PROMOTING WELLNESS:
An Action Research to Strengthen and Sustain Welcoming Communities for Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia

March 2006

MOSAIC, in partnership with
Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria
Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George
Kamloops Cariboo Regional Immigrant Services Society
Institute of Health Promotion Research, University of British Columbia

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About MOSAIC

MOSAIC (Multilingual Orientation Service Association for Immigrant Communities) is a multilingual non-profit organization dedicated to addressing issues that affect immigrants and refugees in the course of their settlement and integration into Canadian society.

MOSAIC's mandate is to support and empower immigrant and refugee communities, helping them to address critical issues in their neighborhoods and workplace.

Since its inception in 1976, MOSAIC has assisted new immigrants and refugees through its numerous multilingual services. MOSAIC's programs and services are constantly evolving and developing in response to the needs of the community.

Our vision and mission guide our work.

"Our vision is of a Canada that welcomes all people, that supports their right to equality and choice as they determine their goals and aspirations, and that acknowledges their contributions in enriching and strengthening our communities."

"Our mission is to support immigrants and refugees by listening to and responding to their needs. We do this through advocacy and through accessible, practical, and diverse services that enable them to meet their personal goals while building bridges to the larger community."

Today, MOSAIC has blossomed into an $11 million dollar organization with over 120 staff, 500 volunteers and 250 contractors. Services offered include interpretation, translation, English classes, employment programs, family programs, research and development programs, community outreach programs, volunteers programs, and bilingual and settlement services.

For further information about MOSAIC and this
Promoting Wellness: an Action Research to Strengthen and Sustain Welcoming Communities for Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia,
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Other partners included representatives of governments, university, and community-based service organizations in BC, who participated on the Project Advisory Committee and Local Welcoming Community Planning Committee activities, which has been essential in all phases of the study.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings of a study conducted in May to December 2005, in four British Columbia communities: Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops and Prince George. The study explored what makes a welcoming community and what are newcomers', immigrants and refugees, concepts of wellness. This report is based on qualitative interviews, conducted twice with the same individuals. The first set of interviews occurred with 68 respondents in May to July and the second set of interviews occurred with 47 respondents in September to December.

A key project finding is that a community's infrastructure can render and nurture a sense of welcoming and wellness. Newcomers arrive keen and expecting to work, learn English, make friends and become a part of their new community. However, unless the host community reciprocates with in kind enthusiasm via employment and language learning opportunities, relevant, accessible, information, and places to make new friends and gain support networks, newcomers may remain but waste their potential, or leave for more promising communities. It is well documented that newcomers leave communities which do not offer them (satisfying) employment or opportunities for personal and familial growth.

In British Columbia, in order to strengthen our community's infrastructure federal, provincial and municipal governments, colleges and universities, professional associations, potential employers, the media, and community members must work in concert to promote the benefits of immigrants and refugees in enriching communities, and to facilitate their settlement and integration.

STUDY BACKGROUND

Promoting Wellness: An Action Research to Strengthen and Sustain Welcoming Communities for Immigrants and Refugees in British Columbia was a community-based, exploratory, longitudinal qualitative study that investigated the themes of a welcoming community, and newcomers' concepts of wellness.

Research was conducted in four British Columbia cities: Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops and Prince George. The research involved four lead immigrant-serving agencies MOSAIC, Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria, Kamloops Cariboo Regional Immigrant Services Society, and Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George. Also involved in the research process was a Project Advisory Committee consisting of the 4 lead agencies and the Institute of Health Promotion Research, University of British Columbia, and Local Welcoming Community Planning Committees in Vancouver, Victoria, and Kamloops. Prince George chose to use its own internal resources as a Welcoming Community Planning Committee because of ease of communication within its smaller community context.

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Sixty-eight respondents were interviewed in the first phase of the study from May to July. Due to the highly mobile nature of the respondents, only, 47 out of the 68 respondents were located and interviewed from September to December 2005.

As a community-based research study it is part of an ongoing organization capacity building and community development process. By identifying welcoming communities' factors, from the perspectives of newcomers, the primary goal of this study is to identify possible practical approaches to enhance service delivery, planning and policy. As this is an exploratory study, the findings also provide insightful directions for future research.

STUDY FINDINGS

What Wellness Means

Respondents included all or some elements of physical, mental, emotional and often spiritual health, including their socio-environment, when expressing what wellness means to them.

The outstanding factors of what wellness means to newcomers were the following:

- Financial freedom: being "financially secure … and independent"
- Secure family life: "Having a happy and healthy family"
- Comfortable environment: Living in a "good climate and environment"
- Social engagement: "Being socially involved and active"
- Family's wellness

Employment and language-training needs

Access to employment and language opportunities were the most important elements in affecting newcomers' and their family's wellness.

Studying English was considered a high priority. It is linked both to gaining (better) employment, and to learning about and becoming part of Canadian culture (which includes gaining English-speaking friends).

In all four communities, when participants spoke of having a job, the related comments included the following: feeling financially secure, being able to care for and support family, having an interesting job and/or a job in one's field, having job opportunities and opportunities to seek better work, feeling stable and secure in one's job, and being independent.

Having a job was linked with wellness (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual). Consider these comments: "I feel frustrated when I remember I am more qualified to

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have a better job … depression, frustration, sadness are more common than in my country for me, (Vancouver respondent)." "I am coping but it always implies extra effort that affects every aspect of my life (Victoria respondent)."

Employment needs of skilled professionals

All the skilled professionals interviewed are working at low-paying jobs. All said their degrees are not recognized and that employers want Canadian experience. Some felt wounded that they had to have 'connections' to get work. To them, this meant that they couldn't get a job on their own merits.

In this study, respondents who were admitted into Canada on the basis of being skilled professionals reported feeling utterly misled by Canadian immigration officers. They say they were told they would easily be employed because Canada has a shortage of skilled labor. Once arriving, however, they found this assertion utterly false.

Study respondents said that, if they had been told the reality of the situation in Canada before they left their native country, they either would not have come, or at least would not have had unrealistic expectations.

Furthermore, had they known the reality prior to coming they would have been able to avoid later problems and delays by compiling in advance all the necessary documents required by Canadian professional associations in order to assess their foreign credentials. As it stands, newcomers must wait months to receive university documents, if they are able to access them at all.

For skilled-professional females, this problem was compounded by gender roles. They felt that, if they were employed in a similar capacity as in their native country, they would be less likely to fall into a purely traditional-housewife role. These respondents reported trying to mitigate feelings of loss, sadness or depression by focusing on family and friends in an effort to nourish their emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellness.

Making this employment situation even worse is the lack of accreditation and upgrading opportunities for skilled immigrants in relatively isolated smaller communities, such as Kamloops and Prince George. Professional associations and many of the educational institutions offering upgrading are located in Vancouver.

Newcomers expressed immense frustration because they could not speak to anyone face-to-face in their own community in Kamloops regarding credentials recognition or the upgrading they required.

One Kamloops family recounted their high costs of travel to and from Vancouver trying to deal with this situation. Their only alternative seemed to be to move the whole family to Vancouver.

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Family members also suffer the effects of problems facing under-employed skilled workers. For example, Prince George has seen an increase in skilled workers, which includes their families. The result is that agencies now must support not only the incoming skilled workers, but also other members of their families. These family members are individuals with a wide variety of needs.

Overall, skilled professional newcomers consistently reported feeling frustrated, angry, sad and depressed because of their employment situation. In light of this unexpected reality, it seems that they must continually struggle to keep up their spirits.

Wellness and local immigrant settlement agencies

The majority of respondents spoke very highly of their respective immigrant and settlement services. Most attributed a significant part of their wellness to the services and supports of these agencies.

Respondents specify English as a Second Language (ESL) classes – where they met friends and learned about Canada, or employment programs – where they learned how to apply for and get a job. They also turned to the agencies as sources of translation, community and government information, and other forms of education, such as training in first aid.

Wellness and individual responsibilities

Newcomers also cited some personal adaptations that could improve their own wellness. These included working to do one or more of the following:

- Increase their social network
- Learn more about Canadian culture
- Become more involved in their communities (i.e. volunteer work or helping older people or children)
- Increase self-care (often with a cultural focus, i.e. cook native foods, read their holy book, listen to native music or re-create cultural routines such as going to a local bakery every morning for breakfast and coffee)
- Exercise
- Spend more time with family and friends
- Self/family improvement (i.e. talk with a financial advisor, get further university training)
- Consider working in an alternate but related profession
- Maintain a positive outlook

Interestingly, respondents in Vancouver focused less on these internal means of improving wellness and more on external factors, i.e. how they are treated by government officers or the community in general.

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Wellness and responsibilities of communities/governments

The relationship that emerged between particular community themes and wellness seems to support the literature in conceptualizing wellness as extending beyond physical health. In other words, wellness seemed clearly affected by socio-environmental elements, as well.

The Vancouver respondents, particularly the refugees, cited ways that more community and government supports would enhance their wellness. For instance, refugee claimants, because of their immigration status, cannot access a SIN card in their early stage of arrival in Canada. This means they are not legally able to work and not eligible for MSP. Also, refugees reported feeling harshly treated by income assistance and employment officers.

Hence, the status of refugees has a strong impact on their wellness – much of which they feel they have little control over.

Vancouver's refugee respondents mentioned the need for more public education to counter discrimination based on ethnicity and immigration status. Respondents said that Vancouverites and its institutions should be more respectful and understanding of refugees and the situations from which they have come.

Here are some comments, from Vancouver refugee respondents, regarding their experience of Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (formally called MHR) office environments: "MHR should wait until refugees' English skills are good enough before they demand that they look for work" and "welfare workers' training should include knowledge of specific refugee issues to increase their understanding and compassion."

As well, Vancouver respondents generally said they felt discriminated against when their credentials and foreign work experience was not recognized. Unique to the Vancouver respondents was their sense of their rights. They articulated wellness in more value-laden terms, such as desiring respect, dignity, acceptance, and equal opportunity.

In contrast, respondents in the other three communities conceived of wellness – and feeling welcomed – in solely concrete and practical terms. Their responses tended to combine internal and external factors more equally than those of Vancouver respondents.

Common Themes of a Welcoming and Supportive Community

Eight themes emerged as to what makes a community seem welcoming to newcomers. The overarching concern of the respondents was how the infrastructure of a community can render and nurture a sense of welcoming.

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The eight themes were:

- People who are genuinely friendly, helpful and patient
- Employment opportunities
- English language study opportunities
- A good social support network
- Good public transportation
- Housing that is affordable, decent and set up prior to arrival
- Immigrant settlement services and supports
- A desirable community environment

While there was variety in responses as to what defines a welcoming community and what impact it has on newcomers' wellness - depending on community and individual variables – several common themes emerged.

- **People who are genuinely friendly, helpful and patient.** The importance of community attitudes was a strong and pervasive underlying theme in this study.

  Community attitudes and perceptions affected how welcomed newcomers felt, both initially and over time. Respondents took their cues from how genuinely friendly and helpful they found the general public, their neighbours, and those working in government institutions. Initially, a smiling face or a casual greeting on the street made newcomers feel welcome. Over time, it was the community reaching out, giving of themselves, and being included that indicated genuine friendliness and helpfulness. Respondents felt that community attitudes affected their chances of gaining employment – whether in their own, or in any, field.

  Communities and their government institutions also need to improve their information networks. There needs to be a more streamlined and coordinated effort to compile and disseminate relevant information. Newcomers need to know exactly how to access the information that will smooth, speed and promote their integration. This requires clear directions regarding: where to go, how to get there, whom to talk to, how something is arranged. As it stands, respondents reported much frustration and waste of time and money in their information quests.

- **Employment opportunities'** needing to improve was the strongest theme – particularly for skilled immigrants if they were to remain in the community. Skilled immigrants require expedited recognition for their foreign credentials and foreign work experience. Also needed are placements for potential employment that do not demand Canadian work experience.

- **English language study opportunities** were also commonly cited. Newcomers in this study showed a strong desire to become part of their new

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community. In this regard, language was their major barrier, and language opportunities are lacking.

Wait lists are very long, classes sparsely offered, and newcomers' language levels are sometimes too high to benefit from the much-needed English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) classes.

- **A good social support network** was another strong theme**.** While these are aspects of wellness for all Canadians, the support network holds special importance for newcomers.

