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

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SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY CLASS IMMIGRANTS IN A SMALL CITY: KAMLOOPS, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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ABSTRACT

What is the settlement experience of family class immigrants in Kamloops, British Columbia? 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. It is imperative to better understand the settlement experience of family class immigrants in a smaller city. British Columbia (BC) is a large province, and settlement experiences can be very different from one community to another. From 2001 to 2006 the population of immigrants in Kamloops grew from 7945 to 8490, which translates into 545 (10.6 % of the population) new immigrants settling in the city of Kamloops (BC Stats 2006). In 2007, there were more family class immigrants who settled in Kamloops than any other class. All immigrant groups rely on health, education, and social services; and social workers play a key role in the delivery of direct and essential services. The results of the study will generate discussion and policy recommendations for government, practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders around issues such as the needs and settlement experiences of immigrants, credential recognition, employment and other labour market issues, as well as welcoming and inclusive community capacity issues for delivering key services in a smaller community.

INTRODUCTION

This community-based study investigates the settlement experiences of family class immigrants in Kamloops, British Columbia. Immigration is a recognized aspect of Canada's economic, social, and political development. The majority of studies conclude that immigration produces a small but positive net economic benefit to Canada over the long term (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001). Although immigration is within the jurisdiction of the federal government, provincial and municipal governments also have an important role to play in ensuring the successful integration and settlement of newcomers. "While different immigrant and refugee groups often have very different needs, they all rely on health, education and other social services that provincial, territorial and municipal governments deliver to all members of society" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001, p. 15).

The research team brings together faculty in the School of Social Work and Human Service at Thompson Rivers University, community-based partners at Kamloops Immigrant Services, health and social service practitioners at the Interior Health Authority, and student research assistants. By working together as partners in the research, post-secondary institutions and community organizations can jointly develop new knowledge and capabilities in key areas, sharpen research priorities, provide new research training opportunities, and enhance the ability of social sciences research to meet the needs of Canadian communities in the midst of change (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada 2008). The community-based research approach allows for the development of short and long-term strategies that address the *aspirations* of immigrants, laying the foundations upon which immigrants' potential can be nurtured, supported and realized.

Newcomers to Canada have predominantly settled in larger cities. For example, statistics indicate that 70 per cent of Canadian immigrants locate to Vancouver, Toronto, or Montreal (CIC News, Canadian Immigration Newsletter January 2008). Furthermore, the Vancouver Metropolitan area was the initial destination for the majority (91%) of all BC immigrants from 2002-2006 (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch May 2007). Subsequently, concerns have been raised about this urban phenomenon and the resulting uneven distribution of population growth, as well as the absorptive capacity of Canadian regions. Furthermore, concerns over rural depopulation and labour needs due to shortages of skilled workers have also encouraged dispersal of immigrants to non-metropolitan communities. Consequently, all governments are seeking to develop new ways to encourage immigrants to settle in 'non-traditional' destinations (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001).

During the past few years, initiatives to attract immigrants to smaller cities and communities have been undertaken collaboratively between both federal and provincial governments. For example, a regional immigration initiative led by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services (MCAWS), and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) through the Agreement for Canada – British Columbia Cooperation on Immigration and Memorandum of Understanding on Regional Immigration was introduced in BC in August 2006. Likewise, WelcomeBC, a provincial initiative supported by the Government of Canada through the same Agreement, was introduced in 2007. WelcomeBC also recently launched an expansive website to assist potential and new immigrants in their settlement process and integration in BC (Ministry of Attorney General and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism CIC 2008). Furthermore, in 1997 a "Settlement Renewal" initiative to realign settlement administration and federal funding was offered to the provinces and territories, and BC was

one of the provinces to sign a Settlement Realignment (SR) Agreement with CIC in May 1998.

From 2001 to 2006 the population of immigrants in Kamloops grew from 7945 to 8490, which translates into 545 (10.6 % of the population) new immigrants settling in the city of Kamloops (BC Stats, 2006). This study seeks to explore how family class immigrants are welcomed, included, and sustained in small cities such as Kamloops. British Columbia is a large province and settlement experiences can be very different from one community to another. Unfortunately, "even when small and medium-sized cities succeed in initially attracting immigrants, many newcomers soon gravitate to larger and more established immigrant communities in Canada's three largest cities" (CIC 2001, p. 29). 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. "In fact, the success of the Canadian approach to integration is attributed to a large extent to the extensive network of local service delivery partners" (CIC 2001, p. 16).

The study was undertaken in response to this challenge and seeks to increase our knowledge base and understanding of family class immigrant settlement experiences in a small city. The research question is the following: What is the settlement experience of family class immigrants in Kamloops, BC? The importance of undertaking this study lies in the settlement challenges faced by family class immigrants in smaller communities outside of the major metropolitan areas of Canada. It is imperative to better understand the settlement experience of family class immigrants in a small city. Related research questions include: What is the role of health, education, employ-

ment, 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?

The next section provides information on the conceptual ideas informing the research, as well as the larger context of national and provincial initiatives on settlement and immigration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature was undertaken as an important component of the research. We approached the literature with the goal of learning more about the settlement experiences of family class immigrants in smaller cities. Specific aspects of settlement are considered under the following headings: 1) The Delivery of Settlement Services: A Historical Context; 2) Family Class Immigrants; 3) The Phases and Experience of Settlement; 4) Regional Settlement of Immigrants in BC; and 5) Regional Settlement in the Thompson-Okanagan and Kamloops.

The Delivery of Settlement Services: A Historical Context

Prior to World War II, settlement of immigrants was left to those responsible for bringing them to Canada, such as the Canadian National Railway, Canadian Pacific Railway and the Hudson Bay Company, and to voluntary agencies and the immigrants themselves. The Settlement Service was established in 1948

placing federal settlement officers throughout the country to help families of Canadian soldiers and war refugees adjust to life in Canada. Settlement assistance is one of the main activities of the immigration program. In 1966, with the creation of the new Department of Manpower and Immigration, the Settlement Service was disbanded, and the federal government withdrew from being actively involved in the settlement needs of immigrants. Instead, the prevailing philosophy was that immigrants should turn to existing, mainstream services available to all Canadians for their settlement needs.

With the influx of the Indochinese refugee movement, the mandate for operation of federal settlement programs and services was reaffirmed. In 1974, grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were initiated under the new Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), which continues today (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001). In 1996, the Federal Government announced that it was open to devolving its responsibilities for settlement services to the provincial/territorial level and negotiated agreements with two provinces – British Columbia and Manitoba in 1998. Under these agreements, these provinces receive funds from the federal government to administer settlement services.

“The Canadian model of settlement and integration program service delivery aims to enable newcomers to adapt, settle and integrate into Canadian society ‘as quickly and comfortably as possible’ so that they may become contributing members of Canadian society” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001, p. 7). Today the delivery of settlement services involves both the federal and provincial governments. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) contracts with and provides funding to immigrant-serving organizations and other community-based agencies, often referred to as service provider organizations (SPOs).

There are four main funding programs: Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), the Host Program, and Employment Assistance Services (EAS). The LINC program funds basic language instruction in one of Canada's official languages to adult immigrants as soon as possible after their arrival. ISAP funds organizations that provide programming designed to help immigrants access services and to integrate into their community. These programs include: reception and orientation services; translation and interpretation services; paraprofessional counselling; referral to mainstream services; and employment-related activities such as job-finding. The Host Program matches newcomers with established Canadians to help in the acclimatization process. Recent immigrants learn about their community and local services and are given an opportunity to practice their language skills (Fontana 2003). Employment Assistance Services (EAS) provide important labour market skills for immigrant newcomers.

