

Immigration in Canada

Aboriginal and Immigrant Communities

Strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and immigrant groups is vital for creating a more welcoming and inclusive community. They face many similar challenges within Canadian society and can build important support networks by bridging their communities. There are important challenges that exist between Aboriginal and Immigrant communities that test our ability to build bridges. This fact sheet looks to identify some of them, and discusses moving forward.

Existing Challenges between Aboriginal and Immigrant Communities

Competitive employment environments are a major source of contention between these communities. It is believed that new immigrants within the work force are taking jobs away from Aboriginal peoples.¹ Depending on where in Canada individuals live, unemployment related statistics show that this may be true. However, in BC it is less likely as immigrant and Aboriginal individuals experience very similar rates of unemployment (12.3% vs 14.8%).² High rates of underemployment experienced by immigrant workers due to struggles with credential recognition may exasperate this.^{3,4,5} As

¹ http://www.vancouversun.com/business/energy/Report+lauds+energy+projects+impact+First+Nations/9223392/story.html?__lsa=9124-25b9

² <http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=16>

³ http://www.uoguelph.ca/geography/research/ffw/papers/immigrant_credentials.pdf

⁴ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2007004/10312-eng.htm>



immigrants are unable to compete for positions they are skilled to do in sectors facing labour shortages, they are forced to find work in other places. Immigrants are often unfamiliar with the root causes of Aboriginal struggle in Canada, including: the residential school system, the “60s scoop”, assimilation focused government policies, and centuries of colonization. Ironically, both communities face similar experiences of oppression, but they are pitted against one another in a race for scarce resources.⁶

Stereotyping

Immigrant and Aboriginal individuals learn many negative stereotypes about one another. Some develop in response to the above mentioned competition. This case is aggravated by the perception that newcomers are receiving better treatment from government.⁷ Prejudices that exist within Immigrant groups against Aboriginals

⁵ <http://www.allnorth.com/sites/default/files/New-Canadian-Immigrant-Success-Story.pdf>

⁶ <http://socialpolicies1310.blogspot.ca/2010/11/aboriginal-perspective-on-immigration.html>

⁷ Madariaga-Vignudo, L. (2012). Urban Aboriginals' perceptions of African refugee neighbours: A case study of Winnipeg's inner city. Canadian Issues Themes Canadiens.

Kamloops Welcoming Communities Program's Fact Sheets

are most often the stigmas and attitudes that are prevalent within Canadian society.¹ Because newcomers to Canada receive so little information about the history of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people, they are unable to understand the devastating effects of government policies on these communities and individuals. Immigrants are often left to collect information from popular culture and media misrepresentation instead.

Success Stories for Working Together

More commonly across Canada, immigrant and Aboriginal communities are coming together to build positive relationships between their members. In Vancouver, dialogues were organized by the City to increase understanding between the groups, as well as strengthen relationships and cultural knowledge exchange.⁸ In Toronto, a 3-day conference looking to build cultural, political, intellectual and social connections between Aboriginal peoples and all newcomers was held – including new immigrants, established immigrants, refugees, temporary residents, etc.⁹ There is a federal program in place that looks to unlock the potential of marginalized youth from immigrant and Aboriginal backgrounds. The program sees the amazing potential these youth have to offer, and aims to build intercultural relationships while supporting the youth to make decisions regarding their academic and career pathways.¹⁰

⁸ http://speakingmytruth.ca/?page_id=649

⁹ <http://toronto.localtiger.ca/toronto-ontario/toronto-events/learning/encounters-in-canada-contrasting-indigenous-and-immigrant-perspectives-62315.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.horizons.gc.ca/eng/content/part-ii-%E2%80%93-policy-challenges-canada-2017>



How to Build Bridges between our Immigrant and Aboriginal Communities

There are some things that we can all do to foster positive relationships between Aboriginal and immigrant communities:^{11, 12}

- Remain respectful and open-minded about one another's cultures and perspectives,
- Build collaborative initiatives in an effort to maintain and revitalize cultures and languages,
- Reflect on how race and identity overlap, and whether experiences of exclusion and discrimination can become points of "shared difference" between people, and
- Host joint community events to promote cultural exchange and raise awareness within all members of our shared community.

For more information, please contact:

Kamloops Immigrant Services
448 Tranquille Rd. Kamloops, BC
Ph: 778-470-6101
Email: kis@immigrantservices.ca

¹¹ Wong, B. (2012). Dialogues between First Nations, urban Aboriginals and immigrant communities in Vancouver. Canadian Issues Themes Canadiens.

¹² http://crs.yorku.ca/encounters_in_canada