

**Title:** **How strangers become neighbours: constructing citizenship through community development**

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**Research Question:** This project explores the possibility that citizenship can be actively constructed through community development at the local level, through local institutions that promote cross-cultural interactions.

**Importance:** What is the role for public policy in promoting the social and cultural integration of newcomers and minorities into an already multicultural society? Arguably the most direct social and cultural impact of immigration policy is felt at the local level, in streets and neighbourhoods, shops and schools. Perhaps not enough attention has been paid to the potential for local, community-based institutions to develop a sense of citizenship and belonging through an integrated approach to inclusion.

**Research Findings:** This project used the exemplary case of the Collingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH) in Vancouver to demonstrate how community based organisations can do the work of developing a sense of citizenship and belonging anchored in shared values and a shared identity. Building on a documentary by the PI about the role of CNH in the social integration of immigrants, this action research project produced a community development manual to complement the film, and then used the film and the manual in a series of workshops in four Canadian cities (by the PI, with the CI, who is Executive Director of CNH). The Manual documents the vision, values, and relationship building approach of CNH.

**Implications:** The workshops (organized through Metropolis centres in each city in 2007) received outstanding evaluations. Attendees (from 3 levels of government, NGOs, faith-and community-based organizations, and educational institutions) responded enthusiastically to the unusual combination of film and Manual, suggesting that these methods are good communicative devices in disseminating knowledge about successful case studies of integration. The case study itself (CNH) shows how it is possible to create a sense of welcome through a local place-based institution, and, through community development processes, to overcome the fear of strangers (in the host society) and help immigrants to become citizens through the process of becoming neighbours. This suggests more federal and provincial policy emphasis on funding such neighbourhood-based initiatives, especially those with an integrated approach to settlement services. Specifically, it is important to support community development approaches as well as services in funding structures, as both bring about different outcomes. If the approaches are used together, they are a powerful tool for settlement and citizenship.