There are eight categories employed to classify immigrants, which can be grouped into two major classes, Economic Class and Non-Economic Class. Each of these classifications has implications for entrance requirements and expectations, as well as to the entitlement of supports and services such as those listed above. The Economic Class Immigrants include members of Federal Skilled Worker, Provincial Nominee, Business, Live-in Caregiver, and Canadian Experience Classes. The Non-Economic Class immigrants are members of the Family Class, Refugee Class, and others (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009).

Family Class Immigrants

The experience of Family Class immigrants will differ greatly from that of Business Class immigrants. Sponsors of Family Class immigrants must promise to financially support the family members applying for permanent residency status, and as a result sponsors must meet certain income requirements. If one has previously sponsored relatives to come to Canada and has later turned to the government for financial assistance, one may not be allowed to sponsor another person. In Canada, a citizen or permanent resident may sponsor her or his spouse, common-law partner or conjugal partner, dependent children (including adopted children), or other eligible relatives to come to Canada as permanent residents. Citizens and permanent residents can also sponsor other relatives, including parents and grandparents, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, and grandchildren who are under 18 and unmarried. CIC refers to the immigrants who are eligible to use this family sponsoring process as 'family class.'

The Phases and Experience of Settlement

According to Mwarigha (2002) settlement is viewed as a process and a continuum of activities that new immigrants or refugees pass through upon arrival in a new country. Settlement can be broken down into three phases (Wayland 2006). The early settlement phase is evident with requirements for shelter, food, clothing, information and orientation, basic language instruction, and other essential "reception" or early settlement services. The intermediate settlement phase refers to persons that require advanced or employment-specific language instruction, training and education to acquire or upgrade skills, usually with the goal of securing employment. Other needs at this stage include assessing health services, housing, and the legal assistance

system. The long-term settlement phase refers to persons that work to overcome systemic barriers and to participate in Canadian society as equals to the Canadian-born population. Long-term settlement includes civic participation and issues related to citizenship. This view extends beyond settlement policy as defined and funded by CIC (Wayland). On the other hand, CIC only considers the short-term version of settlement, whereas most of the barriers are in the longer term.

Goss Gilroy's three distinct phases of newcomer integration correspond well to the three phases (early, intermediate, and long term) outlined above:

Settlement refers to the meeting of the basic needs of newcomers, including: housing, food, registering children in school, signing up for language training, accessing general mainstream services with the assistance of the service provider, and understanding basic rights and responsibilities.

Adaptation refers to the next step in the process, characterized by an immigrant's ability to realize some benefits of settlement—that is, being able to access mainstream services independently, understanding Canadian social and cultural norms, improving language skills, developing contacts and building friendships in the community, and reassessing personal goals.

Integration refers to the ultimate goal of the process, at which point immigrants act as fully functioning members of Canadian society. Among other things, it assumes they have found and are maintaining employment appropriate to their skills and background; they participate in mainstream organizations; they offer a portion of their time to the community; they feel comfortable with Canadian values and participate in the political process (voting, running for office, etc.). (Handford and Tan 2003, p. 8)

This study considers the critical importance of adaptation and integration to immigrants' long-term settlement experience. Although the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) does not explore long-term settlement experiences, the research was established in response to the growing

need for information on immigrants to Canada. Particular emphasis is given to the settlement process and the factors that influence immigrants' ability to integrate and adapt to Canadian society, in addition to the services used by immigrants to facilitate the transition. Information on how new immigrants adjust to life in Canada and the factors that help or hinder this adjustment can be gleaned from the LSIC. The study was conducted in three waves. Wave one (designed in 2001) of the survey was conducted with newcomers after the first six months of arrival in Canada; wave two was administered after two years; and wave three after four years of settlement. A few key areas of settlement were explored including: immigrants' destination choice and the reason for that choice; initial experiences in finding suitable housing, accessing health care services, pursuing further training and entering the labour force; and difficulties encountered during the settlement process (Statistics Canada 2007).

Findings of the LSIC survey, such as distinctions between the experiences of family class immigrants and other immigrant classes, and the evolution of the settlement process from six months to two years, and two years to four years of arrival, as well as the barriers to integration in BC are of relevance to this study for comparative purposes. However, the target population of the LSIC was respondents from Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA) and non-remote Census Agglomerations (CA). A CMA has an urbanized core of 100,000 or more, and a CA has an urbanized core of 10,000 to 99,999 persons. Immigrants from **rural areas and small cities** like Kamloops, BC were not included in this study. Thus the findings of this particular research are of interest, for comparative purposes, but do not relate directly to research being undertaken to explore the experience of settlement in a small city such as Kamloops, BC. Consideration of the potential implications of the LSIC findings

will be given in the discussion of the findings of this research later in the paper. It is important to understand the context of regional settlement of immigrants in BC before discussing regional settlement in Kamloops and the Thompson-Okanagan region.

Regional Settlement of Immigrants in BC

In 2009, Canada received 252,179 new immigrants. The number of immigrants to BC in 2009 was the fourth highest in the last decade. Only in 2005, 2006, and 2008 did BC receive more new immigrants. BC's share of Canada's immigration total was 16.4% in 2009, slightly lower than the 17.8% in 2008 and 16.5% in 2007. British Columbia welcomed the third-largest number of immigrants of all provinces (41,438) and territories. In 2009, immigrants to BC came from over 175 countries. Mainland China, India and the Philippines were the top three source countries (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009).

Every year, more than 40,000 immigrants move to British Columbia to start a new life. The number of family class immigrants increased by 1.5% from 2008 to 2009, from 12,423 to 12,611. The 2009 total was nearly identical to 2007. Family class immigrants made up 30.4% of all immigrants to BC in 2009 (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development 2009). The challenge is to help those new residents settle in and feel that their new country and province is becoming their new home.

Social inclusion is a useful concept today as the Province of British Columbia had developed WelcomeBC for immigrant settlement and integration services and welcoming communities' initiatives. The purpose of WelcomeBC is "to assist immigrants in accessing a wide variety of settlement and integration services and to ensure that BC communities have the capacity to be welcoming and in-

clusive" (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, undated, p. 3). In BC, the Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP) recognizes that the goal of integration is a two-way process that seeks to engage diverse sectors of the economy and social groups and promote collaboration in fostering welcoming and inclusive communities. (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, undated).

Today, immigration is a major component of population growth in BC (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch 2008).

Immigrants, and especially recent immigrants, have not settled in the province in the same pattern as the total population. The regional distribution of immigrants is quite different from that of B.C.'s total population, and the characteristics of immigrants living in B.C.'s regions vary as well. (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch 2008, p.1)

Immigrants in BC have settled unevenly in the eight regions across the province. (Vancouver Island and Coast/Victoria, Vancouver and Metropolitan Area, Thompson Okanagan, Kootenay, Cariboo, North Coast, Nechako, and Northeast). The Lower Mainland - Southwest Development Region (Vancouver and Metropolitan Area) is home to the largest populations of immigrants and recent immigrants. While 59% of British Columbia's total population lived in this region in 2006, 90% of recent immigrants living in BC made their homes here (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch 2008).

"While job growth continues to occur disproportionately in these urban centers, the pairing back of the welfare state through neoliberal policies at the provincial and federal levels has reduced the social and physical infrastructure in Canadian cities" (Walton-Roberts 2005, p.77-78). "Since the 1980s there has been a restructuring of the welfare state in favour of the neoliberal approach that rejects state intervention with regard to immigrant intervention"

(Frideres 2006, p. 7). Regionalization policy, or immigrant dispersion, to small and medium-sized cities outside the three major Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver) has been discussed for some time (Sherrell et al.). Walton-Roberts (2005) explains that, “while there is certainly a movement toward promoting immigrant dispersal to smaller urban areas, research on the issue has been limited” (p. 14). This study addresses this issue through an exploration of the settlement experiences of family class immigrants in Kamloops, BC, a small city located in the Thompson-Okanagan region.

