for their children as a primary reason for immigration. 65% of the participants indicated that they had family or friends already in Canada prior to their immigration.

ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION GATHERED

After the knowledge-exchange meeting had finished the information provided was gathered and categorized by the researcher into five main categories that represent the major learning objectives noted by the participants. These were:

- Learning about language
- Learning about working in Canada
- Learning about Canadian culture
- Learning about Community
- Access to Educational Programs

Almost all issues that came out of the discussion fell within one of the five main categories. For each category, a brief overview of the issue has been provided and is followed by the concerns listed by the participants and both coping strategies and suggestions for program development and improvement. Due to the nature of the discussions surrounding learning, there is some overlap between the categories.

The suggestion list is comprised of both solutions provided by the participants themselves and solutions that have been derived by the researcher from the points that were raised by the participants.

LEARNING ABOUT LANGUAGE

The topic of language was discussed throughout the meeting, often interlinked with discussions about community and social participation. Thus, the following points address issues that are related to both language training programs and language as a key to accessing Canadian culture and society.

Issues:

- The high cost of some language training programs is a problem.
- ESL classes do not provide immigrants with the opportunity to learn from native speakers and more skilful people. Other students in classes do not provide adequate opportunity to learn how to converse.
- ESL programs are primarily focused on the technical aspects of the language and not on practical application of the language (conversation).
- Many immigrants require specific vocabularies, especially for the workplace, that are not taught in LINC programs.
- The Canadian Language Benchmark assessment tool is unrealistic. Testing is poorly implemented and unfair.
- ESL classes are very mixed. People of different ages learn in different ways.

Coping Strategies:

- In the beginning, language is a barrier that has to be crossed. Immigrants must gain confidence to cross that barrier, to overcome their fears and get out and start talking to people.
- Using conversation groups is an excellent way to both practice English and to learn about your community and more culturally based aspects of the language.

Suggestions:

- Provide more low cost and free ESL training programs.
- Involve native English speakers or community members in ESL training programs.
- Have multi-level ESL training where student have a range of English conversational abilities and can learn from one another.
- Provide programs that are focused on conversational English.

-
- Provide programs that are rooted in specific work places and professions.
 - More attention should be paid to dividing immigrants within ESL classes.
 - Provide opportunity for classes where people are closer in age.

LEARNING ABOUT WORKING IN CANADA

The topic of employment was discussed widely throughout the meeting. All of the participants agreed that gaining access to meaningful and adequate employment is the biggest challenge for immigrants coming to Canada.

Issues:

- Finding work is the number one challenge for immigrants.
- Systems of accreditation do not recognize immigrants' credentials.
- Too many immigrants are working in jobs that are below their level of education.
- Standards and expectations for work and professional behaviour are very different in Canada and are hard to learn.
- The use of resumes and cover-letters is different in Canada than in many countries. In Canada you need to learn to sell yourself. This is a difficult concept to grasp.
- There are very few places that provide adequate, low cost support to immigrants to help them with understanding how to use and produce useful work documents.
- There are many barriers to developing the social networks that would help in job searching.
- Learning about the hidden job market is a big challenge.
- Canadian employers do not see the value in immigrant labour. Their experience and qualifications are not recognized.
- Learning to be aggressive is very difficult for many immigrants. It is a constant learning process with few resources to help you learn.
- The information provided to immigrants prior to immigration about the Canadian job market does not show the true picture.

Coping Strategies:

- Speaking to job counsellors and other people who have already gone through the process of finding a job in Canada can be helpful.
- Immigrants must be willing to learn constantly, they should seek out opportunities to learn about the Canadian job market.
- Immigrants must look for resources and learning opportunities all of the time.

Suggestions:

- Provide workshops and training focused on specific professions.
- Provide workshops and training focused on Canadian workplace culture and operations.
- Increase support for educating immigrants about the Canadian workplace, identifying skills and producing good applications.
- Provide opportunities for Canadian employers to learn about the reasons why immigrants have come to Canada and the value in having of immigrant workers and professionals.
- Provide programs that increase access for professional immigrants to their fields of study.

LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE

The discussions surrounding the topic of culture and cultural integration were perhaps the most varied during the discussion. The participants came from a variety of backgrounds and depending on the nature of their previous cultures different people noted difficulties with a variety of topics that fell within this category. A notable concern was the difficulty in learning to balance one's previous beliefs with adapting and participating in Canadian culture and society.

Issues:

- Learning to adapt to new social standards is often difficult and confusing.
- Social networking is a major obstacle. Even after years in the community, it is difficult to develop strong ties.
- It is difficult to make friends outside of the immigrant community. Canadians are often not open to immigrants.
- For many immigrants, learning to live in an individualistic society is a very difficult obstacle to overcome. It requires a complete reorientation of your outlook on living in the community. In our home countries we are taught to be humble.
- Discrimination can be a problem for people who are not used to living in diverse communities.
- It is difficult to engage in conversations with Canadians. Small-talk is a very hard skill to learn.
- The television and radio are very hard to understand for lower level language learners and even for more fluent people because there are so many cultural things involved.

Coping Strategies:

- Immigrants need to be willing to let go of old assumptions. You cannot assume that you know everything and you need to be willing to adjust.
- Don't be shy. Participate in your community, community centres, schools, and town or city events.
- Learning about culture takes time. You need to be patient.

Suggestions:

-
- Provide forums for immigrants to gain access to their communities. For example, volunteering can provide invaluable informal learning opportunities for immigrants to access cultural knowledge.
 - Provide access to workshops and information on discrimination and immigrants rights and responsibilities.
 - Access to conversation groups and volunteer tutors is very useful in learning about a variety of topics about Canada, for example; the community, news, sports and politics. All of these things are important to know to be able to participate in the culture.

LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY

The following points concerning community have been identified by the researcher as the points that concerned learning to adapt to life in Atlantic Canadian society, as opposed to learning cultural ones. These included topics such as Canadian law and the legal system, school systems, dealing with business people, insurance and dealing with conflict.

Issues:

- Learning about Canadian law is hard to do (court systems, laws and by-laws, the police, etc.). There are not many resources available to get information on these topics. Most people know what crimes are but not how to interpret the rules.
- Canadians are not always willing to help immigrants. They are often easily frustrated.
- There are few resources to learn about how systems like insurance work.
- Immigrants have a hard time identifying social standards for dealing with people; helping others, arguing, trying to find a job etc. What are you allowed to do?
- Learning about how the community works is a difficult process (e.g. how to shop, what road signs mean, how to use public transportations systems).
- There is not enough information available about social systems and how they work (health care system, school system etc.).
- There is interpretation available in some hospitals but it is by appointment only. This is only useful if you are having a planned procedure

Coping Strategies:

- Most problems in the community can be remedied with time, but immigrants must be open to change and willing to take mistakes as learning opportunities. You must be patient when learning to live in a new place.
- The longer you are here the more you will learn about your community.