  Social support networks promote wellness in all its forms: emotional, mental, spiritual and physical. Friends and/or family provide community and mainstream cultural knowledge, acting as compatriots on the journey from cultural shock to adaptation.

  However, the elements of these support networks depend on individual circumstance. Generally, the higher the newcomer's education or training, the less importance is placed on having family already in place in the new community.

  The primary factors for these, more self-reliant newcomers, are employment, a good environment (i.e. clean, quiet and safe), and an ability to create a social support network.

  It is worth noting that many respondents cited local immigrant settlement services as the means by which they made new friends and generally strengthened their support networks.

- **Good public transportation** was important to newcomers who usually do not have immediate access to a car. Due to our sprawling Canadian communities, getting to and from work and language classes can be hindered or in some cases stopped when there is no transportation at needed times. Good transportation means buses run 7 days a week, past 11pm.

- **Housing that is affordable, decent, child-friendly, and arranged prior to arrival** was important to newcomers who both did and did not have family members already living here. Housing that was arranged prior to arrival was particularly cited by newcomers who lacked family members already living here or were government-assisted refugees.

- **Immigrant settlement services and supports** were commonly cited as the major resource for newcomers. Employment and language programs and settlement services were indicated as critical – primary (or only) sources of information, community connection, skill building, and support: mental, emotional, physical and spiritual.

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- **A desirable community environment** was often indicated as one of the main reasons why newcomers, particularly skilled immigrants who did not already have family settled there, were attracted to a community. Safety, cleanliness, beauty, and opportunities for their whole family's growth attracted many newcomers to the three smaller city centres.

A final important consideration that was not mentioned by newcomers, but was evidenced throughout their interviews is ***uniqueness*** - the qualities of which interacts and is mitigated by the individual's own personality and situation. Each newcomer is unique in terms of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, age, language skills, education level, economic or immigration status, and length of time in Canada. These factors in concert with one another create sharp differences in newcomers' strengths, needs and experiences, as well as in their sense of a welcoming community and wellness. Throughout the report particular issues, needs and considerations are raised, as they arose, with respect to: gender, ethnicity, language skills, education level, and immigration status.

Summary

Despite the variations among the four communities and variations among the individuals within these communities, there arose some overarching themes of what makes a welcoming community and what are determinants of wellness. The eight main themes of a welcoming community were: employment and language learning opportunities, patient, friendly and helpful people, affordable, child-friendly, housing arranged prior to arrival, immigrant services and supports, a good social support network and public transportation, and a desirable community environment (safe, clean and quiet). The majority of respondents also saw both internal and external factors being responsible for their wellness, which included physical, spiritual, emotional and mental elements. In particular, wellness factors included: financial freedom, a secure family life, a comfortable environment, social engagement and family's wellness. Gender, immigration status, ethnicity, and the context – urban or rural – were also factors in affecting newcomers' experiences of a community and their needs and issues in that community. These factors need to be explored in greater depth. Contrary to the dominant assumption, urban contexts are not necessarily a superior settlement environment. Newcomers settled in rural or small city centres were in general very pleased with their environment. However, more investment from governments, and coordinated efforts - on the part of professional associations, colleges, universities and local employers - to speed up and encourage greater integration needs immediate attention. As a country, Canada needs to move more quickly, be more proactive, and equitable, in order to attract and retain newcomers in its urban and rural centres.

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Recommendations

Findings of this study indicate that wellness relies, at least in part, on a welcoming community that enables newcomers to fully participate in its productivity and social activities.

Yet a welcoming community cannot appear in a vacuum. There must be national, provincial, and community infrastructures to ease the settlement and integration of newcomers, both initially and long-term.

For this reason, federal, provincial and municipal governments play major roles in supporting and promoting the following recommendations. And, non-governmental organizations - professional associations, universities and colleges, and local service agencies - play a role in cooperating with government and in examining their institutional structures for systemic discrimination.

I. EMPLOYMENT

Professional Associations
Increase dialogue with professional associations to coordinate information sharing to newcomers *prior* to their arrival.

Smaller centres having official headquarters located in the community
Currently to the best of our knowledge the majority of professional associations are located in Vancouver or Victoria.

'Newcomer-friendly' employers
These are not just important at government offices, but in community organizations, medical clinics, stores, and hospitals.

II. LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

Increased English Language Training
Language skills were of key importance to respondents. But, as noted in this report, wait lists are very long, too few classes are offered, and newcomers' language levels may disqualify them from English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) classes.

Financial Support
Living allowances during the newcomer's first year while attending English classes.

III. HOUSING

Affordable Housing with Support Services
The existing stock is diminishing for all Canadians, especially in major cities. For newcomers, there are additional challenges in accessing this low supply of affordable

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housing, including language barriers and discrimination. For these reasons, newcomers require more assistance.

VII. HEALTH CARE

Medical Coverage (MSP)
Medical coverage should be available within the first month of landing

IV. ANTI-RACISM/DISCRIMINATION INITIATIVES

Anti-racism education
In elementary and high schools and in the workplace

Cross-cultural education
This can ease relations between ethnic groups, because some perceive other ethnic groups to be impolite, and possibly racist.

Community Education
Educate people about the positive impacts newcomers have upon their communities, the ideals of multiculturalism, and the value of attracting and retaining newcomers in small communities. Debunk myths, i.e. 'immigrants take away jobs.'

Media
Should produce a greater diversity of stories/representations of ethno-cultural communities

V. SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

Multilingual/culturally-appropriate supports for female survivors of domestic abuse
These are particularly lacking outside major cities. Female newcomers may be at higher risk of being abused and of remaining in an abusive situation because they are isolated not only the abuser, but by language and cultural barriers and a comparative lack of supports.

Multilingual/cultural women's groups
The majority of female respondents were in the Family category (even if they were also skilled professionals). The husband most often is the Principal Applicant.

In addition to the power imbalance implicit in these immigration categories, the women seem more likely to follow the lead of a husband, remaining isolated and alone. This is especially problematic in communities with smaller ethnic populations.

Multilingual brochures on local services
Multilingual brochures would help newcomers learn about relevant services and supports available to them in their new community. Prince George respondents would also like Chinese newspapers or magazines.

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Free childminding services
Important for female newcomers, who have primary responsibility for the children

Lists of doctors and dentists accepting patients, plus health/emergency services
Prince George respondents said they would like information on e.g., police and hospital services.

More educational immigrant youth programs
These seem especially needed in smaller cities. Drop-ins, cross-cultural programs and other activities can promote good self-esteem as well as better communication and relationships with friends and family.

VI. MORE ACCESSIBLE, STREAMLINED INFORMATION: Pre-arrival and Post-arrival

Pre-arrival – more accessible information
These could be used to assist those who have not yet arrived, not just those who have. A basic starting point could be "Are you immigrating to _____?" with links to relevant resources for particular populations and groups, in that community.

Websites could also assist provide useful housing information, e.g. revealing Canada's housing costs and availability in various regions. They could explain how to access affordable housing, i.e. co-op housing, and how to set up housing BEFORE leaving one's native country. We also recommend links to sites on tenancy rights and responsibilities.

Since credential recognition is so critical to skilled professionals, we recommend website links to professional associations, advocacy groups, and colleges/universities that offer required upgrading courses. Immigrants should be able to start preparing before they come here. This will make it easier for them to collect the necessary documents.

For investment immigrants, websites should include tax laws and employment rights.

Improve Citizenship and Immigrant Canada (CIC) websites and handouts from embassies and immigration officers
Some of the website suggestions above could also apply here. In addition, a government site such as CIC should provide links to every professional association. It should also stress that prospective newcomers collect all their educational degrees and professional accreditation papers BEFORE leaving their native country.

Government information should list which credentials are recognized by which association, and which are not. It should also state whatever upgrading will be needed.

At a minimum, government agencies should advise people to get the information they need to make an informed decision on whether to immigrate to Canada. For professionals

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and skilled immigrants, this would entail checking with relevant professional associations of the province where they'd like to live.

Post-arrival-more streamlined information
Newcomers wanted to know exactly where and how to access relevant and consistent information about services and supports so they do not lose opportunities (i.e. free ELSA courses) or waste a lot of time running between different offices.

Respondents in all four communities, but most notably the larger centres of Victoria and Vancouver, called for more organization and networking between the key institutions they deal with. These include government offices, professional associations, multicultural service agencies, and churches that sponsor refugees

A Centralized Newcomer Settlement Information and Referral Centre
Particularly in medium and larger city centres.

VII. RURAL CONTEXTS

Equitable funding
Equitable funding for both rural and urban communities – *investment* in rural communities will promote development of their existing potential.

VIII. ENHANCING COMMUNITY'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Community Development Initiatives
For those who want to create a more welcoming community, a logical starting point is to *assess and map the community's existing resources*. It's best to do this with the help of newcomers and former immigrants and refugees who have settled into the community. Such an inventory will reveal where new initiatives are needed

To be effective, groups can combine forces through *partnership*s, building communication and relationships in order to advocate as a community for what is needed. They'll find stronger local support if they first *educate residents of the benefits of immigrants,* i.e. *engaging local media*.

Respondents noted their appreciation of community reach-out initiatives such as the *`Welcome Wagon'. Within a month* of their arrival, greet newcomers and *bring a package of relevant information, translated* if needed. Or bring them *information on arrival*, perhaps also suggesting less-expensive accommodation options, i.e. B & Bs, hostels or private homes.

Other welcoming initiatives could include *interpretation services, a community centre dinner, drop-ins or cultural and social events* for newcomers. Also *partner newcomers with a native-born Canadian* to learn about the community, practice English or simply have a new friend with whom they can talk.

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XI. FUTURE RESEARCH

This was an exploratory study. And, despite the findings' riches there arose further questions and considerations that warrant attention. Here are some suggestions.

- Story of each immigrant is complex. Therefore, we may need to fully understand how immigrants experience the complexity of their settlement process and to capture the stories of some immigrants to glean a more complex, in-depth understanding of how numerous interacting factors impact upon settlement experience and indication of wellness (i.e. rural/urban origin, gender, mother tongue, immigration status, sexual orientation, class, and length of time in Canada). A qualitative narrative study may be useful for this purpose.

- The findings indicate a strong relationship between employment and the access of social capital. We need to further explore how respondents entered the job market and got their current employment, who provided their connections to the job (if any), and where their connections came from. A survey based on existing social capital studies and theories will be necessary to investigate what forms of social networks newcomers may have, e.g. family, neighbour, religious organization, and settlement agency, and how their access to these resources is embedded in their networks.

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1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 OVERVIEW OF NEWCOMERS

Canada receives over 200,000 immigrants per year (CIC, 2001). The majority of newcomers are well-educated, visible minorities in their prime working years. The majority of refugees are government sponsored. Humanitarian refugees come on the basis of both political and sexual orientation persecution.

Majority of newcomers to Canada are well-educated visible minorities

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) Statistics for 2004 from *The Monitor*, Spring 2005, presents the latest abridged immigrant and refugee information on visible minorities, mother tongue, education level, and skilled immigrants, and refugees.

At least 80% of all Canadian immigrants were visible minorities coming from China, India, the Philippines, Pakistan, South Korea and Iran. The leading mother tongue was Mandarin, followed by English and Arabic.

On average, the CIC Stats show that 50% of female immigrants and 60% of male immigrants aged 25 to 64 years were university educated. Men and women in equal numbers held Bachelors degrees, with more males retaining Masters and PhDs.

Eighty percent were in the skilled immigrant category; with 58% in the professional skill level A (highest), and 22% in skill level B (skilled and technical). These skilled immigrants comprise 68% of all immigrants who came immigrated to Canada in 2004. British Columbia attracted 16% of these skilled immigrants.

Refugees

There is limited research on how different types of refugees affect their needs and experiences. But the literature available does make it clear that there are differences, which warrant closer attention.

In 2004, refugee claimants and their dependents comprised 68% of the total refugees. Government-assisted and privately sponsored refugees who came directly from refugee camps made up the remaining 32 percent. Privately sponsored refugees were from Afghanistan, Colombia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Iraq. Government-assisted refugees were from Pakistan, China, Sri Lanka and Colombia.

Some gay, lesbian and bisexual refugees are not poor but are well off, or from well-off families who still support them from abroad (O'Neill, 2004). These refugees may be

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westernized, well educated (i.e. university graduates), competent in English, and from major cities (Ibid). These refugees have more in common with skilled immigrants.