Regional Settlement in the Thompson-Okanagan and Kamloops

The number of immigrants settling in areas other than Vancouver and Victoria declined drastically during the early 80's. However, in 2005, 17.2% more immigrants chose to live outside of Vancouver and Victoria compared to 2004, and a significant annual increase continued in 2006 (+14.2%) and 2007 (+8.5%). During this time, family class immigrants accounted for the largest share of landings into other areas in BC. Kelowna (located in the Thompson-Okanagan Region) recorded the largest number of immigrants, accounting for over 13.5 percent of immigrants settling in “other areas” in 2007. Compared to 1990, the number of immigrants in Kelowna more than doubled, and most of the immigrants were categorized as family class and skilled workers. Kamloops attracted the third-largest number of immigrants in BC, with 4.9 percent of immigrants settling in the city, followed by Vernon (also located in the Thompson-Okanagan) with 3.6 percent. There were more family class immigrants who settled in Nanaimo and Kamloops areas than any other class. Although Nanaimo and Kamloops have seen many economic and

social developments, there were still fewer immigrants going to those areas (BC Stats 2009).

Thompson-Okanagan covers much of the interior of the province, stretching from Princeton in the west to Golden and the BC-Alberta border in the east. Kelowna, Kamloops, Vernon, and Penticton are the largest cities in the region. According to the Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch, 2008:

The Thompson-Okanagan Development Region was home to 491,479 people in 2006. The population of this region grew by 26,437 people, or 5.7%, between 2001 and 2006. In 2006, there were 63,190 immigrants in the region, 8.3% more than in 2001, who made up 12.9% of the total 2006 population. The region was home to 5.6% of all immigrants living in B.C. In 2006, 5,210 recent immigrants lived in the Thompson-Okanagan Development Region. Recent immigrants composed 8.2% of all immigrants in the region, and 1.1% of the total population of the region. (p.3)

Immigrants come to different communities of BC, such as the Thompson-Okanagan, bringing their skills, knowledge, business experience, and culture. They settle in communities and help to support the local economy and invigorate communities by providing labour, supporting local business, and sending their children to local schools. Interestingly, socioeconomic characteristics of immigrants who settle in BC communities are quite different. Immigrants' age structure, gender breakdown, education, English ability, and source countries vary across each of the BC Development Regions. The Thompson-Okanagan Development Region had the highest proportion (36%) of immigrants who came with secondary or less education. The primary source countries of immigrants to the region were India, the UK, the US, the Philippines, and Mainland China (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch 2007). According to the Welcome BC site:

The region's population and economy are growing these days. Newcomers are attracted to its lifestyle, nice weather and beautiful landscapes. Seniors are particularly interested in the region. Their interest is a main force behind construction of new resort and residential developments. Forestry, agriculture, mining and manufacturing are still important here, but tourism and the growing retirement industry are overtaking them in the economy of the Thompson Okanagan. Jobs have increased steadily in the Thompson Okanagan over the last five years. Job growth is expected to be strong in the region through 2009 to 2011. (2010)

The population of immigrants choosing to settle in Kamloops increased from 7,945 (10.3%) in 2001, to 8,490 (10.6%) in 2006. Kamloops is the second largest city in the region, with a population of nearly 85,000. The economy of Kamloops is diverse. Forestry, mining, agriculture, and tourism represent important business sectors. Retail, government services, and business/financial services also contribute significantly to the economic structure of the city. The average unemployment rate was 5% in 2007 (Venture Kamloops 2007), and the current rate is 7.7% (BC Stats, 2010).

The city is located at the junction of four major highways, two major railways, and the North and South Thompson Rivers. Kamloops is a service and transportation hub for much of the Thompson- Okanagan Region. The highways are the Trans-Canada, the Yellowhead, Highway 97, and the Coquihalla. Kamloops is referred to as a year-round playground including world-class fishing, available at its many surrounding lakes in summer, and skiing at nearby ski resorts in winter. The city is also known as the Tournament Capital of Canada, hosting dozens of regional, provincial, and national tournaments each year. Kamloops will host the 2011 Canada Summer Games. Like many urban centers in British Columbia's interior, Kamloops has traditionally functioned as a processing and service centre for a resource economy (MacKinnon and Nelson 2005).

A welcoming community is one where there is strong support for contributions, challenges, and diversity offered by immigrants (both in and outside of the workplace), an engaged voluntary sector to provide ongoing support to newcomers, quality local infrastructure (i.e., housing, schools, etc.) to accommodate new residents and the provision of effective settlement services in coordination with the provincial government (Bruce, Lister and Ellis 2005). Rural community development research shows that, in general, social cohesion and social interaction are extremely important in rural communities (Bruce 2003). Therefore smaller communities must prepare themselves to welcome and integrate immigrants into their communities if there is any hope that they will remain and be contributors to the community.

To this end, Kamloops was one of nine communities in Canada to participate in the United Nations Association in Canada, A Sense of Belonging Project from 2006 to 2007. A series of round-tables and community training sessions were organized across the country with the overall objective to promote diversity and combat racism through local action. The other communities involved in the project included: Calgary, Alberta, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Kingston, Ontario, Montreal, Quebec, Moncton, New Brunswick, and St. John's, Newfoundland (United Nations Association in Canada 2007a). Findings indicated further work was needed to promote diversity and combat racism in Kamloops within the school system and employment opportunities (United Nations Association in Canada 2007b).

"While not all immigrants require assistance upon arrival, many benefit from language and employment training, as well as other services" (Fontana, 2003 p. 2). Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS), a partner in this study, plays a critical role in welcoming and integrating immigrants into the community

of Kamloops. The provision of settlement services is a critical investment. KIS is a not-for-profit registered society and registered charity that delivers a broad range of programs which are sensitive to the needs of a culturally diverse community; to deliver programs and activities designed to facilitate immigrants, visible minorities, first-generation Canadians and their families in becoming full and equal members of Canadian society; to inform and sensitize the region on immigration, settlement, integration, and multicultural issues; and to promote the elimination of racism and to facilitate organizational and institutional change (Kamloops Immigrant Services 2009).

KIS delivers most of its services in the Kamloops community, with individuals coming from outlying areas such as Merritt, Ashcroft, Salmon Arm, Revelstoke, Clearwater, 100 Mile House, and Barriere to access services. Until recently staff travelled to these areas to assist individuals and/or organizations. Adapting to a new life can be difficult: the community is unfamiliar, and both the culture and language may be very different. To help immigrants feel comfortable in their new community, the Government of British Columbia provides a wide variety of programs - from providing the personal touch to welcome people into their new community to helping newcomers understand official forms and paperwork. Information and support services provide immigrant newcomers with information about BC society, guidance and support with personal and family adjustment issues, and connect newcomers to the broader community. Employment and career decision-making services are a critical component for newcomers. In most cases, services are provided by settlement workers at third-party organizations and are often available in the first language of the newcomer.

From 1998 to 2008, there were 840 new family class immigrants in Kamloops, BC. In 2008, 36 percent of all new immigrants arrived in Kamloops

as family class immigrants (Citizenship & Immigration Canada 2009). Several studies have shown that most, but not all, immigrants first choose their destinations based on the presence of kinship and ethnic networks and then on potential employment opportunities. "The LSIC report corroborates the findings that the presence of family and friends significantly shapes immigrants' destination experiences upon arrival in Canada" (Sherrell et al. 2005, p. 81). Based on field research with Kosovar refugees in smaller BC cities, Sherrell et al. found that "the strategy of settling extended families together is an important one that may well shape the likelihood of staying in a small-or medium-sized city" (p. 82). Family and friends provide important networks of support during the early stages of settlement as well as on-going contacts and resources, at least in principle, thereafter (Sherrell et al.).