Suggestions:

- Provide reading materials about Canadian law in multiple languages. This is a topic that immigrants need to learn about as soon as possible and cannot necessarily wait until they are fluent enough in an official language to read about it in English or French.
- Provide education to people in service industries about helping immigrants.

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- There should be a national system of information for all immigrants after they come to Canada. There are a lot of resources available about immigrating to Canada but after you are here there is little available.
 - Increase programs that are available at service organizations like MISA and HILC.

ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

While many participants mentioned that there were a large number of educational opportunities available, and that they were appreciative of that fact especially for their children, there was a feeling that for adults many programs were inaccessible.

Issues:

- The high cost of post secondary education.
- The high cost of some ESL programs.
- It is difficult to know about what programs are preferable and which organizations are the best ones to go to.
- Previous education is not recognized.
- It is difficult to access opportunities to upgrade skills without going back to school for a full-fledged program.
- Immigrants are required to get a job as soon as possible, which does not leave time to return to school.
- Discrimination in the school system and in post-secondary education is a problem.
- Standards for education are very strict in Canada so it is difficult to adapt your previously held skills to be useful.
- Immigrants require ways to learn about different fields of study within Canada and the policies for entrance to that profession.

Coping Strategies:

- Try to gather as much information as you can about programs that are available in your community before attending one.

Suggestions:

- Provide more low cost and free ESL training programs.
- Provide programs that allow immigrants to access educational opportunities within their fields of study.
- Provide a better system for recognizing immigrants' educational credentials.

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- Provide space for immigrant groups to meet to discuss community issues.

RESOURCES THAT HELP IMMIGRANTS LEARN

Participants identified the following as useful resources in their community that supported them and helped them learn about and adapt to life in Canada.

- Family & Friends (especially those who have immigrated to Canada already)
 - o Help you learn how to deal with Canadians and social situations.
 - o Help you learn how to live in Canada.
 - o Help you prepare for immigrating to Canada.
 - o Help you learn about organizations in your community.

- National Group Websites
 - o Often have discussion groups in your native language and about a number of topics.
 - o Provide a place for you to share your experiences and frustrations.
 - o Provide a place for you to connect to other immigrants in your community.
 - o Provide a place for you to learn from other immigrants who have already gone through the process of moving to Canada.

- Immigrant-Serving Organizations
 - o Organizations like the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA), the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) and the YMCA Centre are very helpful.
 - o Provide you with information about living and working in your community.
 - o Provide programs and workshops focused on specific topics like finding a job.

- Community Centres
 - o Are very helpful to families.
 - o Help you and your children meet people in the community.
 - o Help you learn about the community and provide a space to talk to other people.
 - o Provide resources for helping you with your kids.
 - o Give parents a chance to volunteer with other parents in the community.

- Information Sessions Prior to Immigrating to Canada
 - o Can provide you with a lot of information about Canada so that you can learn about the society, culture and workplace.

- Community Volunteer Programs
 - o Allow you to access your community.
 - o Can make you feel like you belong to the community.
 - o Colleagues were willing to help you learn and give you information.
 - o Provide a place for people to learn about small talk and about the culture.
 - o People are willing to give you references for working with the group.

- Local Libraries
 - o Provide a lot of programs for people in the community.
 - o Help you to meet other people in the community.

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- Provide a place for children to go.
 - Conversation Groups
 - Help you improve your English and learn about the language.
 - Help you to understanding the news, politics, music and other culturally-specific things in English and in your community that are very hard to learn about.
 - Help you to meet people and make connections.
 - Faith Groups
 - The people are very friendly and willing to help you in adapt to life in the community.
 - Can help you learn to communicate with other people in Canada.
 - Can act as your tutors to living in Canada.
 - Help you with problems or when you are confused about something.
 - Canadian People
 - In general, Canadian people are very helpful as compared to other countries; you just have to be willing to open up, to talk to them and ask questions.

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PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

The third knowledge exchange meeting was held in Charlottetown at the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEIANC) on March 4th, 2008. The group was composed of seventeen participants from the local area. Most had been clients of PEIANC at some point since their immigration to Canada. Two were employed at PEIANC on a part-time basis.

The age of the group ranged from nineteen to fifty-five years old, with the average being thirty-eight years. Over sixty percent of the participants were of Asian origin. The remaining participants emigrated from European, African and South American countries. There were thirteen female and four male participants.

Twelve of the participants identified themselves as having post-secondary education ranging from college diplomas to masters degrees. Although not all of the participants have found work in Canada, many of those that have did not believe that they are employed in a job that is equivalent to their level of education. Virtually all participants had attended classes of some sort since immigrating to Canada, ranging from ESL classes to university.

The participants' time in Canada ranged from four months to five years. The average time in Canada was approximately eighteen months. Participants immigrated to Canada under a number of different entry categories which are listed below:

Entry Category	Number of Participants
Permanent Resident - Family Class	2
Permanent Resident - Skilled Worker Class	1
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Provincial Nominee	6
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Business	1
Permanent Resident - Refugee Class	2
Quebec-Selected Skilled Worker	1
International Student	2
Work Visa	1
Participant did not specify	1
Total	17

Four of the seventeen participants identified themselves as Canadian citizens.

The participants reported a number of motivations for deciding to immigrate to Canada. The following is a summary of the responses:

- To seek a better quality of life.
- To come to a country with respect for individuals and justice.
- To seek better opportunities for children.
- Because of marriage to a Canadian.
- To study/ for a better education.
- For employment.
- To explore a new country – especially a Western one.
- To reunite with family.
- Because Canada is a wonderful place to live.

ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION GATHERED

Information from the knowledge-exchange meeting was gathered in a number of ways:

- The researcher took notes throughout the session.
- Each participant completed a short survey noting information about their personal background, education and immigration to Canada. This data was later compiled by the researcher.
- The session was video-recorded and later transcribed and combined with the researcher's notes.
- Each participant was given an afterthought sheet which listed the major concepts that were being discussed during the meeting. These sheets gave the participants the option to take their own notes during the meeting. These sheets were collected and compiled with the transcribed information and researcher notes.

The information from the meeting was categorized by the researcher into three main categories that represent both the concerns that the participants had about life in Canada and the learning opportunities that they would like to have. These categories are:

- Learning about working in Canada.
- Learning about community
- English training and education

The majority of the time during the Charlottetown meeting was spent discussing concerns surrounding learning about Canadian culture and integrating into the local community. This section is thus the most extensive and inclusive.

Each section presented in the following pages includes a brief overview of the discussion and is followed by the topics that were discussed by the participants. In order to combine similar topics of discussion, the points have been rephrased by the researcher and are not direct quotes from the participants themselves.

The final section of this report contains a list of resources that were identified by the participants as learning opportunities within the Charlottetown community. Following this section, there are lists of coping strategies and recommendations for program improvement and implementation that were provided by the participants. Once again, all points have been rephrased by the researcher in order to combine similar topics of discussion.