In contrast, refugees who have been tortured or escaped war, famine and/or refugee camp conditions may have lower levels of education, English skills, fewer financial resources, and less knowledge of Western culture (Ibid).

However, all refugees may be presumed to have experienced trauma and are often here alone. They may also experience discrimination on the basis of their immigration status, because of negative stereotypes and assumptions (Hiebert, 2002).

1.2 PROBLEMS FACED BY NEWCOMERS

Canadians' attitudes towards newcomers and need for structural changes

In Hiebert's 2004 report, the onus to bridge cultural groups is placed on immigrants, who already face numerous formidable challenges, including language, culture and labor market barriers. This result is disturbing, given that Vancouver is a large, diverse, cosmopolitan, metropolis where almost 50% of Vancouverites are visible minorities (MCAWS, *Profile of Immigrants*, 2001).

In contrast, Victoria's visible minority population is only about 10%, and that of Kamloops and Prince George only about 6% (Ibid). If Vancouver respondents report problems, what must the situation be like in smaller, considerably less diverse, communities?

Furthermore, Canada's ideals of a multicultural citizenship do not yet meet the reality. These ideals theoretically now extend beyond the 'song and dance' of multicultural displays. They have led to some structural changes in which spaces are created for newcomers. However, few spaces for real voice and power exist for Canada's immigrants (Sandercock, Dickout and Winkler, 2004).

Discrimination towards visible minorities or those perceived as 'different'

Canadian society does not value all cultures equally. In a 1991 national survey of 2,500 respondents about their perceived "comfort level" with people of different ethno-cultural backgrounds, the average score was considerably lower for visible minority groups than for European ones (Kalin and Berry 1982, Berry and Kalin 1995, Kalin 1996).

Significantly, the reported "comfort levels" are highest for those groups perceived to be integrated into the mainstream culture (Simon and Lynch, 1999) or when there is a lot of inter-ethnic interaction (Kalin, 1996).

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In fact, studies focusing on experiences of discrimination find that visible minorities report much higher levels of discrimination than both men and women of European origin (Dion, 1989; Breton, 1990; Driedger and Reid, 2000; Li, 2003).

Discrimination seems greater towards refugees than immigrants

Even though just over half of Hiebert's survey respondents agreed that Canada has a moral obligation to accept refugees, a large number drew negative associations. They linked refugees with crime/terrorism or believed that refugee claimants were not assessed with sufficient care, or that they burdened social programs (Hiebert, 2004).

Lesbian, gay and bisexual refugees

Compounding the 'stigma' of being a refugee gay, lesbian and bisexual refugees face added challenges because of their sexual orientation. There may be internalized homophobia, homophobia from their own ethnic community, racism from the mainstream gay, lesbian and bisexual community, and heterocentric and/or homophobic multicultural agencies to whom they turn to (or do not turn to for fear of discrimination) for settlement support (O'Neill, 2004).

Labor market discrimination

Hiebert's 2004 survey also revealed that discrimination is experienced with the greatest frequency in the labor market. Here, immigrants and visible minorities, blacks in particular, suffer the worst impacts (Hiebert, 2003).

Labor market discrimination expresses itself in various ways. Employers may refuse to accept years of foreign work experience. Professional associations usually reject foreign credentials or, at best, request years of costly training/up-grading (*Immigrants face job problems*, October 2005).

Not surprisingly, labor market barriers have a negative effect on newcomers' sense of belonging and overall wellness – both of which are well below those of people who are Canadian-born or of European ethnic backgrounds (Hiebert, 2003).

Immigrant families are poorer than are Canadian-born families

Furthermore, as the literature reveals, not only are skilled professionals often working in unskilled jobs, when newcomers do work in general they earn less than Canadian-born individuals.

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Biased hiring practices can be seen in statistics showing that immigrant families are poorer than are Canadian-born families, even after they have been here for over 10 years (*The Monitor*, Fall 2004).

Thirty-three percent of children whose parents have been in Canada 10 years are from low-income families. This is almost twice the rate (15.5%) for children whose parents are Canadian-born. And even after 10 years, 15% of the former group remains low-income (Ibid).

In the four communities in this study, male and female immigrants earn from $6,000 less (Prince George) to $19,000 less (Vancouver) than non-immigrants (MCAWS, *Profile of Immigrants*, 2001). This represents a situation where foreign-trained doctors, engineers and researchers are often working as janitors, security guards and sales clerks (*Immigrants face job problems*, October 2005).

Gender bias and income disparity

For female newcomers, this income disparity is compounded by gender bias.

Immigrant women earn 50% less than immigrant men and *75%* less than non-immigrant men, whereas non-immigrant women earn 25% less than their male counterparts.

Potential immigration policy changes – racist and diversionary

Federal, provincial and territorial governments are in the process of developing policies to encourage and determine, or enforce, smaller city migration. Such a policy would only allow newcomers into Canada if they agree to settle in particular small or remote communities (Walton-Roberts, 2004).

The plan referred to would require skilled immigrants to live outside the country's largest cities for at least 3 years. In essence, the government would try to implement a 'social contract' that limits settlement options (Ibid).

Given the high proportion of well-educated, skilled professionals who are visible minorities coming from countries whose cultures are very different from Canada's, there are troubling implications to the idea of a 'social contract' limiting settlement options for the first three years after arrival.

There are questions as to how this would be enforced, as well as whether it contravenes The Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It could be seen as a racist and diversionary policy (Ibid).

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Not only does the plan have troubling implications, it seems bound for failure (Krahn, Derwing and Abu-Laban, 2003). How would government stop newcomers from leaving smaller centres, as they are evidently doing?

Furthermore, if a cosmopolitan city's population is still racist towards visible minorities and discriminatory against refugees, what would newcomers face in smaller, less diverse centres? (Hiebert, 2003).

1.3 GOVERNMENT CUTBACKS AND DOWNLOADING – ROOT CAUSES OF POVERTY

Governments are not addressing the root causes of poverty, which are government cutbacks and downloading to the provinces. Instead, geographical dispersal, or regionalization, is framed as the way to relieve metropolitan concentrations of newcomers (Walton-Roberts, 2004).

Newcomers are entering Canada in a socio-political context in which cutbacks and downloading are eroding Canada's social and health services and education systems.

In British Columbia, sharp provincial cutbacks to social services, education, and health have left these sectors with fewer resources and jobs - for immigrants, and immigrant women in particular (Ibid).

To respond to this reality, governments must spend more on a range of programs, not only settlement services (Walton-Roberts, 2004). Governments must also work collaboratively and cooperatively at all three levels, by including a diversity of newcomers, in order to make all communities more welcoming and inclusive (Ibid).

1.4 URBAN VERSUS RURAL – UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION

Majority of newcomers attracted to largest 3 Canadian cities

As 2001 Census figures show, newcomers are by far attracted to the three largest Canadian cities: Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Taken together, the three major cities account for 80% of recent immigrants, compared to 65% of the general population. The one exception to this pattern involves immigrants from the following regions: Western Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom (Census 2001, *The Monitor,* Spring, 2005).

Newcomers leaving smaller British Columbia communities

Between 1996-2001, immigrant populations rose in Vancouver by 5%, and to a lesser extent in Victoria, by 1%. However, immigrant populations in Prince George significantly declined by 12% and in Kamloops by 8%.

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- The City of Vancouver had a total population of 539,630, 247,635 (45.9%) were immigrants, which was +5% change in total population and +9% change in immigrant population between 1996-2001.
- The City of Victoria had a total population of 71,585, 14,840 (20.7%) were immigrants. which was -3% change in total population and -1% change in immigrant population between 1996-2001.
- The City of Prince George had a total population of 71,990, 7,230 (10%) were immigrants, which was -4% change in total population and -12% change in immigrant population between 1996-2001.
- The City of Kamloops had a total population of 76815, 7,945 (10.3%) were immigrants. which was +1% change in total population and -8% change in immigrant population between 1996-2001.

In sum, it appears that the smaller the community is, the greater the number of newcomers leaving it.

1.5 RATIONALE TO ENCOURAGE AND RETAIN SMALLER CITY MIGRATION

Canada's population over the next 25 years is expected to stabilize and then decline (Auditor General's Report, 1998). Communities will be affected by these population trends, which are compounded by the migration trend to large cities (National Working Group, 2005). Governments have voiced concern over the sustainability of immigrant concentrations in Canada's 3 largest cities (Walton-Roberts, 2004).

Studies have documented Toronto's increasing level of immigrant poverty and homelessness. Canada's Federal, Provincial and Territorial immigration ministers have also placed regionalization on the agenda at their regular meetings.

As for employment realities, communities may be concerned about their current levels of unemployment, e.g. an oft-voiced concern that 'immigrants take away jobs'. In fact, not only do immigrants create more job opportunities and enrich communities but also, by 2015, Canada will have more people leaving the workforce than entering it.

This changing employment situation will be due to the aging and retiring of the "baby boom" generation. Currently, Canada is already experiencing a skilled labour shortage.

Some small Canadian communities are flourishing due to their wealth of newcomers to tackle jobs they need filled. Leading examples are Prince George in BC, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray; Canmore in Alberta; Winkler and Steinbach in Manitoba. Winkler has more immigrants per capita than any other small centre in Canada.

Newcomers may remain in small communities if have economic opportunities

Research also indicates that small communities can offer greater economic opportunities than some larger communities for immigrants. This suggests that effective immigrant

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settlement outside the largest metropolitan regions is not just about the size of the community (Walton-Roberts, 2004).

In contrast to the larger community of Kelowna, the smaller community of Squamish's greater employment opportunities - in the lumber mills and nearby tourist town of Whistler in the service sector - appeared to be the major factors in retaining newcomers. In Kelowna, competition for the seasonal service-oriented jobs meant newcomers were competing with the native born, and losing, in a tight labor market (Ibid). Newcomers increasingly left Kelowna, whereas they remained in Squamish.

1.6 DETERMINANTS OF WELLNESS

Socio-economic and physical factors

How does a community affect our wellness? In 1999, a Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory committee on population health helped to answer this question with their second report on the Health of Canadians, "Toward a Healthy Future".

The findings of this current study concur with the observations of the report, which connects a welcoming community to well-being, or wellness. Study respondents mention almost all factors in their socio-economic and physical environments as impacting their wellness, whether positively or negatively.

The report expands upon how we conceptualize and determine health. For the first time, the government included our socio-economic and physical environments as impacting upon our health.

By socio-economic environment, this report refers to living and working conditions in both economic and social realms. Key influences on health in the *economic* dimension include income and income distribution. Major determinants on the *social* side include education and literacy, employment and working conditions, levels of social support and violence in the community and home, civic participation and volunteerism. P*hysical environment* means access to affordable housing and transportation.

1.7 A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Strong correlation between employment prospects and friends/family

The 2004 longitudinal study by Hyndman and Schuurman recorded a strong correlation between particular factors determining a city's attractiveness to newcomers. The primary factors were friends and family, in combination with employment/employment prospects.

Role of settlement services

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Settlement services are likely to make a place more welcoming to newcomers through counselling and interpretation services, host programs, and official language instruction (Hyndman et. al 2004, National Settlement Conference II, *Discussion Papers*, October 2003).

Many economic immigrants score high on official language ability. Consequently, they don't always qualify for (or avail themselves of) settlement services to the same degree, as do family and refugee class immigrants (Hyndman et al. 2004, Statistics Canada, 2003).

Attitudes towards newcomers

"A major dimension of settlement that has been largely ignored in the literature, and is not included among the indices, is the proclivity of a given city's population [Canadian-born and newcomers] to welcome and accept new immigrants" (Hyndman et al., 2004).

1.8 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS – HOW TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN NEWCOMERS

Based on work done with new immigrants and refugees, there is literature – discussion papers and a community development booklet - on the needs of newcomers, and on how community's can attract and retain new immigrants and refugees, via a focus on community development/capacity-building initiatives.

The discussion papers are a compilation of settlement workers' feedback presented at the National Settlement Conference II in 2003. Settlement workers have worked extensively with newcomers and are often newcomers themselves. The booklet, *Attracting & Retaining Immigrants: A Tool Box of Ideas for smaller centres*, published in 2005, was funded by the Federal Government (Citizenship and Immigration Canada). It gathered input from 19 individuals/representatives nationally - government immigration personnel, and immigrant agency personnel (primarily settlement workers).