Flint (2007) found that rural immigrants in Nova Scotia are usually first attracted to the region through personal relationships or family ties with area residents and that the strength of these ties correlated with the likelihood that immigrants will remain. Settles (2001) argues that "from a family and individual perspective, being at home can mean a variety of different statuses and experiences" (p. 627). "Immigration decisions and families' mobility is not simply expressed in the first move, but also in its implementation and success" (Settles, p. 632). If there is enough critical mass of a particular immigrant group in an area, then others will follow, and their decision to stay will also depend on employment, appropriate social services, and a welcoming community (Bruce 2007).

Recent work by Walton-Roberts (2004) on immigrants in Squamish and Kelowna and by Henin and Bennett (2002) on Latin American and African immigrants in Victoria, BC, addresses the settlement experiences of immigrants outside BC's Lower Mainland. Walton-Roberts examines practices undertaken

by regional governments in attracting and retaining immigrants. Her research underscores the importance of the settlement context in facilitating negative or positive settlement experiences. Henin and Bennett identify several obstacles to inclusion, including obtaining meaningful employment that reflects the education and training of the immigrants, as well as finding adequate and affordable housing. Studies show the significance of social and economic conditions in the city of settlement (Abu-Laban, Derwing, Krahn, Mulder and Wilkinson 1999; Krahn, Derwing and Abu-Laban 2003; Sherrell et al. 2005).

A regional forum organized in Kelowna on June 23, 2009, at the University of British Columbia Okanagan campus aimed to create dialogue on exploring best practices for addressing attraction, retention, and integration of immigrants into the social and economic life of their communities. The Welcoming and Inclusive Community and Workplaces Program (WICWP) working group led by Community Futures Kamloops and Kamloops Immigrant Services are developing partnerships through a memorandum of understanding between the various sectors and groups. A welcoming and inclusive community is obviously an important factor in retaining any newcomer. Beyond employment, the hospitality offered in a new environment will have a profound effect on successful settlement and retention. Immigrants' settlement experiences are contextualized in the context of the small city, which is an important consideration in this study.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study was guided by a community-based approach in all aspects of the research. As noted, the research team consisted of two social work faculty members and a student research assistant from Thompson Rivers University, a social work practitioner from Kamloops

Immigrant Services, and a social work practitioner from the Interior Health Authority. The advisory committee included the research team and settlement workers from Kamloops Immigrant Services who were informed and consulted about the research process and approach consistently throughout the duration of the study. According to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) CURA Program:

Alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions will foster new knowledge, tools and methods to develop the best strategies for diverse aspects of intervention, action research, program delivery and policy development that will be appropriate for our rapidly changing times. Public or private community and voluntary organizations represent major sources of expertise and innovation that are based on front-line experience. For their part, postsecondary institutions offer breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in the social sciences and humanities disciplines, which shed vivid light on the changing human condition and thereby offer new approaches to problem-solving. (SSHRC, 2008)

This quote aptly reflects the aspirations of the research team in exploring the settlement experiences of family class immigrants in Kamloops, BC. By involving immigrants, community members, and students in the research the added benefit of building future leadership contributes to the goal of further developing capacity to support a local research agenda in the immigrant community. Short and long-term strategies that address the aspirations of immigrants, laying the foundations upon which immigrants' potential can be nurtured, supported, and realized is identified as an anticipated action outcome.

The data for this research were collected from January to August 2008 using three qualitative research methods: key informant interviews, focus groups, and photovoice. The research team in consultation with the advisory committee chose these methods to elicit the voices of family class immigrants, as well as those involved in service delivery, in a creative, diverse, and re-

spectful manner. The methodology employed for this investigation is exploratory and descriptive in nature and is guided by a mixed-method research design. The blend of key informant interviews, focus group, and photovoice data collection methods and resulting analysis yields a comprehensive response to the research question, *what is the settlement experience of family class immigrants in Kamloops, BC?* The key informant interviews and focus group methods provide a detailed understanding of the experience of family class immigrants, and the photovoice method complements these methods by providing a “snapshot” or vivid picture of this phenomenon as seen through the eyes of family class immigrants. By using more than one method of data collection, a triangulation strategy was made possible for data analysis. It is important to note that during the period of the study (2008-2009 year) there were a number of significant shifts in the global economy that affected resource industries in the interior of BC. The changing economic context will continue to play an important role in the settlement and integration experiences of newcomers, particularly the effects in the labour market and employment options.

Social work practitioners, service providers, settlement workers, and local officials were interviewed to gather information about process, access, strengths, and barriers to settlement experiences in Kamloops. Focus groups were employed to encourage group interaction between family class immigrants, thereby ensuring insight that would otherwise not be accessible through individual interviews. According to Krueger (1994), “a focus group is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment ... conducted with approximately 7 to 10 people by a skilled interviewer” (Williamson 2002, p. 251). Standardized interview guides were employed for both the key in-

formant and focus group interviews (refer to appendix). This method along with a semi-structured format was well suited to the needs of this study. Participants were asked to describe their settlement experience and what their needs and specific challenges were within a small city such as Kamloops, as well as how improvements could be made to enhance their settlement experience. The semi-structured framework allowed the co-facilitators, as the moderators, to follow up on themes and specific comments provided by the participants during the discussion. Narrative analysis and storytelling were used to examine the narratives of respondents, and a thematic analysis of the focus group and interviews with informants was conducted to generate patterns and processes and develop meanings in order to understand and explain contradictions and multiple versions of meaning generated by participants.

Photovoice, an innovative participatory action method, was also utilized to allow immigrants and settlement workers to reflect on their experiences and support needs through taking pictures and providing narratives which represent their "voice" about these experiences. According to Wang and Burris (1997):

Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. As a practice based in the production of knowledge, photovoice has three main goals: 1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, 2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and 3) to reach policymakers. (p. 369)

Along with a photograph taken by respondents to reflect their settlement experience, they included a narrative description of the photo, which allows the photographer to give specific meaning to individual photographs. The narrative tells the story of the image and helps the viewer understand the impact the

image had on the photographer respondent. This method allows the research to influence the wider community in Kamloops through a powerful visual representation of the experiences of immigrants. Settlement workers and family class immigrants participated in photovoice by taking photos that represented their settlement, integration, and adaptation experiences in a small city, and storytelling the meaning of the photograph in their own words.

Nine key informant and four focus group interviews (two women only, one male only, and one mixed gender group) were facilitated, and four respondents participated in photovoice. Key informant interviews were conducted with social work practitioners, settlement workers, a secondary school teacher, hospital and community health nurse, family physician, city official, and others involved in providing services to family class immigrants in Kamloops. Interviews allowed for in-depth perspectives on the issues associated with providing services to immigrants and allowed service providers to be candid regarding the current nature of service provision in Kamloops. One of the best ways to gather this information was to ask additional questions during the interviews.

The recruitment of immigrant participants was coordinated at Kamloops Immigrant Services. Settlement workers contacted recent family class immigrants to Kamloops in order to invite their participation in focus group interviews. They contacted potential respondents through their own contact lists and invited them to participate. As a result, four focus groups were conducted in May and June 2008. It was important to organize focus groups carefully to be certain participants understood the purpose of the research and the questions being asked. By having other immigrants in the room, conversations around services and settlement needs flowed freely in an uninhibited manner. All of the focus groups were held at Kamloops Immigrant Services where immigrants

usually meet in the context of their settlement services. Respondents were assured that their service provision and support from Kamloops Immigrant Services would not be impacted by the feedback and information they shared and that their names and any other identifying information would not be revealed in future publications or presentations. Interpreters were available to assist respondents and the researchers during the focus groups, as required. Data from the key informant interviews and focus groups were audiotaped and selectively transcribed for later analysis. The data was then analyzed and sorted thematically. Focus group respondents reflected diverse ethnic and racial demographics, congruent with the demographic profile of Kamloops (such as South Asian, Chinese, Latin American, Eastern European, and other communities).