LEARNING ABOUT WORKING IN CANADA

The topic of employment was discussed throughout the meeting. Overall the participants' primary concerns about employment seemed to be linked to their concerns about integrating into the Canadian community and by extension, into the Canadian workplace. Many of the participants were not yet employed in Canada which may contribute to their concern about learning about workplace culture.

- We require resources to learn about working in Canada. How do you learn about starting a home business?
- We need to learn how to apply for jobs, how to prepare a resume and how to prepare for interviews.
- We need to learn what education and experience is required for each job and profession.
- We need to learn about workers rights. Employers sometimes take advantage of immigrants because they don't know all of their rights and aren't sure how to fight things such as lay-offs.
- We need to learn how to use and access Service Canada and other job search tools.
- We need to learn about the employee-employer relationship in Canada. In our country the relationship is very structured and strict. Here it seems to be very casual and friendly but it is hard to know where those lines are drawn.

LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY

The following points put forth by the participants represent concerns that they have related to participating in and integrating into Canadian community and culture. In this knowledge-exchange meeting, the participants spent the majority of their time focused on community oriented issues with particular attention paid to learning ways to help their children to cope with life in Canada.

- Codes in the community are different here. We have to learn new ways to communicate and to behave.
- We need to learn about our neighbours.
- There are very few community and social activities here. Many people are focused only on the computer and on television, especially children.
- We need to learn about what topics are taboo and about what we can and can't talk about with people in our community (e.g. religion and age).
- We need to learn how to understand and interpret the news, current events and other aspects of life in the community. It is very difficult without knowing the Canadian context.
- Learning about scheduling and being on time for appointments is a very difficult thing to understand and to get used to. Time management in the Canadian way is a skill that we have to learn.
- The weather has been a difficult thing to learn about. We need to learn how to dress in it and how to cope with it.
- The medical system is very difficult to understand and confusing to deal with.
- We require places for our children to get help learning English after school.
- We would like to have opportunities to make friends with local families.
- There are very long waits for medical treatment and we need to learn about the difference between medical systems, walk-in clinics, family doctors and specialists. What is the difference and which is better?
- We are concerned about the values that our children will grow up with and how they will differ from our own.
- In Canada the focus is on the individual. For people that come from a place where the family is the primary concern this is a very difficult social concept to learn about.

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- We need to learn how to deal with older children when they become adults. At home children stay with their families until they are married; here many want to move out, to live with their friends. This is difficult to understand.
 - There is a lot of difficulty learning vocabulary about business, and the medical system .
 - We want to learn how to help our children to adapt to life in Canada and how to succeed here.
 - We need to learn to participate in the community and to find venues where we can do that.
 - Volunteering is difficult for many people who do not come from a culture where people volunteer in the community. In our culture everything is focused on the family.
 - It is very difficult to make friends with Canadians.
 - Dealing with food is a very difficult thing; it is very different from our home country and takes a lot to get used to preparing it and eating it.
 - Accessing the immigration doctor is difficult.
 - Accessing medical treatment has been difficult and takes a very long time.
 - Many newcomers don't know about PEIANC, it is only immediately accessible to refugees and provincial nominees and those that find out about it don't always feel entitled to its services.
 - We need to learn about how insurance works.
 - We need to learn about Canadian laws.

ENGLISH TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The participants spent little time talking about English training and educational opportunities. Most of the participants were quite fluent in the language and seemed to be content with the ESL services that were available. However there was particular attention paid to the necessity of learning English and using it as a tool to integrate into their local community.

- Learning to communicate is the most difficult thing. It's not just about learning English but about how to communicate in a new culture.
- People feel too shy to communicate with English speakers. They need places to practice.
- We need to have better opportunities for accreditation.
- Learning about Canadian rights and freedoms is important.
- It doesn't seem that people are concerned about learning here. Even in the school system, children have a lot of freedom and very little homework.
- Before we came the only information about education we got was from websites and from immigration companies. However, many of the resources were useless or incorrect so it took us a long time to access education. Meanwhile, we made several mistakes and spent unnecessary tuition.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Participants identified the following as useful resources in their community that supported them and helped them learn about and adapt to life in Canada.

- Community Centres & the CHANCES Family Centre
 - o Help families learn about life in the community.
 - o Have child care programs, which allow parents to have time to do other things.
 - o Offer programs focused on parenting and personal growth.
 - o Some provide free taxi-service which helps people to attend their programs.
 - o Are places to meet other people in the community and where you can learn about Canadian people and the culture.
 - o Are places where you can discuss problems you are having and the staff can help you to learn to deal with those problems.
 - o Offer comfortable environments that help you to be less shy and to talk to Canadian people.

- Public Health Centre & Nurses
 - o A place where you can learn about the Canadian medical system.
 - o People can give you advice about your family's health.

- Holland College English as a Second Language Program and Staff
 - o A place where you can learn English.
 - o The staff are very helpful and help you learn things about your community.

- Job Fairs
 - o Help you to learn about job opportunities in your city.
 - o Provide information about working in Canada.
 - o Provide opportunities to learn about what is required to work in certain professions.

- PEI Residents and Other Immigrants
 - o In general people are very helpful and willing to help.
 - o Many immigrants are facing similar problems, they can learn from one-another and can help each other to find solutions.

- Association of Chinese Canadians (Website)
 - o A website for Canadian Chinese people.
 - o Helps you to learn about work and life in Canada.
 - o A place where you can communicate with people from your home county and where you can post questions and receive answers about problems that you are having.

COPING STRATEGIES

The following points represent strategies that the participants themselves have used to learn about life in Canada. As noted earlier, the PEI group focused most of their time discussing issues related to learning about Canadian culture and community and thus the majority of the following strategies relate to that topic.

- Take English as a Second Language Classes
 - o Learning English should be the number priority for immigrants. It is not just about learning the language but also about participating in your community.

- Volunteer in Your Community
 - o Volunteering teaches you how to help your children integrate into and give back to your community, meet people in your neighbourhood and meet other newcomers. It can help you with your English, and can help you find work.
 - o Volunteering in hospitals can help you to learn about the Canadian health system.
 - o Volunteering at your children's school can help you to understand the Canadian education system, and the differences between your own experiences and Canadian schools. It also gives you a chance to participate in your child's education, which is very important to many immigrants. In addition, parents will learn how to help and work with their children at home.
 - o Volunteering helps you to gain access to the community and the culture of Canadian people. You can talk to other people and hear what kinds of things they are talking about and how they are making decisions.

- Learn From Your Children
 - o Integration into the community is a family affair. It is difficult for many people but you should be willing to learn from your children as well. They can help you with language. Children adapt more easily than adults.

- Try New Things
 - o Newcomers need to try new things, and to try to get over the shyness that goes along with living in a new place.