Attracting & Retaining Immigrants is a practical, grassroots, step-by-step guide to assist interested communities in assessing their resources, promoting the benefits of immigrants, and engaging communities to reach out and welcome newcomers (Appendix 1).

For example, the booklet states the value of initial welcome: "Nothing is better than welcoming people … wherever they may be arriving" (*Attracting & Retaining Immigrants*, p.65*).* But it also stresses that further steps are needed in order to build on the positive effects of that initial welcome.

After initial orientation, early settlement supports, and assessment is advised (*Attracting & Retaining Immigrants*, 2005, National Settlement Conference II, 2003*).* Areas of assessment could include housing, language assistance, health issues, economic self-

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sufficiency, education goals, cultural or religious needs, and social and leisure opportunities (Ibid*).*

Furthermore, the literature offers suggestions that may be especially helpful in communities with fewer resources. For instance, if the community does not have a multilingual service agency, one solution could be a "language bank" of volunteer interpreters (Ibid*).*

1.9 QUESTIONS REMAINING AND THE EXPLORATORY STUDY

Is it solely economic opportunities and the presence of family and friends that allow communities to attract and retain immigrants? What about attitudes of the settlement community towards newcomers? Factors related to wellness? What does wellness mean to newcomers? Is there a relationship between feeling welcome and wellness? Why do some newcomers move out of smaller city centres? Who is leaving and who is staying? How do factors such as gender, ethnicity, language, education and immigration status interact within individuals to influence their experience and expectations of what is a welcoming community? Lastly, where are the voices of newcomers in relating what makes a welcoming community, and what wellness means to them?

This exploratory study begins answering some of these questions - from newcomers themselves across British Columbia - and to take a closer look at the role governments can play in creating a more welcoming and inclusive community infrastructure, so newcomers are attracted to and remain in both smaller and larger city centres.

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2. METHODOLOGY

Detailed in this section are: the research questions and objectives; ethics, consent, and confidentiality details, locations and inception, design, process and implementation, data analysis, respondents' demographics, complexities regarding diversity and attrition, reflections on the participatory approach, and study limitations.

2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the socio-cultural and environmental factors of a welcoming community for immigrants and refugees?
- What does wellness mean to immigrants and refugees?

2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Outline the socio-cultural and environmental determinants of a welcoming and supportive community;
- Outline what wellness means to immigrants and refugees;
- Assess the impacts of a welcoming community on newcomers' well-being in four BC cities;
- Address such impacts while considering newcomers' ethnicity, gender, mother tongue and immigration status;
- Examine the value of a participatory approach to research in an urban context by involving academics, service providers and community members in the research process;
- Contribute to planning and policy by identifying and describing the determinants of welcoming communities for newcomers in BC and possible approaches for future intervention in order to strengthen and sustain enabling and supportive environments to reduce the health disparities observed among newcomers and that of Canadian born individuals in BC.

2.3 ETHICS, CONSENT, AND CONFIDENTIALITY

The methodology, including the individual interview questionnaire and the consent form, was submitted to the British Columbia Medical Services Foundation (BCMSF) Research Ethics Board for approval before commencing the project.

Participation was voluntary. Each interviewee was asked to provide informed consent prior to participating in the brief longitudinal study. Interviewees could refuse or

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withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to their ability to further accessing settlement and community services.

Any personal identifying information that was obtained during this study was kept confidential unless specific consent was granted in advance of public dissemination. Identifying materials were kept in a locked filing cabinet or were computer password protected in electronic format.

2.4 RESEARCH LOCATIONS AND INCEPTION

The study was conducted in four cities in British Columbia. In order to understand if there is any rural-urban difference in terms of welcoming newcomers, two rural centres and one small city centre are chosen to compare with Vancouver, the major urban centre in BC.

Canada has a tradition of welcoming newcomers and embracing diversity. It is a good tradition and, by and large, one that has enriched Canada.

A welcoming community plays an important role in the general wellness and mental well-being of immigrants and refugees. Hospitality extended to newcomers and their families has a profound impact on successful settlement, integration, retention and productivity.

Dr. Hiebert D (2003), in his survey "Are Immigrants Welcome? Introducing the Vancouver Community Studies", reveals widespread acceptance of multiculturalism in general, and a sense that immigration brings more benefits to Canada than problems. It also reveals that immigrants generally feel that they belong in Canada and that their choice to move from another society to Canada has been justified.

Unfortunately, while immigrants and refugees in general terms speak favorably about feeling welcomed and accepted in Canada, discriminatory attitudes, separation from family and community, language barriers, and the inability to find suitable employment are among the most powerful determinants of emotional and mental distress among immigrants and refugees in Canada, and cause them to move to another city. Krahn H et al (2003) "the Retention of Newcomers in Second and Third Ties Cities in Canada" concludes that the economic status of municipalities, the existence of compatriot communities, and the recognition of immigrant skills, among other factors, contribute to the retention of newcomers in second and third-tier cities.

The discussion document prepared by the settlement service sector and the Citizenship and Immigration Canada Joint Working Group on "Small Centre Strategy, the Regional Dispersion and Retention of Immigrants" (2003) states that a welcoming community is obviously an important factor in retaining any newcomer. Beyond employment, the hospitality offered in the new and perhaps very strange environment will have a profound

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affect on successful settlement and retention. This factor affects all members of the family, whether they are bound for the workplace, school or life at home.

The lead agencies, stakeholders, immigrants and refugees, who participated in the Research Developmental Project in the summer 2004 focus group discussion in Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George, and Kamloops indicated clearly that the notion of a hospitable community extend beyond a friendly welcome and neighborly attitudes. It reaches into the fabric of community attributes and available services. It is important to enhance dialogue between government departments, service providers, and immigrants and refugees, to recognize challenges to hospitality and identify initiatives that can be undertaken so that newcomers can feel that they have come to a welcoming community, and continue to stay in the community.

The lead agencies, stakeholders, immigrants and refugees who participated in the focus group discussion were in general interested to join their efforts to promote wellness, and to strengthen and sustain welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees in their own cities. As a result, MOSAIC applied for funding to the Vancouver Foundation in order to implement this study.

2.5 RESEARCH DESIGN, PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The limited research on welcoming immigrants and refugees meant there were limited references with which to inform this study's methodology. Thus, as an exploratory study conducted by a community based organization, in collaboration with other BC multicultural agencies, it was decided to employ a participatory action approach. A participatory research approach involves an ongoing dialogue with academics, service providers and community members in the research process.

A participatory approach is guided by a community development philosophy - wherein a community's strengths and resources are called upon and utilized throughout the research process. A community taps into its 'experts' to help mentor its compatriots, thereby strengthening its community members' skills and helping them to more fully realize their potential. For instance, all of the interviewers, except the individual in Kamloops, were newcomers to Canada; a number of them did not have a research background and had not previously conducted interviews. The interviewers consisted of: a project coordinator, ESL teacher, and bilingual settlement workers in the lead agencies. Hence, one intended outcome was skills development and capacity building. Interviewer training and support was sought through the respective agency. This participatory approach also included lead agencies and study respondents in the report preparation process, by soliciting their feedback on the draft report and in making the suggested revisions and additions. Finally, the project's participatory process brought together four immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies to work in partnership towards a common end – namely to better understand what makes a community welcoming in general, and to learn to what extent their own community is welcoming in particular.

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The research process also included forming a project advisory committee, and local Welcoming Community Planning Committees.

The local Welcoming Community Planning Committees were comprised of some of the following stakeholders: government departments, settlement organizations, social and health service providers, economic development associations, chambers of commerce, academic and training institutions, immigrant and refugee community leaders.

The inclusion of a variety of key community stakeholders in local Welcoming Community Planning Committees enabled the project's process and outcomes to be analyzed and informed from multiple perspectives, whilst being grounded in its respective community.

The Committees also assisted in developing the interview questionnaire, discussed the brief longitudinal study results, evaluated the project, and recommended follow-up action. As well, the Committees were instrumental in building community partnerships, reviewing and identifying community resources and options for strengthening and sustaining a welcoming community for immigrants (See Appendices 3 & 4 for questionnaires).

Research implementation began April 2005 and ended March 2006. The principal researcher retained a researcher (based in Vancouver) to coordinate the interviews/research process, analyze the data, and write-up the report. The researcher also drew up a terms of reference framework, to be adapted by each community (Appendix 2).

Respondents were interviewed first in early spring/summer and then again in fall/winter. A second questionnaire was revised and developed for the 2nd round of fall/winter interviews.

The principal researcher and researcher visited Kamloops and Prince George, met in Vancouver and had a teleconference in Victoria, in late February of 2006 to present the project background, draft findings and recommendations, and to solicit feedback, from community stakeholders, which was incorporated into the final report. The final report was circulated to the Project Advisory Committee members for final input.

2.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Transcripts were coded. The codes were categorized into different themes through constant comparison of similarities and differences among different transcripts and sites of study. Interview data was then re-visited with closer attention to demographic data, i.e. gender, ethnicity, mother tongue and immigration status.

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2.7 SELECTIVE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR RESPONDENTS

Below is selected data for respondents from the four communities. *

City	***Vancouver***	***Victoria***	***Kamloops***	***Prince George***
Participants 1st round	12	19	18	19
Participants 2nd round	6	15	10	16
Countries of origin	Africa China Iran Mexico Vietnam	China Columbia Cuba Iran Panama Russia South Korea Sri Lanka The Ukraine	China El Salvador Germany India Kosovo Pakistan Philippines Russia Taiwan Thailand	China Ethiopia Germany Hong Kong India Ireland Macedonia Mexico Philippines Russia Thailand West Africa
Interviews 1st round	May/June 2005	May/June 2005	May/June 2005	May/June 2005
Interviews 2nd round	October to December 2005	October to December 2005	August/ September 2005	September to November 2005
Immigration status at time of first interview	6 Immigrants 5 Refugees 1 International Student	16 Immigrants 2 Refugees 1 Refugee claimant	16 Immigrants 2 Canadian Citizens	15 Immigrants 2 Refugees 1 Refugee claimant 1 International student
Length of time in community	A few months to 1.5 years	A few months to 1 year	A few months to 29 years	A few months to 3.5 years

*(See Appendices 6 to 9 for detailed demographic data for respondents)

2.8 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA: HIGHLIGHTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Below are the highlights of the demographic data collected in the four communities:

- Approximately 65% of all respondents were female
- 55% to 67% were between the ages of 31-40 in Vancouver and Victoria, while in Prince George and Kamloops it was just over 30%

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- At 41%, Prince George had the highest percentage of respondents 26-30 years old
- At 20%, Kamloops had the lowest Principal Applicant respondents and highest in the Family Reunification category at 40%
- Whereas, at 68%, Prince George has the highest Principal Applicant respondents
- At 50% and 40% both Victoria and Kamloops had high respondents in the Dependent category
- Over 90% of all study respondents were visible minorities. The vast majority of respondents were from Asia. Only Prince George and Vancouver had respondents of African origin. The majority of all respondents had been in their respective community a few months to 2 years. Kamloops' respondents had been in Canada the greatest range of time, from 29 years to a few months. Prince George respondents had been in Canada up to 3 years. And, Vancouver and Victoria were the newest, having immigrated within the past 1.5 years. The varying time, from 29 years to 1.5 years, were important factors to consider in the analysis.
- The majority (65% to 82%) speaks their native language at home. Yet the two smaller communities saw respondents speaking English or English and their native language at home more than did either Vancouver or Victoria respondents.

An effort was made to secure diverse respondents. The challenge in small communities is the dearth of newcomers. In some cases, almost all the community's newcomers were interviewed.

Newcomers in transition were the major challenge encountered in the first round of interviews. Many newcomers chose not to participate because they did not know whether they would be around for the second interview. In fact, a number of respondents who participated in the first interview moved out of the cities, or changed their telephone and contact information so that interviewers were unable to contact them for a second interview. Particularly in Vancouver, the lower respondent rate for the 2nd round of interviews can be related to loss of client contact.

2.9 REFLECTIONS ON THE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACH

The participatory approach involved the four lead agencies participating in the research process via developing the questionnaire, conducting community interviews, training and supporting community interviewers, outreaching to community members to tell them about the project and seeking their participation as welcoming committee members to guide study recommendations, and enhance community infrastructure.

The following feedback from the four lead agencies gives a wide array of community input/perspectives on the value of a participatory research approach.