Following each of the focus group interviews, participants were oriented and invited to participate in the photovoice aspect of the research. Disposable cameras were given to those individuals who expressed an interest in participating. Although the return rate of the cameras was low, a number of photos were received from four participants. Due to time and financial constraints, the necessary follow-up was not possible. However, the photographs and narrative submissions received provided unique, rich and detailed accounts of the insights, reflections, and experiences of family class immigrants and settlement workers in Kamloops. In future, further consideration and investment of time would be required before employing photovoice in further studies. Perhaps an individual session devoted to orienting respondents to the use of this method would be beneficial, in addition to exploring the comfort level of participants, the necessary time required for taking photographs, subsequent meetings for storytelling, and the follow-up in employing and sharing this method to reflect their experience.

FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of data from the key informant and focus group interviews, and photovoice, there were several key factors identified by respondents regarding the settlement experience of family class immigrants in Kamloops. Themes relating to 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 echoed many of the themes of the literature reviewed for the study. These aspects 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.

Themes have been organized under the following six 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.

The Advantages of Settling in a Small City

Respondents spoke of the many advantages to settling in a small city such as Kamloops. However, perspectives varied on whether these countered some of the more challenging aspects. Some individuals expressed a strong commitment to settling in Kamloops, while others indicated they would not settle in the area. Many expressed the view that the cost of living, proximity of

basic amenities, and services are much more manageable than larger centers, and that crime rates are lower. They like the weather, clean air and surroundings, friendlier appeal, pace and lifestyle of Kamloops, and feel comfortable raising their children in the area. These advantages are illustrated in the following comments:

Kamloops is cheaper than a bigger city. That's the biggest thing. Bigger city you need at least two cars. Everything is closer in Kamloops, bigger city has higher house prices. No jobs. In Kamloops good jobs, house prices low, everything low, that the thing. Less crime. Big city big crime, small city small crime. You know everybody in Kamloops, in a small city. Different lifestyle in small city. When I moved here I couldn't speak one word.

I know everywhere in Kamloops, it is easy if I need an address, everywhere is easy. to go everywhere. Big city is too hard for going to places. Kamloops is good, it is dry, not too rainy. Because Vancouver has too much rain, Kamloops is dry. I like. The weather in Kamloops is very good. My children have gone to a different city, but Kamloops is friendly. Happy face. Big city, no. Nobody has the time for each other in the big city. In Kamloops you drive nice and slow, in the big city you drive fast. I know everywhere, especially the material for building a house. I know everything. It is easy for me.

I like to stay in Kamloops for many reasons. First, it reminds me of my place. Kamloops reminds me of my place, rivers, hills, the air is clean. It is very clean. In the city we had problems with breathing. Especially for my kids. Kamloops is a small place, it offers opportunities. For me, the Sahali area for me is the center, everything is close – university, schools, shopping malls. So, everything is close at hand. People are friendly. There are challenges in big city – drugs. Kamloops is very nice and ideal place to raise the kids.

Kamloops is a good city if you like sports, very good weather, and I found people here are friendly, city has more personality, people try to understand even if you have a different accent better than Vancouver. Sometimes I found community does a lot of stuff. Community tries to do things together.

TRU, I have friends that studied at university. I don't have any negatives to say, that's why I'm here.

Further benefits are noted within the following photographs and associated narratives:



This is me sitting at Riverside Park near the beach in front of the river. It means to come to Kamloops and to have peace, of so many things, so many things. It was a new start, so it was something new (photovoice respondent).



I like this view down my street. I like the quiet and the green space. I prefer small cities where you can just go around in flip-flops and shorts, like casual (photovoice respondent).

The Role of Employment in the Settlement Experience

Not surprisingly, the majority of respondents stressed the critical role of employment and income to their settlement experience. As in the following illustrations, some respondents report experiencing a newfound optimism and hope for the subsistence of their family upon arriving in Kamloops:



This I call abundance. Because when I came here it was too much of everything, wow. For example, when I saw my husband's kitchen it was like a store for me. It was too much. When I came here I was divorced and broken. This picture means for me was abundance – very full. Here, when I moved to Kamloops, I was able to feed my daughter and myself. Because when we were there we were lack of lot, couldn't buy lot, unable to do a lot (photovoice respondent).



...my kitchen was empty. Now I am feeding this little bird. The big thing for me is that I was able to feed my daughter. That's what it means. This picture is symbolic of me. I came here and I had something to give to her, a future for my daughter, something to feed to her, the future (photovoice respondent).

However, for some newcomers these initial positive experiences are dashed by a lack of recognition of their credentials and uniform education and qualification requirements, as well as a lack of employment opportunities. Many respondents noted a number of disparities and contradictions with their pre-departure impressions and their actual experiences of settling in Kamloops. They expressed despair at having to start over again. In the words of one focus group respondent:

It is discrimination. The experience abroad in your country doesn't count. You need Canadian experience. Ten years' experience should allow you to show what you know. Why Canadian experience? If you say you have experience you need to know the job. A piece of paper is a piece of paper. Frustrating experience.

This sentiment was echoed by another focus group respondent:

It is ridiculous. They want Canadian experience – how to volunteer when you have three children to feed? He needs a job, right now. You can volunteer if someone supports you. When you have a home you need to work.

Likewise, another focus group respondent laments:

You leave ...a well-paying job there [country of origin] and then you don't find a job in that same field that you were in and then there's no evaluation, there's no, that degree is nothing for you, so you have to upgrade your degree and you still have to go to school which you have no money for because education is so expensive here ... so your dreams kind of die down when you come here.

Another focus group respondent notes the challenges to staying in a small city:

The system should allow for people like us to get integrated...up until now I have not been hired by a Canadian company ... and I don't see it happening soon...my chance of getting hired in Toronto was better.

A few focus group respondents spoke to an element of deception as in the following quotes:

I think there is a lack of information ... when it comes to family class ... there is a lack of knowledge ... there is a little blackmail going on... it's not only women, it's also men who are brought here under false pretences.

Canada needs regular labourers, but doesn't want a general labourer from elsewhere. Afraid of crime, etc. Pick up the upper level with language skills and they'll still do it. Being tricked to supply cheap labour.

Every person needs a work permit, meaningful employment. As a skilled person I expect adequate opportunities in this country. We need good jobs. Number one is employment, meaningful employment. If we don't find employment we don't have anything...

Furthermore, as in the case of the following focus group respondents, a number of respondents and key informants note the challenges of subsisting on low wage employment:

At first you start with small jobs, nice city, nice people, and not enough jobs. It is hard to survive on \$8 or \$9 dollars per hour. So these are problems. The city itself is not the problem. The city is growing so fast. There are new houses everywhere. People are polite. Personally I don't want to go anywhere.

It's a nice city, nice people, people who want to help you. There are just not enough jobs and, if you have kids, it's hard to survive on \$8 an hour.

The Role of Health, Education, Language, Housing, and Social Services in the Settlement Experience

The important role of health, education, and social services in the settlement experiences of family class immigrants cannot be stressed enough. It is the researchers' premise that much more emphasis needs to be placed on this aspect. Several participants identified that more community programs and initiatives to welcome newcomers to Kamloops are needed. For instance, greater collaboration between organizations such as Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS), or other community initiatives and various ethnic/cultural groups in Kamloops would be helpful with the integration process. It was also suggested that more information and education about the diversity of cultural norms has to be introduced to the community to facilitate understanding and cooperation. In the words of one respondent, "it takes patience. You come here and they have to respect you. But you need to have respect for the new culture. So both sides have to be patient" (focus group respondent).