- Build Relationships With New People
 - o Networking and building relationships with other people in any way possible, with both newcomers and Canadians, is a very important thing to do.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were derived by the researcher from the information that was presented by the participants throughout the knowledge-exchange meeting. The suggestions represent a broad spectrum of possibilities for community, government and institutional programming.

- Increase community support for newcomers trying to live and work in Canada. Search for ways to make the community welcoming to newcomer families and to help them to learn how to live and cope with life in a new community.
- Establish more community programs to introduce newcomers to the community and neighbourhood. Newcomers need to learn basic information when they arrive such as how to use banking and medical services, how to use government services, how to shop, how to use grocery stores, and how to dress for the weather.
- Increase access to English training opportunities. Speaking English provides access to the community.
- Increase the variety of English training opportunities that are available. Many newcomers have difficulty with vocabulary related to business and the medical system and require a place to learn this vocabulary and how to understand it.
- Provide additional opportunities for job training (e.g. learning about finding a job, learning about professional opportunities in Canada, learning about the rights and responsibilities of employees and management, learning about workplace culture).
- Use mass advertising to connect newcomers together. Help them to find institutions and organizations that are willing to help them, to find jobs, and to meet other newcomers. Connecting newcomers together can help them to learn from one another.
- Provide better information about education systems and learning programs that are available to immigrants. Currently the information is scattered. It needs to be more centralized.
- Provide citizenship classes for immigrants who have entered Canada. This is a service that should be provided to all newcomers, not just those who are in the process of becoming citizens but to everyone. Citizenship classes will help them be prepared to deal with life in Canada and will have a basic understanding of the history, social, political and economic systems within Canada.
- Provide more in-depth information about employment, accreditation and learning programs to newcomers prior to coming to Canada.
- Provide additional and better translation services for newcomers, especially for dealing with documents and forms. Even if you are able to read many things, it is not enough we need to be able to understand them.

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PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

The second knowledge exchange meeting was held in St. John's, Newfoundland at the Association for New Canadians (ANC) on February 29th, 2008. The group was composed of fifteen participants from the St. John's area all of which were current students in ANC language training programs. The participants comprised a diverse group coming from a variety of personal and educational backgrounds and were able to draw experience from fifteen different countries of origin.

The age of the group ranged from nineteen to fifty-five years old, with the average being thirty-three years. The participant's time in Canada ranged from eight months to four years. The average time in Canada was approximately two years. Thirteen of the fifteen participants had come to Canada as refugees, either through government programs or as refugee claimants. Participants immigrated to Canada under a number of different entry categories which are listed below:

Entry Categories	Number of Participants
Permanent Resident - Family Class	1
Permanent Resident - Skilled Worker Class	0
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Provincial Nominee	0
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Business	0
Permanent Resident - Refugee Class	12
Refugee Claimant	1
Quebec-Selected Skilled Worker	0
International Student	0
Work Visa	0
Visitor's Visa	1
Participant did not specify	0
Total	15

Two of the fifteen participants identified themselves as Canadian citizens.

Over sixty percent of the participants were of African origin, all of whom had come to Canada as refugees. According to ANC staff members, the high number of refugee participants is indicative of the clientele at the ANC and, though only verbally confirmed, of the larger immigrant population in the St. John's area. This meeting had the highest representation of refugee residents of the four knowledge-exchange meetings and thus gave a unique perspective on learning needs of newcomers in Atlantic Canada. The remaining participants had emigrated from Asian and Eastern European countries. There were ten female and five male participants.

The participants reported a number of motivations for deciding to immigrate to Canada. The following is a summary of the responses:

- For personal security.
- To seek a better life.

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- To gain citizenship (some refugees may never have held citizenship papers from any country).
 - To stop being a soldier.
 - To look for employment.
 - To live in a peaceful place.
 - Because of marriage to a Canadian.
 - To live in a free country.
 - To escape war.
 - For political reasons.
 - To leave refugee camp life behind.
 - Because Canada is a welcoming place.

The formal education backgrounds of the participants ranged from having no formal education to university level education. In total, six of the participants identified themselves as having some type of post-secondary education up to the Master's level. Since most of the participants are newly arrived in Canada and are attending school, most are not yet employed. However of those that were employed, all believed that they were working in a job that was at the level of their current education. All participants expressed a desire to return to school.

The participants at the St. John's meeting showed particular gratitude for being afforded the opportunity to live and to study in Canada. This sentiment was undoubtedly related to the group's experience as refugees and in refugee camps. Throughout the meeting, the participants expressed a particular desire to learn about participating in Canadian society and in learning about how to give back to both their local communities and the Canadian people as a whole.

ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION GATHERED

Information from the knowledge-exchange meeting was gathered in a number of ways:

- The researcher took notes throughout the session.
- Each participant completed a short survey noting information about their personal background, education and immigration to Canada. This data was later compiled by the researcher.
- The session was video-recorded and later transcribed and combined with the researcher's notes.
- Each participant was given an afterthought sheet which listed the major concepts that were being discussed during the meeting. These sheets gave the participants the option to take their own notes during the meeting and were collected and compiled with the transcribed information and researcher notes.

The information gathered from the meeting was categorized by the researcher into six categories which represent the major concepts that were discussed during the session. These concepts are:

- Learning about community
- Learning about working in Canada
- Difficulties since arriving in Canada and barriers to engaging in learning activities
- Resources that help immigrants learn
- Desired learning opportunities
- The concept of creating a welcoming community, including what community members should know about immigrants and what should be done to help immigrants learn

Each section presented in the following pages includes a brief overview of the discussion and is followed by the issues that were addressed by the participants. In order to combine similar topics of discussion, the points have been rephrased by the researcher and are not direct quotes from the participants themselves.

The final two sections of this report contain a list of resources that were identified by the participants as helpful in their learning to adapt to life in Canada, and finally the participants suggestions for creating a more welcoming community. Once again, all points have been rephrased by the researcher in order to combine similar topics of discussion.

LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY

Many of the participants noted that learning to adapt to Canadian community and culture is the most difficult learning process and the one that takes the most time. The following points represent both the participants' current learning needs and those that they experienced upon arrival in Canada.

I need to learn...