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- engages community members who may be able to contribute resources to the issues
- grounds the study in the practical considerations that help point out practical future directions
- engages newcomers in the process, i.e. requests their feedback and includes their perspectives
- increases community-based interviewers' interviewing skills and knowledge of the research process
- increases community-based interviewers' knowledge of newcomers' issues
- engages various staff in the process, i.e. settlement workers, their director and their executive director (i.e. in contacting potential interviewees, to address issues/challenges during the interview/contacting process, and to support in and guide through the interviewing process)
- expands and enhances (working) relationships and knowledge of more remote agencies, and of their respective communities in working together on a community-based project
- helps forge deeper relationships and understandings between some of the interviewers and the respondents
- some respondents received additional support and guidance following the interviews, from the interviewers
- a learning and partnership strengthening process, as well as a skill and knowledge enhancement process, for all involved

2.10 LIMITATIONS

- The short interval between 1st and 2nd interviews – 2 to 4 months - was somewhat insufficient to see meaningful changes. The second round of interviews should occur after a minimum 9 months has passed.
- Attrition of respondents was a limitation - 68 respondents were initially interviewed and only 47 respondents were later interviewed. Attrition was most notable in Vancouver and Victoria. Major reasons for attrition included: re-location to pursue (better) employment, and lost contact when phone number was changed.
- Few refugees were interviewed in the smaller city centres in particular, which may have been due to the dearth of newcomers in general.

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3. STUDY FINDINGS

In this section we present what wellness means to our respondents, and themes of a welcoming community. We also discuss the similarities and differences amongst the four communities studied.

3.1 WHAT WELLNESS MEANS

Respondents included all or some elements of physical, mental, emotional and often spiritual health, including their socio-environment, when expressing what wellness means to them.

The outstanding factors of what wellness means to newcomers were the following:

- Financial freedom: being "financially secure … and independent"
- Secure family life: "Having a happy and healthy family"
- Comfortable environment: Living in a "good climate and environment"
- Social engagement: "Being socially involved and active"
- Family's wellness

3.1.1 Employment and language-training needs

Access to employment and language opportunities were the most important elements in affecting newcomers' and their family's wellness.

Studying English was considered a high priority. It is linked both to gaining (better) employment, and to learning about and becoming part of Canadian culture (which includes gaining English-speaking friends).

In all four communities, when participants spoke of having a job, the related comments included the following: feeling financially secure, being able to care for and support family, having an interesting job and/or a job in one's field, having job opportunities and opportunities to seek better work, feeling stable and secure in one's job, and being independent.
Having a job was linked with wellness (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual). Consider these comments: "I feel frustrated when I remember I am more qualified to have a better job … depression, frustration, sadness are more common than in my country for me, (Vancouver respondent)." "I am coping but it always implies extra effort that affects every aspect of my life (Victoria respondent)."

3.1.2 Employment needs of skilled professionals

All the skilled professionals interviewed are working at low-paying jobs. All said their degrees are not recognized and that employers want Canadian experience. Some felt

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wounded that they had to have 'connections' to get work. To them, this meant that they couldn't get a job on their own merits.

In this study, respondents who were admitted into Canada on the basis of being skilled professionals reported feeling utterly misled by Canadian immigration officers. They say they were told they would easily be employed because Canada has a shortage of skilled labor. Once arriving, however, they found this assertion utterly false.

Study respondents said that, if they had been told the reality of the situation in Canada before they left their native country, they either would not have come, or at least would not have had unrealistic expectations.

Furthermore, had they known the reality prior to coming they would have been able to avoid later problems and delays by compiling in advance all the necessary documents required by Canadian professional associations in order to assess their foreign credentials. As it stands, newcomers must wait months to receive university documents, if they are able to access them at all.

For skilled-professional females, this problem was compounded by gender roles. They felt that, if they were employed in a similar capacity as in their native country, they would be less likely to fall into a purely traditional-housewife role. These respondents reported trying to mitigate feelings of loss, sadness or depression by focusing on family and friends in an effort to nourish their emotional, mental, physical and spiritual wellness.

Making this employment situation even worse is the lack of accreditation and upgrading opportunities for skilled immigrants in relatively isolated smaller communities, such as Kamloops and Prince George. Professional associations and many of the educational institutions offering upgrading are located in Vancouver.

Newcomers expressed immense frustration because they could not speak to anyone face-to-face in their own community in Kamloops regarding credentials recognition or the upgrading they required.

One Kamloops family recounted their high costs of travel to and from Vancouver trying to deal with this situation. Their only alternative seemed to be to move the whole family to Vancouver.

Family members also suffer the effects of problems facing under-employed skilled workers. For example, Prince George has seen an increase in skilled workers, which includes their families. The result is that agencies now must support not only the incoming skilled workers, but also other members of their families. These family members are individuals with a wide variety of needs.

Overall, skilled professional newcomers consistently reported feeling frustrated, angry, sad and depressed because of their employment situation. In light of this unexpected reality, it seems that they must continually struggle to keep up their spirits.

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3.1.3 Wellness and local immigrant settlement agencies

The majority of respondents spoke very highly of their respective immigrant and settlement services. Most attributed a significant part of their wellness to the services and supports of these agencies.

Respondents specify English as a Second Language (ESL) classes – where they met friends and learned about Canada, or employment programs – where they learned how to apply for and get a job. They also turned to the agencies as sources of translation, community and government information, and other forms of education, such as training in first aid.

3.1.4 Wellness and individual responsibilities

Newcomers also cited some personal adaptations that could improve their own wellness. These included working to do one or more of the following:

- Increase their social network
- Learn more about Canadian culture
- Become more involved in their communities (i.e. volunteer work or helping older people or children)
- Increase self-care (often with a cultural focus, i.e. cook native foods, read their holy book, listen to native music or re-create cultural routines such as going to a local bakery every morning for breakfast and coffee)
- Exercise
- Spend more time with family and friends
- Self/family improvement (i.e. talk with a financial advisor, get further university training,
- Consider working in an alternate but related profession)
- Maintain a positive outlook

Interestingly, respondents in Vancouver focused less on these internal means of improving wellness and more on external factors, i.e. how they are treated by government officers or the community in general.

3.1.5 Wellness and responsibilities of communities/governments

The relationship that emerged between particular community themes and wellness seems to support the literature in conceptualizing wellness as extending beyond physical health. In other words, wellness seemed clearly affected by socio-environmental elements, as well.

The Vancouver respondents, particularly the refugees, cited ways that more community and government supports would enhance their wellness. For instance, refugee claimants, because of their immigration status, cannot access a SIN card in their early stage of

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arrival in Canada. This means they are not legally able to work and not eligible for MSP or free ESL classes. Also, refugees reported feeling harshly treated by income assistance and employment officers.

Hence, the status of refugees has a strong impact on their wellness – much of which they feel they have little control over.

Vancouver's refugee respondents mentioned the need for more public education to counter discrimination based on ethnicity and immigration status. Respondents said that Vancouverites and its institutions should be more respectful and understanding of refugees and the situations from which they have come.

Here are some comments, from Vancouver refugee respondents, regarding their experience of Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (formally called MHR) office environments: "MHR should wait until refugees' English skills are good enough before they demand that they look for work" and "welfare workers' training should include knowledge of specific refugee issues to increase their understanding and compassion."

As well, Vancouver respondents generally said they felt discriminated against when their credentials and foreign work experience was not recognized. Unique to the Vancouver respondents was their sense of their rights. They articulated wellness in more value-laden terms, such as desiring respect, dignity, acceptance, and equal opportunity.

In contrast, respondents in the other three communities conceived of wellness – and feeling welcomed – in solely concrete and practical terms. Their responses tended to combine internal and external factors more equally than those of Vancouver respondents.

3.2 COMMON THEMES OF A WELCOMING AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Respondents considered these to be common themes of a welcoming community:

- People who are genuinely friendly, helpful and patient
- Employment opportunities
- Language study opportunities
- A good social support network
- Good public transportation
- Housing that is affordable, decent and arranged prior to arrival
- Immigrant settlement services and supports
- A desirable community environment

Not surprisingly, respondents reported feeling more comfortable, confident and settled within a welcoming community.

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In such a community, newcomers have opportunities for personal growth as well as raising a family. It is a place that attracts them and their families – and one in which they are more likely to remain.

3.2.1 People who are genuinely friendly, helpful and patient

Initially, friendliness means being greeted, guided and given information at the airport.

- "The lady at the airport was very nice and helpful … she showed us where to go … I got a package of information …".

On a casual basis, friendliness means, strangers on the streets saying 'hi' and smiling.

- "People are very friendly … they say 'hi' to you on the streets and smile even though they don't know you" (Kamloops respondent)

Settlement assistance is associated with friendliness and helpfulness. It means individuals in a community reaching out with information, or giving basic household items.

- " … neighbours are particularly nice … I learned a lot about Kamloops because of the Welcome Wagon … felt more included in life here".
- "When I needed personal references to rent an apartment, the owner of the small hotel where I lived provided the references".
- "Our neighbour gave my son toys, and advice about where to shop and get buses … helped with landlord".
- " We got free good furniture from people we didn't even know and we still get help from people we have met … people in Victoria are very friendly and kind to foreigners".

Showing patience means people take the time to listen and explain things in English. Newcomers need time to produce the language, and feel valued and respected when people take the time to listen.

- "Bus drivers and strangers on the street are ready to help when I ask for directions. They were very patient with my poor English …"
- "My neighbour is an older woman … she came up to me and invites me over for tea … she really takes the time to listen … I feel I can have a conversation and I understand what she's saying … it's not just a quick 'hi' and 'hurry up' …"

Later on, *genuineness* is questioned when newcomers see they are not fully included in the community, despite their best efforts.

- "I start thinking that the friendliness is superficial … they are just being polite … it's difficult to find friends even though Canadians are friendly … people smile … the culture is very polite [Victoria]".

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- "I start having serious doubts about whether immigrants are truly welcomed in Canada. It feels like nobody wants to deal with me".

3.2.2 Employment opportunities

A strong theme running through all four communities was that a welcoming community for skilled professionals meant their credentials and foreign work experience are recognized.

- " …my English is good but I don't have the experience required most of the times. Therefore they prefer Canadians".
- "My family likes Prince George, but if I can't work in my profession I don't know if we'll stay".

Skilled immigrants also shared experiences of employers misunderstanding their situation.

- "Tolko, Wal-Mart, Costco, Safeway and Zellers employers all asked me the same thing, if you are a dentist why are you applying to work in an unskilled position?"

Then, they were told that they lacked the work experience to warrant being seriously considered for these positions.

Both skilled immigrants and non-skilled class immigrants said the would like "…any type of work that doesn't demand Canadian experience".

Respondents echoed the proverbially Catch-22 "How can I get Canadian experience if no one wants to give me a job?"

Newcomers also expressed a strong desire to be able to get a job on their own or at least not have to rely on 'connections' (i.e. 'who you know' …), which many do not have.

- "If my cousin didn't know the hotel manager I never get this housekeeping job … even I am a dentist in my country …I feel so ashamed that I have to rely on someone else …"

3.2.3 Language Study Opportunities

All respondents expressed a strong desire to learn or strengthen their English language skills. English was understood to be key to gaining (better) employment, getting (or succeeding in) work, making friends/speaking to Canadian-born people, learning about their new community and Canadian culture, and becoming more confident and feeling more a part of their new community.

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- "It's impossible to find work without being able to speak English clearly".
- "Learning English gives me confidence in talking with English people and it helps me to handle basic things like shopping, mailing and transportation".
- "I learned about our community and Canadian culture in the ELSA classes".
- "I met many new friends … we often have potlucks now and visit together … we can share our [immigration] experiences and feelings".

Initially, all newcomers qualify for free English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) classes, up to ELSA 3 level. Higher-level classes are offered at a range of times and days in universities, colleges, and non-profit organizations, usually on a fee for service basis.

However, if newcomer's English is too high (which in fact means a grade 2 level English), they do not qualify for ELSA and thus lose many of vital opportunities.

- "My English was too high. I couldn't take ELSA and I missed a lot".

And, long wait lists in the Vancouver and Victoria, or a lack of variety of classes in Kamloops and Prince George, often proved frustrating barriers because people lose precious time and resources.

- "I waste so much time waiting to study English" (Vancouver).
- "I had to stop studying English because my work schedule …Thompson Rivers University doesn't have many English classes".