In the Thompson-Nicola region the most common non-official languages spoken are German, Punjabi, Italian, Spanish and Shuswap (Statistics Canada 2006). Understanding the new culture is often made difficult due to language barriers, particularly those experienced by older immigrants as identified within the findings. Language and communication barriers are particularly prevalent among older immigrants. According to one respondent, "the majority [older newcomers] have a problem with English. Older adults find it very hard. The tongue doesn't work in the same way. The process is slow." Although English training is readily available through KIS, respondents noted the time-limited nature of this service and the need for more assistance in this regard. A few respondents noted the drawbacks to the lack of ethnic diversity in a smaller city such as Kamloops and that it is much more difficult not knowing English

than in a larger centre. One focus group respondent noted “in a small center you can’t customize your course [English training] for everybody.” Another stated that “once you get here you must adapt or leave. If you don’t speak English you leave.”

Furthermore, although it is questionable to use a family member as a translator, medical practitioners stated they must often rely on family members to communicate with their patients. One healthcare practitioner noted that due to the lack of training in working with immigrant populations there have been cases where healthcare professionals have confused grief with pain. According to a health care professional “there is no focus on the cultural and spiritual dimensions of patient care. We need more workers who are better informed about diversity of ethnic and cultural differences so that we do not project Western values on the immigrant population.” Many of the health care professionals such as nurses, other hospital staff, and the general practitioner stressed the challenges of communicating with patients from other countries as illustrated in the comment from the general physician below:

The basis of all doctor-patient relationships is trust ... if you can't communicate effectively as people, then how do you establish that doctor-patient relationship? It takes twice as long to consult with a person who is non-English speaking and a person who has different cultural expectations of the interaction... You want to ensure that according to your training you have given as good a care as anybody else, so what I'd like to see is ... on top of funding for translators is additional funding for those consultations which need a translator. I only have 12 hours of working each day. Once I've worked 12 hours, I'm done ... Extensive input to improve my ... cross-cultural understanding and awareness is not something that I'm strongly drawn to undertaking ... I have experienced immigration myself... I always want to improve but there are ... lots of departments I want to improve in.

In addition to a lack of cultural competence, as in many other Canadian cities, respondents expressed concern for the lack of physicians accepting new patients, and emphasized their reliance on walk-in medical clinics to address their healthcare needs. In 2008 there was a lack of cross-cultural mental health counselling services due to a vacancy in Kamloops, until the position was filled. Specific cross-cultural training is critical to this position, given the cultural mores and stigmatization around accepting and addressing mental health concerns within particular ethnic groups. The varying cultural expectations for types of treatment and the reliance on mainstream treatment methods leads people to think about going back to their country of origin to access traditional treatment – such as from a shaman.

In addition to language and education and health, respondents also emphasized the need for adequate housing. Like many other regions in British Columbia, real estate and rents have increased substantially during the past few years in Kamloops, making purchasing a home out of reach for newcomers, which challenges permanent settlement in the region as is alluded to in the following statement:

We need a place to live. Shelter. We know how the real estate is. The prices have doubled. It is harder for newcomers to have a place of their own. We are temporary residents. We are all forced to rent. Doesn't help people to settle (focus group respondent).

Access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing is an essential step in immigrant integration (Hiebert, Mendez and Wyly 2008).

Identified Settlement Needs in Kamloops

The key informant, focus groups, and photovoice findings highlight the ongoing nature of settlement as an evolving process that cannot be associated with a specific moment in time. Settlement needs change over time as individuals adapt to their new surroundings as illustrated in the following photograph and accompanying narrative:



This one for me is adaptation, because I had to adapt to the weather. It reminds me the first time the weather, so cold. Picture of a tree with a few leaves. I arrived in 1997. I had some time to adapt, little by little, very difficult, very hard, and still is, hard for me. This photo is from my window. So cold, adapting. I am here 11 years. Takes time to adapt, very difficult and hard and still is hard for me. (photovoice respondent).

The continuum of settlement needs also emerged within key informant interviews:

Initially it's like a honeymoon, they are happy. Slowly that changes, and other issues like employment, sometimes women get the jobs and men don't, they are the breadwinners, frustration, family violence, issues with the kids. School – communication gap, parents don't speak the language. Parents concerned about changes in their children. Some start feeling lonely, want to sponsor family, can't afford to. That's a lot of stress. That bothers them a lot. They have to get 2-3 jobs to sponsor their parents. Along with that, the family violence... They start thinking about getting better jobs. Initially they need to get food on the table, they take any job.

It starts to bother them, they went to school for so long. Then they start thinking about moving (Settlement Worker).

For the first 2 years work, education, finances (studies show that immigrants are healthier when they arrive in Canada; due to stress, changes in diet etc.). From 2 to 5 years: disillusionment especially for older people – children settle more quickly but parents must face new situations such as gender role reversal, acceptance of different lifestyle and unexpected hardships. Women from some cultures have a difficult adjustment to make after the birth of children because there are no family supports. Many have post-partum depression and have no assistance. There are also increasing substance abuse issues as a result of depression and stress. Mental illness and even depression will often go undiagnosed due to stigma attached to these in other cultures.

From 10 years and on: conflict between parents and their children who have grown up here. Younger people often leave to find work. Older people stay because of established family units, and current employment (social work practitioner).

As noted, the findings also indicate that the needs and expectations of younger immigrants are very different from the older generation, while the young see adaptation as a two-sided process and make shifts based on the new cultural expectations, older newcomers have an understandably harder time making their own shifts to become a part of the local landscape. One focus group respondent notes, “my age for learning was young, and I had a lot of opportunity. My dad had hard times trying to find a job, harder for older people.” Another respondent conferred “if you come after a certain age like 30 years and you are qualified in another country, it is a bad idea to come to Canada.”

Many of the focus group respondents also identified the impact of unmet needs on family cohesion. Parents stressed the need for school, leisure activi-

ties, and future employment for their children in order to retain them in the community:

My kids are growing up here. There are no second language options for our children in Kamloops. Look at Vancouver, there are so many options for schooling to learn to read and write. Bilingual writing and reading is difficult. I don't see myself here for more than 2 years because they can't seriously learn to read and write here.

My kids are grown now, one already has a degree. They don't want to stay in Kamloops there are no jobs so they go to bigger cities. You can't make them stay. Not many activities for young kids after schools. Especially for newcomers, there are language barriers, no programs for them in the schools. It is hard for them to catch up.

It is difficult to live on \$800 per month. Next generation of kids move to larger cities for jobs in Vancouver or Calgary. There is no industrial base in Kamloops. Splits up families again. Settled here, but the children leave.

Key Components of Cultural Continuity Beneficial to Newcomers

Although anecdotal accounts indicate that Kamloops is becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse, one observes very few people of colour and has to look hard to locate artifacts, symbols, and practices that reflect ethnic and cultural diversity. There are, however, corners of the city where facilities such as the Sikh Temple, the Japanese Canadian Culture Centre, and the Italian Cultural Centre are located. There are also various associations such as the Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association, Chinese Free Masons, Kamloops Filipino Association, Indo-Canadian Community, Kamloops Hindu Cultural Society, Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kamloops Croatian Society, Cantal Ladies Society, Kamloops Korean Sa-Rang Church, Kamloops Taiwanese Cultural Society, and the Circulo-Latino which fulfill a number of purposes, from planning the annual Folkfest event on Canada Day with the Kamloops

Multicultural Society, to providing intermittent and ongoing cultural, social, and leisure opportunities. Thompson Rivers University is making efforts to build capacity in cultural competency, and yet there remains a need for more cross-cultural communication courses and program content.