- how to speak English very well in order to participate in the community.
- how to use public transportation.
- about Canadian food. How to shop at the grocery store, about prices, types of food, how to prepare the food, and how to use Canadian measurements.
- how to take care of my children in this place. Things here are different than before.
- how to use the hospital.
- about Canadian history, and about the history of the community.
- how to do household chores in Canada (e.g. use the stove, clean the house, use the telephone book).
- how to use the dental office and the hospital. This is very different from what I knew before. Also, in Canada one is free and one is not.
- about insurance how it works (e.g. medical, house, car, etc.).
- about making local friends, socializing in Canada, going out on the weekends, and about drinking socially. People don't drink in my country.
- about judging people. We don't know who to trust and believe, and who not to.
- about Canadian living situations. In my country, people don't live alone or with boyfriends and girlfriends. Only if you are married. If not, you live with your parents.
- about the tax system on products in the store. In other countries tax is included in the price. I don't know how much something is going to cost here.
- about how to use stores. There is no bartering here.
- about my rights and responsibilities, about living in a community, and how to respect the people around you

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- what the rules of respecting people's privacy are.
 - how to live in a new and unfamiliar community.
 - the rules of the community and how to act.
 - about Canadian laws.
 - how to live as a family in a new country.
 - about different weather and how to cope with it here and about proper clothing.
 - how to use emergency services that are available in the community (police, fire, ambulance). How to use them without calling a false alarm, and how to call 911 and not get all of them at once.

"Learning about the community is a long process. It takes time and you need to experience things first hand to be able to deal with situations and learn different parts of it."

LEARNING ABOUT WORKING IN CANADA

Finding adequate employment is one of the biggest challenges for immigrants who are coming into Atlantic Canada. Immigrants come with a variety of personal and educational backgrounds and finding employment opportunities that match those experiences can be a major hurdle to cross. In addition, depending on their background, immigrants have a variety of learning needs ranging from the most basic skills-related requirements to those related to professional certification and accreditation.

I need to learn...

- how to find a suitable job.
- how to apply for a job.
- how to write a proper resume and cover letter.
- how to dress when going for a job interview.
- about employability skills and how to identify my skills.
- about what skills are required for each job and what opportunities we have to elevate those skills to match them to those jobs.
- about responsibilities at the work place as an employee.
- how to communicate well in your workplace.
- how to work and interact with your coworkers as a team.
- how to judge pay scales and negotiate salaries. We need knowledge so that we are not taken advantage of.
- about institutions that can help you find a job and where we can train for a job.
- to learn organizational skills that match Canadian requirements.
- learn about workplace safety so that people do not get hurt and what workplace safety signs mean.
- how to properly use a computer. The world is a very developed place now and everyone is on the internet. You need to know how to use a computer if you are going to participate in the world.
- about the work culture and the background of the people that you are going to work with. These things are learned through experience.

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- communication skills and about continuous learning.
 - how to work in a service industry. How to be kind and to react to everyone appropriately.
 - skills that can help us to have a good level in the workplace, to be able to achieve our goals in life and be able to help people in the community.
 - how to be adaptable to the Canadian workplace.
 - what the expectations of particular jobs are.
 - about the workers compensation board, its role and how it works.
 - how to direct my studies at college or university so that they will match to the job you want.
 - about how to achieve credit for the education, work and experience that you have had.

DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED AND BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The participants identified the following points as their major difficulties since arriving in Canada.

- The food has been very difficult to learn about. Rice is that staple food in my country. Canadian food is hard to stomach and there are many choices so it is hard to decide about what to eat; to know what is healthy. Food is very expensive. At home food is very cheap.
- Learning English is difficult but it is the most important thing. If people don't learn they will not integrate into the community. When you cannot communicate with someone you are left with that grief in your heart.
- Learning to understand the English language can be particularly difficult to do in Newfoundland. People speak very fast and it is hard to follow conversations.
- Learning Canadian expressions is particularly difficult. If you don't know them, it is hard to follow conversations.
- It has been difficult to teach my children because I do not know the answers to their questions myself, everything is new.
- You need to learn to "find yourself" in a new place. It is a very hard thing to do to re-orient your life. It takes a lot of time, especially if you are older.
- I am living in Canada alone; I hope that my family will be able to come to Canada to live with me.
- There are very few interpreters available.
- Integrating into Canadian society has been very difficult. Sometimes you don't know who to contact if you want to get something done.
- Learning about human rights is different than my previous experience. We need to learn about the rules in Canada.
- Learning about emergency and social services is very difficult, and how services in the community work. These are big things because they do not exist in our home countries.
- It is very expensive to go to school here.

RESOURCES THAT HELP IMMIGRANTS LEARN

Participants identified the following as useful resources in their community that supported them and helped them learn about and adapt to life in Canada.

- The Association for New Canadians
 - o Teaches new immigrant many things about life in the community.
 - o Teaches you how to use the bus.
 - o Teaches you how to shop and about prices and types of food.
 - o Teaches you how to take care of your children.
 - o Gives you an overview of the community.
 - o Provides English training.
 - o Teaches you how to use emergency services.

- Friends
 - o Help you the most.
 - o Canadian friends that we made here are very helpful.
 - o People in St John's are very kind.
 - o Can help you to teach your children about life here.
 - o Help you with day to day life.
 - o People are very generous.

- Faith Groups
 - o Bring immigrants to Canada.
 - o Help you with life in the community.
 - o Help you to go to school.
 - o Help you to get established with your home (e.g. clothing, furniture).
 - o Participating in the choir at church help you to make friends.

- Multicultural Groups
 - o A place where you can talk with other people.
 - o A place where you can discuss problems and get answers from other people.
 - o Give you information about different things in the community.
 - o Answer any questions that you may have.

- Refugee Immigrant Advisory Council
 - o Provides a lot of services to refugees.
 - o Help you with your with their life as refugees in Canada.

- African Canadian Women's Group
 - o Provides social networking.
 - o We can learn in a communal setting.
 - o Has group activities like braiding hair.

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- Sudanese Community
 - o People take care of each other.
 - o Helps people who are in trouble.
 - o Helps if someone is sick.
 - o Helps if someone has no money.

 - Korean Association
 - o Gives advice to people in the community.
 - o Helps newcomers link with people who have been in the community for a long time.

 - Government of Canada
 - o Assisted me to come to Canada.

"I love that there are social support systems here. The government paid for me to come here and while I'm not working the government will pay for me and when I'm working the government will take money from my pay to help someone else."

"It is nice to live in a place where there is little crime and no fear and where you can live and participate in a community without fear."

"The government and the people of Canada helped us to come and to live here so we need to learn also how to contribute to the country and to the people. We need to find how we can share."

DESIRED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Participants identified the following as opportunities that they would like to have to engage in learning since arriving in Canada.

- I would like to attend college.
- I would like to further my education in any way.
- I would like to learn about Canada, its people and history.
- I would like to attend business school to get a good job.
- Immigrants should have the chance to train in their area of specialization. Some immigrants have come with professions from their country. I think that those professions should be looked at carefully.
- We want to get a job that will be comfortable and to know what skills are required for each job and to have opportunities to elevate those skills to match them to those jobs.
- The world is a very developed place now and everyone is on the internet so you need to know how to use a computer if you are going to participate in the world.
- I would like to learn skills that can help me to have a good position in the workplace, so that I will be able to achieve my goals in life and be able to help people in my community

CREATING A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

The concept of creating a welcoming community for immigrants in Atlantic Canada is one that has been put forth by many community groups and organizations throughout the region. Atlantic Canada shares a relatively small proportion of Canada's total immigrant population though the need is no less great. Creating a welcoming community is thus a necessary step in attracting and retaining immigrants in this region. The following points represent the participants' ideas about how to creating a welcoming community in St. John's.