3.2.4 A Good Social Support Network

Respondents in all four communities articulated the importance of having family and/or friends already in the community (from one's ethno-cultural group, particularly if their English abilities are weak).

- "I don't understand what people say. I get by, by asking my family".
- "My friends in the community are helping us".
- "There's no one to really talk to, share frustrations in own language".
- "I miss my friends and family very much, especially cooking and eating with them".
- "Even though I have a Canadian and Filipina friend, I miss my family and friends … I feel very sad".
- "[I] miss speaking native language, losing Bulgarian, and miss a Bulgarian community".

Church is a major source of support and friendships, noted particularly in Prince George and Kamloops.

- "I am not lonely because I have my Church …my wife we go and do many things with our friends from Church …"

In smaller towns it seems easier to make (Canadian) friends.

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- "Easy to adjust here, people are nice and friendly. It's easy to become friends" (Prince George).
- "People have a party with me … people accept me in the community, as me" (Prince George)

3.2.5 Good Public Transportation

Good transit is important for those who cannot afford to take taxis, or buy a car, (or do not have purchasing a car as a priority, given the more pressing necessities).

The two smaller towns were noted as having poor public transportation.

- "Bus service still needs more improvement" (PG). " … only the public transportation needs improvement"(PG).
- Respondents would like buses "that run 7 days a week, until about 12 midnight" (Kamloops and PG).
- "I finish work at 11pm. There are no buses … my landlady picks me up every day after work" (Kamloops).

3.2.6 Affordable, Decent, Housing Arranged Prior to Arrival

Reasonably priced rents/low income housing should be available for newcomers.

- "Renting in a decent neighbourhood is expensive … we are spending more money than we can afford …"

Refugees most commonly experienced an overcrowded living situation.

- "There are so many of us in one house [5-7 Church-sponsored refugees] … I want a place of my own with my children, nothing fancy, just clean and simple".

Only Prince George was noted to be affordable.

- "Prince George not expensive renting".

Victoria in particular lacks child-friendly, affordable housing.

- "It's difficult to find a place that accepts children … Victoria is not a place for people with families".

Housing may not be an issue if newcomers already have family settled in the destination community, or if their employers have it pre-arranged.

- "Housing wasn't a problem because family arranged it" (Prince George).
- "We're staying with family, so it is good" (Prince George).

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- "My employer got my family a house, before we came" (Prince George).

Pre-arranged housing is most desirable for those without family already settled in the host community. They do not know where to find decent, affordable housing, and are often taken advantage of by unscrupulous landlords who may overcharge them, or cheat them of their damage deposit.

3.2.7 Immigrant Settlement Services and Supports

The vast majority of respondents identified their local immigrant settlement agency as an essential, and usually primary, source of settlement support and services – from Employment (i.e. resume writing, job-interviewing skills) to English language training (ELSA classes in particular).

- "When I came …I would've been lost if no IMSS …" [Prince George].
- "IMSS helped me improve my English …achieve my goal to become a businesswoman".
- "MOSAIC helped me a lot because of language barrier … they gave us all the information and addresses … ESL teachers are welcoming us to Canada".

Immigrant serving agencies are also the sources of community and cultural knowledge, as well as outreach services and supports – such as help communicating with their child's school, or help contacting community resources or government offices.

- "Everyone in every department [KIS] is very helpful … settlement counsellors help me with applications … English teachers tell me about Canada and culture … I feel safe to ask anything in class … employment counsellors very helpful".
- "I received important information from ICA and VIRCS … told me how to get the information I need to live here and gave English courses".

Newcomers also learn about current community events and community centres, which is a foreign concept to many newcomers from the Asian and African continents.

- "From KIS I learned of celebrations, social activities my family can go to nearby, and many things happen at community centre".

Childminding services enable female newcomers to pursue integrating into their new community, without which they may not have the opportunity of pursuing.

- "If not for KIS's childminding, I could not have gotten out of the house to learn English or make friends".

However, particularly in smaller communities, respondents noted that there are insufficient multilingual and culturally-sensitive supports and services to address the needs of females abuse survivors.

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3.2.8 A Desirable Community Environment

Newcomers settled in the 3 smaller city centres commonly citied their preference for these places because they were perceived as safer (i.e. little crime or drug use), quieter, cleaner and -particularly in the case of Victoria - naturally beautiful because of the mountains and ocean. These communities are a good place to raise a family, said respondents. Skilled immigrants –many of whom did not already have family settled in the target community chose them because of perceived job opportunities.

Those settled in Prince George, Victoria and Kamloops really liked the fact that they were smaller.

- "I like small community, it's easy to deal with things …". Whilst Vancouver refugees identified a desirable community as one in which they are treated with dignity, respect and compassion.

3.3 FOUR CITIES: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: WHAT MAKES AND DOES NOT MAKE NEWCOMERS FEEL WELCOMED

The two tables in the following section highlight what respondents identified as factors that make – and do not make – them feel welcomed into a community. They include not just initial factors, but those existing several months or years later.

In these tables, cities are grouped according to their *shared themes*, or are singularly identified if they possess unique themes.

Factors not listed may still be valid components of a welcoming community. If they were not included here, it is because the respondents rarely or never mentioned them. A factor may not be mentioned simply because it does not exist in that city – or in that respondent's personal context.

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What *makes* newcomers feel welcomed in these communities?		
All Four Cities	*Prince George, Kamloops and Victoria*	*Prince George and Kamloops*
- Immigrant Settlement Services, with childminding - Neighbours/landlord are friendly and helpful - Public is polite and helpful - Opportunities to learn English - Opportunities to learn about Canadian culture and available resources, supports and services for newcomers - ESL teachers are welcoming - Airport workers are friendly and give guidance and practical information	- Strangers go out of their way to assist and support - Desirable environments: safe, quiet, and clean	- Welcome Wagon - Houses are cheaper to buy - Easier to establish informal, social, support networks - English improves more quickly because there are few from similar language group - Immigrant agency introduces newcomers to newcomer community
Regardless of community's size respondents identified common socio-economic and physical determinants that make a community welcoming. In the smaller centres, respondents identified welcoming themes commonly associated with the positive elements of small town living.		

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What DOESN'T MAKE newcomers feel welcomed in these communities?		
All Four Cities	*Victoria*	*Vancouver*
- Difficulty/impossibility of being employed as a skilled professional - Employers lack recognition of foreign work	- Scarcity of affordable, decent, centrally located, *child-friendly* accommodation	- Disrespectful treatment by MHR (welfare) officers - Long ESL wait lists - Refugees lack sufficient services and supports in the areas of: daily life problem solving, financial issues, housing and free ESL
Prince George, Kamloops and Victoria	*Prince George and Kamloops*	*Kamloops*
- Lack professional association headquarters - Necessary upgrading, or training courses only available in Vancouver	- Fewer job opportunities for skilled professionals - Less variety of ESL classes (times/days and levels) - Small or non-existent ethnic communities - Poor public transportation systems - Insufficient linguistic and/or cultural supports for newcomers experiencing abuse	- Have to rely on connections to get a job
Surprisingly contrary to popular assumptions, finding work as a skilled professional is equally challenging in large and smaller city centres. In both contexts, employers did not recognize foreign work experience or foreign credentials. Not so surprisingly, both the large and medium sized centres had a scarcity of affordable accommodation, with Victoria noted as particularly lacking affordable, child-friendly accommodation. Also, because Vancouver is a larger city, which has suffered cutbacks, as have most places, it has the concomitant problems. There are longer wait lists for ESL classes because of the greater number of newcomers, and fewer classes. And, refugees feel government officials are more disrespectful towards them. Lastly, the three smaller centres noted an inequitable distribution of resources. Thus, Victoria, Kamloops and Prince George lack sufficient job training courses, English classes, cultural supports/services, public transportation, and professional associations that newcomers need.		

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4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS/FEEDBACK/CONSIDERATIONS

In this section we discuss the findings in the four communities. We also present feedback from the four communities and offer considerations regarding: urban vs. rural contexts, gender, the socio-political context and refugees.

4.1 THE FOUR COMMUNITIES

Throughout the interviews, respondents portrayed a striking difference between the small cities of Prince George and Kamloops. These BC interior cities were described very differently both in terms of how welcoming they were and in how they did – or did not – facilitate settlement.

PRINCE GEORGE

Respondents glowed about this city. They were extremely positive about what they had accomplished, particularly in terms of having stronger English skills and being employed. Not only were most Prince George respondents employed and feeling quite confident about their English skills, they reported feeling integrated into the community. For the most part, they felt very happy with their social network, with friends both Canadian-born (native English-speakers) and from other countries.

Their integration and involvement in the English-speaking community is strengthening their English conversation skills because they get a lot of practice.

Employment provided them with more Canadian friends and a greater knowledge about Canadian culture. They said making Canadian friends isn't hard. They find Canadian people very friendly and helpful, particularly in a small community like Prince George.

Respondents said Prince George has the amenities of a big city, without being a big city. All stated they felt more independent and confident. Many repeated how happy they and their family were to be in Prince George.

Despite this apparent satisfaction, it may be important to note that 3 participants had already moved from Prince George before the 2nd round of interviews. They made work-related moves to Calgary, Vancouver and Ontario. All participants were contacted and reported now working full-time. They said they were forced to move to gain better employment. And, two months following the 2nd round of interviews a further five more skilled professional newcomers had left Prince George to seek employment opportunities in their professional area. It would be interesting to know if this rate of departure was just an anomaly or if it represented a trend.

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Also, one Prince George respondent (a female refugee who had divorced an abusive husband) reported insufficient linguistic/cultural supports for newcomers experiencing abuse. Although one reported incident does not a case make, but this incidence is more common than revealed in the interviews - elaboration will follow in the next section.

KAMLOOPS

Kamloops respondents gave very thoughtful and forthcoming responses, but they relayed much less change in their employment situation than their Prince George counterparts. From start to end, they tended to report little progress or change, but this may in fact be due to the shorter time frame between the 1st and 2nd round of interviews.

Regarding employment, they were still looking for work, or still in jobs that underutilized their skills. Regarding English skills, only two respondents reported feeling a bit more confident, and integrated into the community. Kamloops respondents emphasized that not only was it difficult to get any type of a job, it was difficult to get one without contacts.

There also may be more discrimination against Asians, in Kamloops. Non-Asian Kamloops respondents (i.e. Spanish, German, Ukrainian) reported having succeeded to a greater extent than did the Asian Kamloops respondents. The Non-Asian respondents reported working or having prospects of working. These newcomers also described Canadian-born people as much more open and involved with them.

Also, many respondents of color in Kamloops showed a major shift in their 2nd round responses. In stark contrast to the 1st round, they tended to question the sincerity of Kamloop's friendliness. Some said they experienced or witnessed incidents of unfriendliness, anger, and/or hostility. Even one or two incidents would decrease their feelings of being welcomed, and of how friendly Kamloops and its people really were, under the surface.

The summary of interviews in Kamloops suggests that newcomers face more barriers there than they do in Prince George or Victoria. Barriers included: language, cultural and lack of Canadian contacts for references/community connections.

VICTORIA

Particularly for the females, there is a sense of being isolated, keeping to their small circle of home/family and school. In Victoria, learning English is not increasing everyone's confidence. In fact, Victoria respondents, all female, are the first ones who mention the more they are learning English the more timid, self-conscious, nervous, and even embarrassed they feel to speak English.

A lack of job opportunities for professionals is also a significant issue for respondents. Respondents noted having to move, or take unskilled jobs, or return to university to re-

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train/get another degree as outcomes of lack of qualification recognition. All skilled professionals, both male and female, are pursuing upgrading or advanced Canadian degrees in the hope of being able to work in their respective fields.

Affordable housing in Victoria is a big issue, as is questioning the genuine friendliness of the people. Associated with questioning people's genuine friendliness is the inhabitants' ethnicity and age. Dominant Victoria inhabitants are identified as being older, British, citizens who are polite and nice superficially, but are part of a closed community, from which newcomers definitely feel alienated.

Once again, greater interaction in community, i.e. through university (or English) classes, or church, increases social and support networks, as well as feelings of wellness. Respondents are now meeting more friends, both inside and outside of their ethno-cultural communities, and are gleaning support for housing, clothing and furniture needs. Respondents' wellness also improves, mentally, physically, emotionally, as does feeling welcome. Wellness and welcome also seem associated with feeling greater hope for the future. For instance, if the person can get a degree, or acquire more education, they have hope for better job prospects and lifestyle for their family.