Important distinctions were noted as to the functions of various organizations. For example, in reference to the Chinese Cultural Association, one focus group respondent noted "they just have dinner together all the time. It's not like the Japanese Cultural Centre where they celebrate Japanese culture." Some of these associations meet on an ongoing basis, whereas others form once a year specifically for the annual Folkfest event. There is also an Anti-Racism Committee and an annual Stand Against Racism event held each year. Further research is required to ascertain the influence these may have on the settlement experience and the resulting perceptions and practices of the Kamloops community.

According to one faith-based practitioner interviewed for the study, there is a lack of spiritual leadership specific to religion and culture. For example, there is no Imam in Kamloops, and recent attempts to develop a Mosque outside of the city have finally been approved and are now under construction. There is minimal to no focus on the cultural and spiritual dimensions of newcomers. How do immigrants retain, reclaim, integrate or fuse their existing identity within this new context? There is generally a lack of cultural continuity for newcomers. Settling in Kamloops is like starting over, as though everything before is no longer relevant. There are no visible or intrinsic artifacts or reminders of the past; everything is different and foreign, which can be perceived as a loss or a gain by some, as illustrated in the photograph and narrative below:



The very first thing that I noticed that there are flags, Canadian flags. And it was then, everything, a different world, everything was different for me (photovoice respondent).

Similarly as the following quote indicates, there is often a sense of loss of a shared history:

If you're in grade one and have friends, they are with you throughout school. Longtime friends. If you find you are old and find a friend, it is not the same. I think in Kamloops it is the same but you are not friends 12 years ago, you're friends now. As you get older you feel different. If you don't have any memory with your friends it is not the same. Canadians, in Kamloops, it is the same. If I go back to my country you are hugging and kissing your friends, talking about a long time ago. It is the same for those living here, exactly the same.

Separation of practical needs from spiritual/cultural needs is detrimental. Dialogue about various individual identities is necessary, so that immigrants feel they are an integral part of the Kamloops community landscape, as illustrated by the following photograph and narrative:



Mesa ...this represents the rediscovery of my roots and ancestry in ways that resonated with my soul, my experience, and my life in Canada. Learning from the Inca tradition of Peru while I'm in Canada has been another eye opener to the layers of identity and existence one has.

Likewise, the next photograph and narrative highlight how embracing one's faith provided guidance within the settlement experience for this individual:



After I came to Canada and after personal struggles, I followed the guidance of the Buddha that had always been sentient in my life.

It is important to acknowledge the impact of country of origin and culture and ethnicity on the settlement experiences of immigrants in Kamloops. The presence of an established ethnic and religious community from one's country of origin greatly impacts the settlement experience, as has been emphasized within the literature and by respondents. Thus, experiences may greatly

vary depending on the country of origin of immigrants. This was not specifically controlled for within the study and would require further research before specific inferences could be made. However, the 2006 profile of diversity in Kamloops indicates that immigrants from South Asia represent the highest proportion of visible minorities in Kamloops (1,545), and they also appear to be one of the most established ethnic and religious immigrant communities, which could have a positive correlation to the experiences of immigrants from South Asian countries in Kamloops.

Supports Required to Facilitate Positive Settlement Experiences

Respondents noted a number of supports that are required to facilitate their settlement in Kamloops. These included the need for more awareness and respect of other cultures among citizens and helping professionals, assistance and support with housing and medical services, and better access to information regarding available services. Many expressed an appreciation for the support provided by Kamloops Immigrant Services (KIS) and stressed that this was instrumental to their settlement experience. However, a number of respondents also expressed concern for the lack of staff and resources in this organization. On the other hand, one respondent went as far as to infer that Kamloops is not "immigrant ready" and requires a plan for adequately accommodating immigrants. The following comments were made in reference to the perceived lack of awareness of citizens and professionals regarding other countries and cultures and the concomitant lack of respect and regard:

Peoples' ignorance of others cultures. They assume I can't speak English. I had a couple of really difficult experiences. They talk down to you. I'm sure they are well intentioned. They speak slowly and loudly as if you are deaf. Do you have running water? Do you have electricity? When I first came here 13 years ago, that was the biggest challenge. I spoke English all my

life. They automatically assume that because you are from another country you do not have the skills.

It is incredible that Kamloops is a multicultural city, yet most people are not aware of other cultures. They assume things. For example, my daughter was 14 years, and teachers assumed she was from a special country and that annoyed her. She wasn't. They put her in groups without asking my daughter what nationality she had. Lots of people don't know anything about other cultures. They should know that they have to be respectful. People are talking without thinking. People here should be educated about other cultures at least in general.

People's ignorance about other cultures and other countries. People ... tend to talk down; they'll speak so slowly or loudly as if you're demented...they assume that because you are from another country, you don't have the skills.

Sometimes you look into people's eyes and you can tell. It's (racial discrimination) not always overt.

The instrumental nature of the services provided by KIS and the need to be aware of this service was also emphasized by focus group respondents as in the following comments:

I don't know what I would have done without Kamloops Immigrant Services. Helped me to adapt so much. I learned English and my rights, I learned about different cultures and other immigrants who didn't speak English, and in the same situation for me. This place for 8 months really helped me. Specially, they taught me English and my rights here, to know your rights.

A group of volunteers go and give a hug to those in trouble. People who make you feel good. It would be nice to have a welcoming group. You need that lift. When somebody is there for a while to get you through it. KIS does help but they do not have a lot of people. Who is better to do this than immigrants? We have that experience.

If it wasn't for KIS, I don't know what I would have done because this place really, really helped me to adapt to the culture, to the country because I learned not only the language, but my rights.

KIS do help, but they don't have enough people.

There should be some kind of pamphlet for people who come here because some people don't even know about KIS.

Settlement worker accounts confirmed some of the challenges experienced by KIS staff, particularly in rural areas and communities:

In the smaller city a settlement worker wears many hats (Settlement Worker).

I used to do a lot of outreach work, some of the clients don't come here, we have to reach them, give services to them, that has been cut down with the gas prices, things have become worse, with funding that we get, we are not allowed to escort, outreach services have been cut down, there are a lot of clients that I don't reach, they cannot afford to come here (Settlement Worker).

Violence in the family, I see the spouse, I see other relatives. That's very challenging if I'm interpreting for both of them, so I try to tell them "in the courts I can't do that," I have to let them know that's a conflict of interest if I'm interpreting for one and then for the other. But when they come and see me at work, that's a challenge, how to keep confidentiality, that's a big thing. They also want to know, some of my clients they ask me questions like "What is your last name?" They want to know where in the class system I fall in. If I'm not one of them, then they feel confident, she's not within our group. They also ask "where does your husband work?" If your husband works in a mill, he might know us. He might talk to them. I tell them, "everything that I do stays here, it is confidential, it doesn't matter where my husband works", but they still want to know. That gives them some satisfaction, they open up. So that is a challenge, you have to portray yourself that you respect their confidentiality, otherwise they won't say anything,

you can't do your job, so that is a challenge. Now it has changed, in the community, your name is out in the community, people start trusting, they become really open, they know the word is out in the community so fast, if something leaked from here, they won't come to you the next time, so you have to be very careful about that, confidentiality is very important to them, You have to respect that, you have to prove that as well (Settlement Worker).

However, as noted a few respondents question the readiness of Kamloops to adequately accommodate immigrants as is indicated by the following comments:

Kamloops is not ready for them ... Kamloops is not immigrant ready. Agencies like TRU and City of Kamloops can work together. I do it but I have to scramble to get the information...the city needs to take initiative... Otherness happens a lot...we have that stigma of immigrants as workers, they're not people, they're not families, they don't need a temple or mosque, family... (Settlement Worker).

You do come across that feeling of hopelessness and despair ... there is simply nothing to motivate them. The main thing is getting adequate information about employment opportunities ... before moving to Canada. ... (Settlement Worker).