What support do you want from your community?

- We want people to be willing to employ us and to give us a chance.
- We want people to take interest in the immigrants in the community.
- We want people to tutor and to volunteer with immigrants.
- We want websites and locations where we can find information more easily. Information is very spread out.
- We want easier access to CIC (Citizenship & Immigration Canada).

What do you want your community to know about immigrants?

- We want people to know that we are willing to support their community.
- I want people to know that I want to be helpful and to contribute to my community, but I also need support from them.
- My community needs to know that I am a friendly person, easy to get along with, honest, and someone who respects other's privacy and culture. I support development and I am hard working.
- We want people to know about other cultures, that immigrants have valuable skills, and about behaviour. Everyone does not behave the same ways as Canadians but that does not mean that there is something wrong or that they are trying to be disrespectful or different.

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Immigrants should have the chance to teach other immigrants what they have learned. They should be able to teach each other subjects that are relevant to their lives in the community such as math and economics.
- The community should help immigrants to learn about whatever they would like to be in the future so that they can be helpful in the Canadian community and improve their lives.
- The community should help immigrants integrate into Canadian society and help train them in what they want to do. Immigrants have a positive attitude toward learning.
- The community should help us with employment. We need work counsellors to learn about working in Canada.
- We need volunteer tutors to teach us English.
- We need community websites that help direct immigrants to services and resources.
- We need consolidated information about settling in Canada and in the local community.

Adult Immigrant Learning Needs in Atlantic Canadian Communities

Fredericton Knowledge-Exchange Meeting Summary Report

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PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

The fourth knowledge-exchange meeting was held in Fredericton, New Brunswick at the Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF) on March 12th, 2008. The group was composed of sixteen participants from the Fredericton area, most of whom had utilised MCAF resources since their settlement in Canada. The participants comprised a diverse group coming from a variety of personal and educational backgrounds and were able to draw experience emigrating from ten different countries.

The age of the group ranged from twenty-four to fifty-two years old, with the average age being forty years. The participants' time in Canada ranged from five months to just over eight years with the average time in Canada being approximately three and a half years. There were seven female and nine male participants. The participants immigrated to Canada through a number of different entry categories which are listed below:

Entry Category	Number of Participants
Permanent Resident - Family Class	4
Permanent Resident - Skilled Worker Class	1
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Provincial Nominee	4
Permanent Resident - Economic Class – Business	0
Permanent Resident - Refugee Class	5
Refugee Claimant	1
Quebec-Selected Skilled Worker	0
International Student	0
Work Visa	0
Visitor's Visa	1
Participant did not specify	0
Total	16

Five of the fifteen participants identified themselves as Canadian citizens. This was the highest percentage of self identified citizens in any of the four knowledge-exchange meetings that were conducted.

The following is a breakdown of world regions represented by the participants at the meeting.

- South and Central America – 25%
- East and Central Africa – 25%
- Eastern Asia – 19%
- Eastern Europe – 13%
- Western Asia – 13%

An analysis of the information gathered concerning participant entry category and countries of origin illustrated the following patterns in the immigration process. Approximately forty percent of the participants had entered Canada as refugees or as refugee claimants. All of these

participants had come from South or Central America or Africa. All of the participants who categorized themselves as provincial nominees were of Asian origin.

The participants reported a number of motivations for deciding to immigrate to Canada. The following is a summary of the responses:

- For my son's education and for fresh-air, high quality food and a good environment.
- To live with my spouse.
- My country was in crisis. I wanted opportunities for our children and for a better future for them.
- To give our children a good educational environment, to spend time with family, my job in my country did not allow time for family.
- To reunite with my family. After the war they immigrated to Canada and I was a refugee.
- I wanted to live in another country and my child wanted to study in Canada.
- There is no choice when you are a refugee.
- I met my spouse on the internet.
- There were safety concerns in my country.
- I am a refugee under federal government sponsorship.
- I wanted to have Canada as a home country. I spent many years without hope of returning to my country.
- I married and came here with my spouse.
- I want to attend university.
- To have a better life for me and my family.

All participants at this meeting, except one unspecified, indicated that they had achieved a minimum of a high school diploma. The post-secondary education of the group ranged from college education through university education to the PhD level. There was no correlation between formal education levels and country of origin or entry category. The participants were both a highly educated and highly skilled group of newcomers.

Over sixty percent of the participants were currently employed. However, most did not believe that their work was equal to their level of education and experience and none were employed in their previous professional fields. The participants expressed great frustration with the lack of recognition of their previous educational and professional experience. Most expressed a desire to return to formal education in Canada at the university level; however, there were notable barriers to making this a reality.

The participants at the Fredericton meeting showed particular concern about employment in Canada. All participants believed that they had a lot to give to the community but the majority were frustrated by rigid employment structures and perceived isolation within the community. Throughout the meeting, participants expressed a desire to learn about participating in Canadian society and in learning about how to give back to their local community.

ANALYSIS OF THE INFORMATION GATHERED

Information from the knowledge-exchange meeting was gathered in a number of ways:

- The researcher took notes throughout the session.
- Each participant completed a short survey noting information about their personal background, education and immigration to Canada. This data was later compiled by the researcher.
- The session was video-recorded and later transcribed and combined with the researcher's notes.
- Each participant was given an afterthought sheet which listed the major concepts that were being discussed during the meeting. These sheets gave the participants the option to take their own notes during the meeting and were collected and compiled with the transcribed information and researcher notes.

The information gathered from the meeting was categorized by the researcher into six categories which represent the major concepts that were discussed during the session. These concepts are:

- Learning about Canadian community and culture
- Learning about working in Canada
- Difficulties since arriving in Canada and barriers to engaging in learning activities
- People and organizations that help immigrants learn and adapt to life in Canada
- What learning opportunities the participants would like to have
- The concept of creating a welcoming community, including what community members should know about immigrants and what should be done to help immigrants learn

Each section presented in the following pages includes a brief overview of the discussion and is followed by the issues as addressed by the participants. In order to combine similar topics of discussion, the points have been rephrased by the researcher and are not direct quotes from the participants themselves.

The final two sections of this report contain a list of resources that were identified by the participants as helpful in their learning to adapt to life in Canada, and finally the participants' suggestions for creating a more welcoming community. Once again, all points have been rephrased by the researcher in order to combine similar topics of discussion.

LEARNING NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY

Many of the participants noted that learning to adapt to Canadian community and culture is the most difficult learning process and the one that takes the most time. The following points represent both the participants' current learning needs and those that they experienced upon arrival in Canada.

I need to learn...