All respondents, unlike in the other three communities, spoke highly of the natural environment – climate, ocean and mountains - its cleanliness, safety and smallness. Victoria's natural and city environment were identified as the primary reasons they had chosen to settle there. Many respondents openly contrasted Victoria with both Vancouver and Toronto, in that Victoria is more desirable because it possesses the aforementioned elements that the two larger cities do not.

VANCOUVER

All respondents have been in Vancouver less than one year for the 2nd round of interviews. Initial settlement in Vancouver was connected with a *perception* of greater job opportunities. In fact, respondents now realized their perception was false. All the professionals/skilled immigrants still cannot find work in their field because both their credentials and foreign work experience are not recognized. One respondent associated lack of credential recognition with discrimination. Two participants very open and honest about the detrimental affect not working in field and not working is having on wellness. Struggling with depression, feelings of uselessness and frustration are daily struggles for these two individuals.

People they meet in ELSA classes or through church or ethnic community, help newcomers to adjust. They feel more a part of the community that they belong, when are helped by community organizations.

Six months later in this 2nd round of interviews, all newcomers are studying English. They feel more comfortable now because their English is better, and they are more

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involved in the community, either via English classes and/or new friends. They can speak and understand English speakers better, as well as know more about the community.

One participant noted how moving to coop housing in New Westminster positively impacted her wellness. The coop housing is economical, and friendly. She no longer feels lonely and practices her English.

One participant interestingly differentiated between feeling welcome versus feeling more adapted. He now feels more adapted because he is more used to everything. He associates needing to feel welcomed with the initial period. For instance, being greeted, guided, and provided information at the airport would help newcomers in feeling welcomed.

Respondents said newcomer information should be more readily available and accessible - handy. Many felt the media could have a role in disseminating newcomer services and supports.

The overall sense in Vancouver's interviews is that it is the newcomers who are the ones changing and reaching out, not the community or government initiatives being brought to them.

Lastly, it appeared that a sense of community, or belonging, positively impacts wellness and feeling of welcome.

4.2 FEEDBACK FROM THE FOUR COMMUNITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING:

URBAN VS. RURAL CONTEXTS AND GENDER

The principal researcher and researcher flew to Prince George and Kamloops, to present the draft findings, meet the local Welcoming Community Committees and stakeholders and solicit feedback. There was a meeting in Vancouver. For Victoria, we incorporated their welcoming committee's feedback via a teleconference.

PRINCE GEORGE

During our visit to Prince George's Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society we learned much about their community, their agency, and its key relationship with both newcomers and the mainstream community.

When newcomers move –because of the promise of better job opportunities in the bigger cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal – they often call the agency to learn where it is best to access supports and services in their new city.

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During the day, 'clients' often drop by just to chat – particularly women who are here without family, and feeling lonely because their partners are at work. They often feel isolated as well because they may live a few miles away from their nearest neighbour. Thus, knowing someone whom they trust and with whom they feel comfortable – a personal contact – is vital for Prince George newcomers, particularly the female newcomers.

And, as we see from the demographic data the majority of newcomers to Prince George are skilled immigrants who usually choose a place because of job prospects not because they have family already immigrated. Furthermore, as we learnt in the interviews female skilled immigrants seem to sacrifice, at least initially, searching for employment in order to take care of the children.

Another very important piece of information was the rising incidence of abuse. Both Canadian-born and newcomer men are increasingly abusing their partners. Recently, the agency helped four women who were married to Canadian-born men and who were being abused. It took time for the women to reveal this to the agency's settlement workers, as it takes time to build trust and a relationship. The women are also afraid of being open as the community is small and if their ethnic community heard of their situation they would be blamed and judged. In smaller communities, ethnic communities can be more traditional and women are expected to remain in their marriage regardless. Therefore, because little support is gleaned from their own ethnic community, the Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George is their primary and only resource and source of support.

Because Prince George is a small working class city that is geographically sprawling there seems to be a strong tradition of neighborly help. As we learned from the agency and observed/witnessed ourselves, not only does 'everyone know everyone else', but also people go out of their way to help acquaintances, or even strangers.

A good example is a local RCMP resident and his wife helped move a new immigrant from her abusive husband's house to a shelter, on their day off. Bus drivers will pick up and drop off people at their house if they are not busy.

Prince George's economy has also been changing. Prince George has become the 'retail hub of the North. Residents from the surrounding towns of Quesnel, Williams Lake, Prince Rupert and 100 mile House drive into Prince George to do their weekly or bi-weekly (during winter months) shopping. Prince George has the largest Canadian Tire in North America, and all the big department stores, Save-On Foods, Superstore, and Costco. IKEA will be moving in shortly. In contrast, pulp mill jobs have declined due to mechanization. Only skilled positions now exist in pulp mills. Mining opportunities may be opening, as Prince George prepares to embark on local mining ventures. Thus, newcomers can find retail and select skilled positions in the pulp mills – for which there is likely significant competition. However, as noted by the attrition of skilled professionals during the course of this study there is a lack of jobs of interest to them.

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Prince George's rural nature, and small size, offers great potential for newcomer support. Its small size and warm, neighborliness, means it can offer more personal contact for newcomers, For instance, newcomers can have staff meet new arrivals at the airport, and help orient them and assist in their initial settlement. Respondents listening to the present said they emphasized that they would have loved to have been personally greeted and shown where to stay when they first arrived. These respondents also said they would have welcomed being told, and given an information package letting them know, of all the relevant services, and supports (i.e. where they could shop for food, furniture, affordable clothing).

This small city also offers very affordable houses to purchase. In fact, these same respondents – who had lived in PG for just over 1 year – had recently purchased a house. They are an average middle-class couple, who are alone here as skilled immigrants.

Small cities also need to be considered within their own community context. They suffer when policies are modeled on a larger communities' context. For instance, ELSA class sizes are modeled after Vancouver and Victoria. However, Quesnel for instance cannot hope to get nor maintain the large numbers that exist in Vancouver and Victoria. Yet, if they 'fail' to do so these ELSA classes are taken away. Thus, the answer is not to 'punish' a smaller community for its size but to recognize the difference and employ realistic standards for that particular community.

Because a community is smaller does not mean it needs fewer resources. Money is often taken away from smaller centres and given to larger ones, such as Vancouver and Victoria. A more equitable - not disadvantaged - playing field, that considers the different costs associated with living in small towns, is important if newcomers are to be supported and encouraged to remain in these smaller centres.

Other considerations raised by the agency's staff, study respondents in attendance, and welcoming committee members included a recommendation that professional associations change their criteria that only Permanent Residents in Canada may apply for certification. This change would mean potential immigrants could apply prior to coming to Canada.

Communities 'reaching out' to newcomers is also important for individuals - many of whom come from countries in which government is something to be feared not an entity that supports services for newcomers. Thus, it is a foreign concept for many immigrants and refugees coming from Asia and Africa – which is the majority of our newcomers – to even look for services and supports that may be of assistance.

In sum, the rural community of Prince George has much to offer newcomers – personal connections, assistance, affordable houses, and retail employment opportunities. However, governments' investment is needed if its full potential is to be experienced by newcomers who come and remain.

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KAMLOOPS

Kamloops population is only about 5, 000 more than is Prince George's. Yet, as we learned during a 'breakfast meeting', to which a variety of community members from the social service to business sectors were invited, there is open racism. Kamloops is a fairly conservative, homogenous town that is less committed to multicultural, or more inclusive, practices. The breakfast meeting was an excellent example of allies and the multicultural community attempting to reach out and openly discuss issues for their newcomers, with the goal of attracting and retaining these newcomers as part of a truly 'sustainable future'. Attendees shared the fact that the vast majority of newcomers who come, leave within the year. Attendees also echoed our study's finding that there may be discrimination against visible minorities – particularly in the employment sector.

Advice was given to learn from other rural communities, such as Prince George and Revelstoke, who are doing well in welcoming their newcomers. 'There is no reason to re-make the wheel', said Milton Wong – the guest speaker at the breakfast meeting.

And, a business community member said he does not know 'how to find' qualified, skilled, newcomers. Yet, when he does attempt to bring someone over as part of the Provincial Nominee program the provincial Professional Association is the most significant barrier because of the fight/lengthy process of credential recognition. Local employers grow frustrated and do not have the time to wait until the newcomers can gain local accreditation, said the local business association's representative. A lengthy and bureaucratic Provincial Nominee application process was also cited as a deterrent to looking to hire overseas.

Local unions also act as barriers, as they see newcomers' labor as threats rather than assets. Newcomers increase the labor pool, hence weakening unions' power.

A final suggestion was to connect newcomers with other successful immigrants, from whom they can learn and receive support and mentorship.

Once again however a rural community has its size as both an advantage and a disadvantage. Although smaller towns may be more conservative, traditional and homogenous, they are also more personable and have the potential to reach out to newcomers and make changes in ways larger centres could not.

During our presentation of the draft findings, at Kamloops Immigrant Services Society, a comment was made that the 25 people in the room likely knew *everyone* in the community – i.e. those who had the power to make Kamloops more welcoming. This statement is impressive and definitely unique not only to a rural setting, but attests to the power of Kamloops multicultural agency to attract key stakeholders.

VICTORIA

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During the discussion with the Victoria's welcoming committee, many questions were raised and issues shared. The project coordinator at the Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria is part of BCITP Net (BC Internationally Trained Professionals Network), which is a province-wide advocacy, education raising and support/action network for newcomer skilled professionals.

Similar to Kamloops' welcoming committee, Victoria's committee consists of a variety of key stakeholders from provincial government officials to people who work in the settlement and women's sector. These individuals emphasized the need to employ a gender lens when designing research studies, discussing findings/a study, and examining and analyzing policies relating to the newcomer community. Questions such as: what access is there for female immigrants and refugees when their primary relationships breakdown? How to reduce their isolation and increase their access to safe places? What are women's experiences in terms of employment, being a newcomer, expectations and experiences in general? And, when we are designing a research study, in order for women to reveal potentially shameful and very private issues, what level of trust is needed, and should we not ensure there is that trust in order to learn of women's experiences?

In our study, the majority of interviewees on the whole were female. Yet, few revealed personal details.

Language is another inhibitor, noted welcoming committee members. If interviewees could at least speak in their native language more in-depth information could be gleaned.

Another consideration is 'who is speaking on whose behalf?' In interviews with newcomers when the men are 'talking about' their family it is their story and perspective that shapes the information. Thus, 'what is acceptable to say to whom' is an important consideration to bear in mind when designing a study and discussing its findings.

The committee also shared what they are doing, or have done, to make Victoria more welcoming for newcomers. Partnering with BCITP Net in order to have a coordinated effort and consistent communication between the federal immigration department and local professional associations is something upon which the ICA coordinator of multicultural, community development and public education services is doing. The coordinator is in the process of organizing seminars to bring together local employers and newcomer skilled professionals in order to enhance economic/job opportunities.

Another discussion was to encourage newcomers to be proactive in their learning of available supports and services, some newcomers are very passive and expect to be helped out. This passivity may be due to a number of factors, one of which may be the foreign concept of such services and supports. Another factor may be the expectations that newcomers were led to possesses. Other factors could be language barriers and the nature of Victoria's community – which is perceived as 'polite' but not necessarily friendly/welcoming.

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Lack of funding for interpreters was shared as a barrier for the general community as it attempts to assess the needs of minority individuals.

VANCOUVER

During the Welcoming Committee meeting, participants shared various considerations about an urban context. On the positive side, it appears easier to get a job, the mainstream community seems to know more about various cultures and ethnicities, and because of the greater population density a newcomer has a choice whether or not to mix with his/her own ethnic group. On the downside, newcomers can feel alienated, be trapped in a 'ghettoized' community, and have to reach out for services. Furthermore, housing and living costs are higher. Thus, in contrast to smaller city centres it is not as easy to form relationships, but it is easier to maintain personal privacy if one wishes. Bigger cities also have a greater variety of services to meet the needs of a greater diversity of individuals.

At the meeting, although the participants acknowledged that there is very limited effort to coordinate outreach-type welcoming activities for newcomers, they also acknowledged that the City of Vancouver has a Multicultural Social Planner, a newcomer's guide published in 5 languages, multilingual lines to call for services and there are accessible core services for a variety of ethno-cultural groups/individuals.

