



Title: Settlement Experiences of Family Class Immigrants in a Small City:
Kamloops, British Columbia

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Research Question:

What is the settlement experience of family class immigrants in Kamloops, British Columbia? Related research questions include: What is the role of health, education, employment, language, housing and social services in the settlement experiences of immigrants coming through family reunion intake class? How do family class immigrants in Kamloops identify their settlement needs within a small city? What components of cultural continuity are identified as key by newcomers? What supports do family class immigrants require in facilitating their settlement experiences? How do we enhance existing settlement programs, particularly to meet labour market and language needs? What are “best practices” in settlement and integration in a small city?

Importance:

The importance of undertaking this study lies in the settlement challenges faced by immigrants in smaller communities outside of the major metropolitan areas of Canada. British Columbia (BC) is a large province and settlement experiences can be very different from one community to another. During the past few years initiatives to attract immigrants to smaller cities and communities have been undertaken collaboratively between both federal and provincial governments. It is imperative to better understand the settlement experience of family class immigrants in a smaller city.

Research Findings:

Employment, business and education opportunities, family and friends, established ethnic and religious communities, the provision of settlement and integration services, access to health care and affordable housing, and a welcoming population were identified as important factors to successful settlement. Retention issues identified were affordability of basic life needs, accessibility to services for themselves and their children (health care, education), safety, community openness and acceptance, and proximity to services, employment and activities. The research findings revealed six themes under the following headings, 1) the advantages of settling in a small city, 2) the role of employment in the settlement experience, 3) the role of health, education, language, housing and social services in the settlement experience, 4) the identified settlement needs in Kamloops, 5) key components of cultural continuity beneficial to newcomers, and 6) supports required to facilitate positive settlement experiences.

Implications:

Smaller cities must realize that to become more attractive immigration destinations, they must implement new strategies that promote fairness and justice to attract and retain newcomers and to provide adequate support systems, particularly in the context of the local economy. This is imperative in health, education, and social services. The results of the study will generate discussion and policy recommendations for government, practitioners, policy-makers and other stakeholders around issues such as the needs and settlement experiences of immigrants, credential recognition, employment and other labour market issues, and welcoming and inclusive community capacity issues for delivering key services in a smaller community