- about Canadian culture and laws. There are different ways of doing things here.
- how to respect time in Canada. I am used to a culture where time is elastic.
- how to be social and how to make friends with Canadian people.
- how to deal with mixed ages groups.
- about calling people by their first names.
- about programs and services that are available in the community for immigrants and citizens.
- about language. We live in a bilingual province so learning English and French is important.
- how to live a healthy lifestyle and about exercising regularly, walking, running. People seem to do that a lot here.
- better communication skills with Canadians.
- about Canadian weather; how to dress for it and how to deal with below zero temperatures.
- about speaking to other people on the street. Canadian people are very friendly and do this a lot. This is something that we have to get used to.
- about small talk.
- about social customs. For example, in my country when we meet someone we not only shake hands but also kiss people on the cheek and that is not done in Canada. We want to do what is acceptable here and make a good impression, but it is sometimes hard to break old habits.
- about Canadian food. How to shop for it, how to prepare it and about nutrition.
- about the income tax system and about tax on products.

-
- about banking systems, savings and spending, and how to use the different types of accounts.
 - about living in a spending community (commercial society) this is different from where I grew up.
 - about Canadian English. Learning English can also be difficult for people who already speak English. Learning about accents and how to speak in the Canadian way so that you understand each other.
 - about places where you live, about travel, geography and about the area of your city.
 - about the relationships between parents and their children. The hierarchies within families do not seem to be as clear and it seems like you do not have any authority over your children.
 - about how to treat your children in Canadian society. You do not want to be judged negatively for the way that you treat your children.
 - to adapt to change and not just go by what you knew before.
 - the breadth of all things in Canada (e.g. politics, economy, culture, sports, history).

Other Comments on Community

- Immigrants feel a lot of pressure when coming to a new place and so does your family and your children. You are always trying to do the right thing.
- Immigrants are afraid to make mistakes.
- In Canada, people keep their children inside their houses, kids do not play with each other outside and people do not interact in the community.
- Immigrant parents often put too much pressure on their kids. I tried to make them behave a way that is not the way that they are supposed to behave in this culture.
- Canadian society is not based on community. At home the community is a communal society. For example, if my child made a mistake or did something bad, a neighbour could speak to him about it. We help each other. That is not they way things work here, everyone is an individual.
- Immigrants, I think, often put a lot of pressure and too many restrictions on our children and have rules that I think are not very good. You do it because you try to be the best parent possible and make the best impression possible in the society. This is something that you need to learn to deal with. You do it because you are scared to make mistakes but we put too much pressure on our kids.

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- I always wonder why any Canadian you meet is smiling and greeting you even though he does not know you. I think that this is a sign of hope, peace and stability.
 - Canadians make a lot of small talk. This is a skill that we need to learn. People are very friendly here. Where I come from, people don't talk to each other and definitely not in the street. If people did that in my country, you would be wondering what they wanted from you.
 - Coming to Canada was like getting up from a dream. Everything was different, and you don't know what anything is, even how to behave. There is a lot of confusion and you are disoriented. You are not familiar with the system, you need to learn about the society and that is very difficult, but you need to learn your own way to discover everything that is around you.

LEARNING ABOUT WORKING IN CANADA

Finding adequate employment is one of the biggest challenges for immigrants who are coming into Atlantic Canada. Immigrants come with a variety of personal and educational backgrounds and finding employment opportunities that match those experiences can be a major hurdle to cross. In addition, depending on their background, immigrants have a variety of learning needs ranging from the most basic skills-related requirements to those related to professional accreditation.

I need to learn...

- about Canadian labour laws.
- about the wage and salary system.
- about working by the hour. Before I came here, everyone got paid a salary for the month.
- what the best way to communicate with people is.
- about the meaning of living in a bilingual province. When is being bilingual necessary? What jobs require you to be bilingual?
- marketing strategies for small businesses.
- how to network successfully in Canadian society and businesses.
- what is the difference between casual, part-time and full-time work.
- about Canadian work experience and how to get it.
- how to use the computer well.
- about the business tax system.
- how to cope and budget for hourly wages. Work can be cut off in the middle of the day and you only get paid for that time. It is hard to predict your work and salary.
- about the categories and opportunities for creating businesses and what is the best way to do it.
- the use of eye contact. In many cultures it is not appropriate, but if you don't do it here people will think that you are hiding something.
- about the distance between the employer and employee. What is the work relationship like?

-
- about "selling yourself" when trying to find a job.
 - how to gain opportunities in our own fields of experience.

Other Comments on Working

- Many people in the Korean community are here to run their own businesses but they need to know about marketing and managing a business in a small place.
- The lack of trust on the part of Canadian employers is very hard to deal with. We are seen as having a lack of credibility, and education from back home is not acceptable in this country.
- You have to meet a Canadian standard, which means adapting your skills to a Canadian context and finding Canadian experience.
- Discrimination at the workplace because you are different is hard to deal with.
- Even though we live in a bilingual province, still people won't recognize French as an official language. Some immigrants have French already but it is not good enough for working. There are not equal French and English opportunities. This is for sure an English environment.
- A lack of social networks makes it harder for you to find a job.
- Sometimes when you can find a job in your field you will still not be paid equally to Canadians. You will be paid minimum wage because of your "lack of knowledge" about the Canadian way.
- We want to open a business but there is limited opportunity.
- Many people come here through the Provincial Nominee program so they want to own their own business, but there is not enough business opportunity compared to the demand.
- It is hard to open your own business because of the risk, so we need to learn about how to correctly open a business and about the tax system.
- Many immigrants are well qualified to work in Canada and come with a lot of experience.

DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED AND BARRIERS TO LEARNING

The following sections identify the major difficulties and barriers that the participants have experienced since their immigration to Canada. The final section lists the barriers related to returning to formal education programs.

It has been difficult...

- to learn to live a whole new life.
- to learn the language.
- to adapt to the cold weather and to deal with winter.
- to find a job.
- to network in my community.
- to get a job in my field of work.
- to practice the English language effectively.
- to return to school (age, disappointment with lack of credential recognition).

Other comments on barriers.

- There is a lack of recognition of our previous education.
- They should lower the cost of English exams.
- Child-care and daycare is very expensive. It makes it difficult to go to school and to work.
- English classes are only available to the unemployed.
- Reading (understanding) the newspaper is very difficult.
- We need more information about what educational programs are available.
- There are discrimination problems. They are not blatant but they are there.
- People are placed in menial jobs just because they have difficulty with English. This is not fair. They still have skills.
- We need to have equal employment opportunities.

-
- French is used as a bargaining chip for employers. Even if they do not require it for the job, they will use it as an excuse to hire someone else.
 - Low literacy skills do not mean that people do not still have skills in other areas (e.g. construction workers).
 - If I really want to learn something, I don't think that there are any barriers.
 - Discrimination is something very silent. It is not open to the world, but you can feel it.
 - When a job opportunity is decided by the employer, they will give the job to the person that they know.
 - High marks on language assessments are used to keep people out of language classes but they still need to learn.
 - Few resources are available for people who come as skilled workers.
 - Students have to drop out of language training classes when they get a job.
 - You cannot learn both French and English, and we live in a bilingual province.

