



**Title:** Immigrant Integration and Religious Transnationalism: the case of the 'Highway to Heaven' in Richmond, BC

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**Research Question:**

To what extent do religious institutions aid in the process of immigrant integration?

**Importance:**

The question of immigrant integration remains a key policy question in Canada. It is often assumed that religious affiliation, particularly to an ethnic religious community, might prevent integration.

**Research Findings:**

This project reviewed the history of the religious communities located in a cluster on the periphery of Richmond, BC, in a designated 'Assembly District' and analysed their role in activities which might promote integration. The research suggests that communal activities intended primarily for spiritual welfare also promoted social integration and highlighted examples of inter-faith dialogue. Some barriers such as language and peripheral location on the edge of the city were identified. However the research also argues that integration is a multi-faceted concept and argues that multiple understandings of integration should be recognized.

**Implications:**

This research paper argues that faith communities should be recognized as offering important sites of social integration rather than being defined primarily as inward looking spaces of communal ethnic identity. Policy makers should avoid narrow definitions of integration and recognize the variety of different ways in which immigrant faith communities engage with wider society. Sites like 'Highway to Heaven' have the potential to be used in education projects to further understanding of multiculturalism, although faith communities themselves must be allowed to define their own engagement in ongoing public debate.