There's no actual system to deal with immigration issues... collective and individual assistance...a cohesive plan how to theoretically help immigrants with different needs. Canada invites individuals' work, but does not have structural assistance available to find housing, medical services (Settlement Worker).

DISCUSSION

This paper presents the findings of a community-based research project that explores the settlement experiences of family class immigrants in Kamloops, BC. The results of the study indicate that although newcomers indicate many positive aspects of settlement in Kamloops, they also note areas of concern. Based on the analysis, there are several key factors identified by informants regarding Kamloops' community capacity to attract and retain immigrants. Similar to the literature reviewed, 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 to affordable housing, and a welcoming population, were identified as important factors. Retention issues such as affordability of basic life needs, accessibility to services for themselves and their children (health care, education), safety, community openness and acceptance, proximity to services, employment and activities were identified. Specifically, credential recognition and employment and uniform education and qualification requirements were identified as a challenge for newcomers to Kamloops. Several participants identified that more community programs and initiatives to welcome newcomers are needed. For instance, greater collaboration between organizations such as KIS or other community initiatives and various ethnic/cultural groups in Kamloops would be helpful with an integration process. In addition, more information and education about the diversity of cultural norms has to be introduced to the community to facilitate understanding and cooperation.

The findings demonstrate that family class immigrant settlement needs are ongoing. In other words, they are immediate, transitional, and long term and must therefore be met with a continuum of services on all levels.

Moreover, there are aspects of immigration which must be clearly presented to newcomers before their arrival in Canada to ensure that their expectations for employment are based on reliable and accurate information. Also, the systemic barriers to settlement support in the form of institutional policies and regulations must be addressed to create equitable opportunities for newcomers in employment, education, access to housing and social services. Interconnected with systemic discrimination is social exclusion due to a lack of awareness and understanding of cultural, ethnic and spiritual diversity. Thus, attitudinal shifts are crucial in creating welcoming communities where immigrants can develop a sense of safety and belonging. The following recommendations in the final section of this report reflect the key findings and analysis of our research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Statistics indicate that the majority of immigrants to British Columbia (91%) between the years of 2002 and 2006 initially chose to settle in the Vancouver and Metropolis area (Multiculturalism and Immigration Branch, May 2007). This urban phenomenon has resulted in uneven population growth and shortages of skilled workers and professionals in smaller communities. Consequently, both provincial and local governments must find effective strategies to address rural depopulation and labour needs by encouraging more newcomers to settle in small centres (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2001). Various incentives to attract immigrants to non-metropolitan areas of the province currently exist, as noted in the introduction of this paper; yet to be effective, they must adequately address the unique needs of newcomers in smaller communities such as Kamloops. Moreover, although there are many settlement concerns which are common to all immigrants, each group is dis-

tinct and thus, as demonstrated by our findings, family class immigrants also have very particular needs that must be addressed.

Omidvar and Richmond (2003) refer to the growing exclusion of Canada's newcomers, as well as the crisis of settlement policy in Canada that emphasizes early stages of adaptation, and call for a redefinition of the basic notion of settlement to include a long-term perspective. The precarious state of funding cutbacks and imposed restructuring of the non-governmental sector delivering settlement services is an important consideration. Further research is required to investigate immigrants' integration and success in smaller cities such as Kamloops. This study involved a small sample size, and further research pertaining to Kamloops and other small cities and rural communities in BC would be beneficial.

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APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY RESEARCH PRINCIPLES

For more than a decade, MBC (formerly RIIM) researchers have collaborated with immigrant and refugee-serving agencies (a.k.a. 'the sector') across British Columbia on projects funded by Metropolis. Both parties stand to benefit from such cooperation, with researchers gaining insight from settlement workers and access to immigrant newcomers, while settlement agencies potentially enhance their own research capacity/knowledge and have input into what questions are asked. The principles and practices outlined below represent a common-sense approach to mutually beneficial research that reflects all parties involved.

The following charter represents guidelines for community-university research collaborations.

All researchers submitting grant applications to Metropolis BC, who intend to work with NGOs, will be required to:

Meet with the immigrant or refugee-serving agency with whom they wish to collaborate to discuss research;

Provide a copy of the charter/guidelines to the agency;

Obtain a letter of support for the project to accompany the grant application.

As per SSHRC and university-specific regulations, researchers must also meet the required ethics standards for conducting research.

The Charter: In Phase III, Metropolis BC is committed to:

- On-going consultation with the sector regarding its research needs and priorities, as well as broad dissemination of findings;
- The formation of equitable partnerships between university researchers and staff in immigrant and refugee-serving agencies that include:
 - a) consultation at the stages of research design, implementation, and dissemination;
 - b) appropriate recognition and compensation to sector agencies, staff, and research participants for time spent on the research and resources used by the project;
 - c) assurances of confidentiality and informed consent for all research participants;
 - d) the ethics review committee of the PI's home institution must approve the project;
 - e) appropriate supports to ensure the broadest participation possible, i.e., support to cover basic child care, transportation costs, and translation (to ensure that non-English speakers may be included in research);
 - f) the dissemination of a summary of research findings from each project to the cooperating agency staff and, where possible, to all those who participated in the study; flexible and responsive approaches such as community meetings to test ideas and gather feedback from research participants, agencies, and researchers.
 - g) finally, dissemination should include the political sector.
 - Above all, respect for the refugees and immigrants who are involved in research is paramount. Should there be a conflict of interest between researchers' objectives and the well-being of research participants, the latter will take precedence.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS WITH FAMILY CLASS IMMIGRANTS

The focus group questions are designed with inclusive language in order to allow themes to emerge from the participants.

1. Please tell us about your settlement experiences in Kamloops. What is it like to live in Kamloops?
2. What did you need to live in Kamloops? Please identify your settlement needs within a small city such as Kamloops.
3. What was hard when you came to Kamloops? What specific settlement challenges have you faced?
4. Who helped you stay in Kamloops? What supports have you needed to facilitate your settlement experience?
5. What services helped you the most?
6. What was not helpful?
7. What would you like to change?
8. What practices assisted you most in settlement and integration in Kamloops?
9. What would you tell others if they came to Kamloops?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SETTLEMENT WORKER INTERVIEWS

1. Please tell me about your work with family class immigrants in Kamloops.
2. Please identify the settlement needs of your clients within a small city such as Kamloops.
3. What specific settlement challenges have you faced as a settlement worker?
4. Are there any gaps in services or resources for family class immigrants? Please tell me what is needed.
5. What supports have you needed to facilitate your client's settlement experience?
6. What specific services and supports have been helpful?
7. What specific services and supports have not been helpful?
8. Are there specific aspects you would like to change to make the system more helpful or better?
9. What practices assisted you most in settlement and integration for clients in Kamloops?
10. What is the most important resource for family class immigrants in Kamloops?
11. Where do you refer most clients?
12. How do clients' settlement needs change over time? For example 0-2 years, 2-5 years, 6-9 years, +10 years.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER/SERVICE PROVIDER/LOCAL OFFICIAL/POLICYMAKER INTERVIEWS

1. Please tell me about your work with family class immigrants in Kamloops.
2. Please identify the settlement needs of your clients within a small city such as Kamloops.
3. What specific settlement challenges have you faced as a practitioner?
4. Are there any gaps in services or resources for family class immigrants? Please tell me what is needed.
5. What supports have you needed to facilitate your client's settlement experience?
6. What specific services and supports have been helpful?
7. What specific services and supports have not been helpful?
8. Are there specific aspects you would like to change to make the system more helpful or better?
9. What practices assisted you most in settlement and integration for clients in Kamloops?
10. What is the most important resource for family class immigrants in Kamloops?
11. Where do you refer most clients?
12. How do clients' settlement needs change over time? For example 0-2 years, 2-5 years, 6-9 years, 10+ years.