I would be more likely to return to school if..

- it took less time to upgrade my skills (some recognition for previous experience).
- there were better guarantees for a job after finishing school.
- the cost was not so high.
- there were government programs or incentives to support immigrants who want to upgrade their skills.
- my previous achievements were recognized.
- child care was cheaper/ there were better programs/ it was more readily available.
- there was better or consolidated information about university programs available.
- I had a better understanding of the programming that was available.

RESOURCES THAT HELP IMMIGRANTS LEARN

Participants identified the following as resources in their community that supported them and helped them learn about and adapt to life in Canada.

- Multicultural Association of Fredericton
 - o Provides language training.
 - o Provides orientation and settlement advice for people.
 - o Helps you to find a job.
 - o Provides general resources.
 - o Helps you to learn about the tax system and what it is used for in Canada.
 - o Helps me to adapt to life in the community.
- Faith Groups
 - o Give people a lot of help.
 - o Taught me English.
 - o Taught me about Canadian culture.
- Hospitality of local people
 - o Is comforting when you are trying to settle.
- Community Meetings
 - o Help me to learn about issues and events in my community.
- Friends
- Korean Community Association
- Neighbours and my children's friends parents
- YMCA programs
- Citizenship presentations prior to coming to Canada
- Food banks and furniture banks help when you are trying to settle and to figure things out.

Other comments

- Having security and hope for the future
 - o Having safety and peace
 - o Having a solid government structure
 - o Education for my kids

DESIRED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Participants identified the following as opportunities that they would like to have to engage in learning.

I would like to have the opportunity...

- to attend university.
- to access post-secondary education.
- to know how to access finances and a student loan.
- to achieve my PhD in Adult Education.
- to take an English course.
- to know how to start a business.
- to continue studying English.

CREATING A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

The concept of creating a welcoming community for immigrants in Atlantic Canada is an idea that has been put forth by many community groups and organizations throughout the region. Atlantic Canada shares a relatively small proportion of Canada's total immigrant population though the need is no less great. Creating a welcoming community is thus a necessary step in attracting and retaining immigrants in this region. The following points represent the participants' ideas about how to create a welcoming community in Fredericton.

I want my community to...

- share and learn about us.
- understand that we are not different than them.
- know that I want to help build the best community possible.
- know that I am peacefully minded.
- know that I am a good person and that I am willing to learn new things if I have to understand that I will need time to learn.
- accept my cultural background.
- want to learn about other cultures, their values and behaviors.
- know that I am a hard worker, honest, and very well qualified to work in different places with very wide experiences.
- know that I am full of energy and hope.
- be accepting and to absorb different cultures.
- know that the differences are not as great as they think.
- understand that we will take time to learn new things and the language.
- understand that language takes time to perfect. Sometimes when people speak they get frustrated, but we are not stupid. We understand what they are saying, it just takes a us bit of extra time to process and to respond.
- know that we are hard-working.
- know that we want a community where we can all live together and where people are willing to share with us.

-
- know that we are of the same mind, and same soul, we are human beings and we are all equal.
 - be willing to support immigrants running businesses in a small place.
 - be willing to learn about immigrants' backgrounds and be willing to learn about why they are here.
 - understand that immigrants are not terrorists or someone who is here to take advantage of them or the Canadian system.
 - understand that language can be a barrier but it doesn't mean that we don't have knowledge that is useful and that can be shared.
 - be understanding and open minded. Be willing to look outside of the box. Most of the time immigrants come with more and different knowledge. They have experiences from other societies.
 - try to see how different knowledge can help and contribute to the community.
 - be willing to recognize diversity and the benefits that can be achieved from it.
 - recognise that diversity can help to balance a system rather than having everything the same.
 - recognize that immigration requires learning on the part of everyone.
 - recognize that immigrants are asked to come here under Canadian programs to help the country.
 - increase education about immigrants in universities and in schools.
 - allow us to live together sharing a community, not in isolation within the community.
 - be conscious about the vulnerabilities of immigrants and other cultures. People come from a variety of different backgrounds.
 - recognize the reasons that immigrants are in the community.
 - understand that I am not a refugee by choice.
 - understand that refugees are not terrorists or violent.
 - recognize that I am a professional.
 - recognize that I am respectful and well qualified to work.
 - learn about the meaning and reasons for wearing a scarf (Muslim culture).

PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- We want people to be willing to learn about us so that they will have a better understanding of immigrants in the community. In a country that needs immigrants, people should be more educated about immigration in Canada.
- Create more organizations to help facilitate immigrants' inclusion in the community.
- Provide training for specific professional fields.
- Make funds available to assist immigrants to upgrade their skills.
- Provide adequate programs to deal with immigrant needs.
- Give immigrants a chance to access the Canadian and local community and culture.
- There are very good language programs that are available for the computer. I don't think that organizations use these programs to their full advantage. They could be used as a way to relieve staff and to help immigrants who are working or cannot attend regular class times.
- Offer language training that is more focused on adult learning principles.
- Provide other types of language training, e.g. English for work programs.
- Offer job clinics or mentorship programs to help immigrants to learn about their fields of work in Canada.
- Provide more opportunities for immigrants to take language training courses.
- There should be more community involvement in the settlement process and more associations within the community.
- The community should understand the background of immigration in Canada and try to understand what immigrants really want to do in Canada.
- The most important thing is for immigrants to really focus on learning English well.
- Immigrants have different views and different ideas. Organizations should host more conferences to allow them to express what they feel and what they think and provide places where they can express themselves.
- Provide a place where we can meet and learn and receive mentorship from people in the community or from other immigrants.
- After you pass through the immigration system you are left alone. There should be an official system to help facilitate settlement in the community.

-
- There should be better networking between CIC and settlement assistance program providers.
 - Schools should offer programs for immigrant parents, explaining the systems that their children will be involved in.
 - English should be available for children after school. Currently they are taken out of class to learn language and they get behind in their other school work.
 - Provide functional literacy programs. Programs are slow to progress through and involve a lot of grammar and language structure.
 - Provide more opportunities during language training programs for students to get out and to interact in the community.
 - Increase the availability of programming for immigrants.
 - Discrimination is a problem beneath the surface, and is hurtful to immigrants. People should be more educated about diversity.
 - Integrate more immigrants into the workplace and allow immigrants to work in places that are related to their professions
 - Give government assisted refugees a better chance to build their life. When you work, money is cut. Allow newcomers to work as much as they can for the first year without cutting their assistance. This would give them time to go to school and live without worrying about losing money.
 - Language training should be available to anyone who wants to take it.