4.3 SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT AND REFUGEE DIFFERENCES

Both our study and the literature offer many considerations from a socio-political perspective. These include questions about what smaller communities can do to attract and retain newcomers.

Essentially, in both large and small communities, governments and communities need to focus on promoting the benefits of immigration.

In addition, community development initiatives are needed in communities that do want to attract and retain immigrants. This is especially important for communities that lack ethnic and cultural diversity.

As described in the Literature Review, the fall of 2005 saw a community development handbook released, to this end: *Attracting and Retaining Immigrants: A Tool Box of Ideas for Smaller Centres*. As noted, the *Tool Box* is valuable as a step-by-step guide to assist communities in welcoming newcomers. It is a beginning.

However, governments must play a larger role than is outlined in the *Tool Box*. This requires a look at funding. For example, the current federal and provincial funding structures set up a competitive, rather than cooperative, relationship among non-profit immigrant agencies and multicultural agencies.

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As well, the Ministry of Attorney General BC Settlement and Adaptation Program's open solicitation process (request for proposal) has negatively impacted the settlement services sector. This sector now receives less funding and has decreased the capacity of organizations and morale of settlement workers.

Refugee differences and the welcoming community

Both this study and the literature suggest that much more research is needed to investigate the varying realities faced by different types of refugees. These differences affect their experience of a welcoming community.

- Refugees may be government-assisted, privately-sponsored or refugee claimant. Based on such distinctions, their experiences and needs can vary widely. So they're unlikely to have the same perceptions of what constitutes a welcoming community. For example, privately-sponsored refugees in this study reported being well cared-for by sponsoring churches in three communities: Victoria, Kamloops and Prince George.

- Ethnicity seems to be another factor affecting refugee perception of a welcoming community. Three of the five Vancouver refugees reporting a lot of discrimination were from Africa. (Note that no African refugees were interviewed in the other three communities.) The other Vancouver refugees reporting these problems were, respectively, from Latin America and Iran.

- It would be helpful to learn how ethnicity might complicate the difficult situations of some refugees. For example, black refugees may experience multiple sources of discrimination based on immigration status, ethnicity and a cultural difference from the mainstream.

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5. SUMMARY

Despite the variations among the four communities and variations among the individuals within these communities, there arose some overarching themes of what makes a welcoming community and what are determinants of wellness. The eight main themes of a welcoming community were: employment and language learning opportunities, patient, friendly and helpful people, affordable, child-friendly, housing arranged prior to arrival, immigrant services and supports, a good social support network and public transportation, and a desirable community environment (safe, clean and quiet). The majority of respondents also saw both internal and external factors being responsible for their wellness, which included physical, spiritual, emotional and mental elements. In particular, wellness factors included: financial freedom, a secure family life, a comfortable environment, social engagement and family's wellness. Gender, immigration status, ethnicity, and the context – urban or rural – were also factors in affecting newcomers' experiences of a community and their needs and issues in that community. These factors need to be explored in greater depth. Contrary to the dominant assumption, urban contexts are not necessarily a superior settlement environment. Newcomers settled in rural or small city centres were in general very pleased with their environment. However, more investment from governments, and coordinated efforts - on the part of professional associations, colleges, universities and local employers - to speed up and encourage greater integration needs immediate attention. As a country, Canada needs to move more quickly, be more proactive, and equitable, in order to attract and retain newcomers in its urban and rural centres.

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6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of this study indicate that wellness relies, at least in part, on a welcoming community that enables newcomers to fully participate in its productivity and social activities.

Yet a welcoming community cannot appear in a vacuum. There must be national, provincial, and community infrastructures to ease the settlement and integration of newcomers, both initially and long-term.

For this reason, federal, provincial and municipal governments play major roles in supporting and promoting the following recommendations. And, non-governmental organizations - professional associations, universities and colleges, and local service agencies - play a role in cooperating with government and in examining their institutional structures for systemic discrimination.

I. Employment

Professional Associations
Increase dialogue with professional associations to coordinate information sharing to newcomers *prior* to their arrival.

Smaller centres having official headquarters located in the community
Currently to the best of our knowledge the majority of professional associations are located in Vancouver or Victoria.

'Newcomer-friendly' employers
These are not just important at government offices, but in community organizations, medical clinics, stores, and hospitals.

II. Language Opportunities

INCREASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING
Language skills were of key importance to respondents. But, as noted in this report, wait lists are very long, too few classes are offered, and newcomers' language levels may disqualify them from English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) classes.

Financial Support
Living allowances during the newcomer's first year while attending English classes

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III. Housing

Affordable Housing with Support Services
The existing stock is diminishing for all Canadians, especially in major cities. For newcomers, there are additional challenges in accessing this low supply of affordable housing, including language barriers and discrimination. For these reasons, newcomers require more assistance.

IV. Health Care

Medical Coverage (MSP)
Medical coverage should be available within the first month of landing

V. Anti-Racism/Discrimination Initiatives

Anti-racism education
In elementary and high schools and in the workplace

Cross-cultural education
This can ease relations between ethnic groups, because some perceive other ethnic groups to be impolite, and possibly racist.

Community Education
Educate people about the positive impacts newcomers have upon their communities, the ideals of multiculturalism, and the value of attracting and retaining newcomers in small communities. Debunk myths, i.e. 'immigrants take away jobs.'

Media
Should produce a greater diversity of stories/representations of ethno-cultural communities

VI. Supports And Services

Multilingual/culturally-appropriate supports for female survivors of domestic abuse
These are particularly lacking outside major cities. Female newcomers may be at higher risk of being abused and of remaining in an abusive situation because they are isolated not only the abuser, but by language and cultural barriers and a comparative lack of supports.

Multilingual/cultural women's groups
The majority of female respondents were in the Family category (even if they were also skilled professionals). The husband most often is the Principal Applicant.

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In addition to the power imbalance implicit in these immigration categories, the women seem more likely to follow the lead of a husband, remaining isolated and alone. This is especially problematic in communities with smaller ethnic populations.

Multilingual brochures on local services
Multilingual brochures would help newcomers learn about relevant services and supports available to them in their new community. Prince George respondents would also like Chinese newspapers or magazines.

Free childminding services
Important for female newcomers, who have primary responsibility for the children
Lists of doctors and dentists accepting patients, plus health/emergency services
Prince George respondents said they would like information on e.g., police and hospital services.

More educational immigrant youth programs
These seem especially needed in smaller cities. Drop-ins, cross-cultural programs and other activities can promote good self-esteem as well as better communication and relationships with friends and family.

VII. More Accessible, Streamlined Information: Pre-arrival and Post arrival

Pre-arrival – more accessible information
These could be used to assist those who have not yet arrived, not just those who have. A basic starting point could be "Are you immigrating to _____?" with links to relevant resources for particular populations and groups, in that community.

Websites could also assist provide useful housing information, e.g. revealing Canada's housing costs and availability in various regions. They could explain how to access affordable housing, i.e. co-op housing, and how to set up housing BEFORE leaving one's native country. We also recommend links to sites on tenancy rights and responsibilities.

Since credential recognition is so critical to skilled professionals, we recommend website links to professional associations, advocacy groups, and colleges/universities that offer required upgrading courses. Immigrants should be able to start preparing before they come here. This will make it easier for them to collect the necessary documents.

For investment immigrants, websites should include tax laws and employment rights.

Improve Citizenship and Immigrant Canada (CIC) websites and handouts from embassies and immigration officers
Some of the website suggestions above could also apply here. In addition, a government site such as CIC should provide links to every professional association. It should also

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stress that prospective newcomers collect all their educational degrees and professional accreditation papers BEFORE leaving their native country.

Government information should list which credentials are recognized by which association, and which are not. It should also state whatever upgrading will be needed.

At a minimum, government agencies should advise people to get the information they need to make an informed decision on whether to immigrate to Canada. For professionals and skilled immigrants, this would entail checking with relevant professional associations of the province where they'd like to live.

Post-arrival – more streamlined information
Newcomers wanted to know exactly where and how to access relevant and consistent information about services and supports so they do not lose opportunities (i.e. free ELSA courses) or waste a lot of time running between different offices.

Respondents in all four communities, but most notably the larger centres of Victoria and Vancouver, called for more organization and networking between the key institutions they deal with. These include government offices, professional associations, multicultural service agencies, and churches that sponsor refugees

A Centralized Newcomer Settlement Information and Referral Centre
Particularly in medium and larger city centres.

VIII. Rural Contexts

Equitable funding
Equitable funding for both rural and urban communities – *investment* in rural communities will promote development of their existing potential.

IX. Enhancing Community's Infrastructure

Community Development Initiatives
For those who want to create a more welcoming community, a logical starting point is to *assess and map the community's existing resources*. It's best to do this with the help of newcomers and former immigrants and refugees who have settled into the community. Such an inventory will reveal where new initiatives are needed

To be effective, groups can combine forces through *partnership*s, building communication and relationships in order to advocate as a community for what is needed. They'll find stronger local support if they first *educate residents of the benefits of immigrants,* i.e. *engaging local media*.

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Respondents noted their appreciation of community reach-out initiatives such as the *`Welcome Wagon'. Within a month* of their arrival, you could greet newcomers and *bring a package of relevant information, translated* if needed. Or you could bring them *information on arrival*, perhaps also suggesting less-expensive accommodation options, i.e. B & Bs, hostels or private homes.

Other welcoming initiatives could include *interpretation services, a community centre dinner, drop-ins or cultural and social events* for newcomers. Also *partner newcomers with a native-born Canadian* (i.e. a senior) to learn about the community, practice English or simply have a new friend with whom they can talk.

X. Future Research

This was an exploratory study. And, despite the findings' riches there arose further questions and considerations that warrant attention. Here are some suggestions.

- Story of each immigrant is complex. Therefore, we may need to fully understand how immigrants experience the complexity of their settlement process and to capture the stories of some immigrants to glean a more complex, in-depth understanding of how numerous interacting factors impact upon settlement experience and indication of wellness (i.e. rural/urban origin, gender, mother tongue, immigration status, sexual orientation, class, and length of time in Canada. A qualitative narrative study may be useful for this purpose.

- The findings indicate a strong relationship between employment and the access of social capital. We need to further explore how respondents entered the job market and got their current employment, who provided their connections to the job (if any), and where their connections came from. A survey based on existing social capital studies and theories will be necessary to investigate what forms of social networks newcomers may have, e.g. family, neighbour, religious organization, and settlement agency, and how their access to these resources is embedded in their networks.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - A SAMPLE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUGGESTIONS

Most of the following suggestions appear in the Fall 2005 community development booklet *Attracting & Retaining Immigrants: A Tool Box of Ideas for smaller centres.*

The booklet was inspired by the discussion papers, *Maximizing* Settlement, and *The Small Centre* Strategy, prepared for the National Settlement Conference in October 2003, from which the following suggestions are taken and expanded upon.

Greeting
"Nothing is better than welcoming people … wherever they may be arriving"

Accommodation
Economic-class immigrant families usually must seek out and pay for hotel accommodation at market rates. Their resources can be depleted quite quickly. If a community is not able to offer temporary accommodation, such as B & B's, hostels, or private homes, perhaps hotels could offer discounted rates, with meals included.

Interpretation
Some communities already have language services. Emergency interpreting can often be accessed through the telephone from commercial companies. Or a local immigrant settlement agency could provide interpretation services. Communities might also create a "language bank" of volunteer interpreters.

Early Orientation
Basic survival information that your community can immediately pass along to newcomers will be most welcome.

Survival information should include:

- Where to stay temporarily
- Where to shop for food and medicine
- Where to get emergency health care
- Where and how to access bank services
- Where to turn for quick help and advice (in their native language)
- Where to get an interpreter
- Where to find places of worship
- Emergency measures: "911" and fire alarms
- When and where to enroll for medical coverage
- When to get a social insurance number
- When and where to enroll children in school
- When and how to enroll for adult English language classes
- Help with job search and (if need be) professional credential recognition

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Early Settlement Support

Settlement is a long-term and multi-faceted process. Full integration is the ultimate goal. Following a newcomer's initial arrival and orientation, there are many other factors affecting adaptation and integration, which should first include a needs assessment and then connections with the community.

The hospitality of a welcoming community involves both having services available and making them known to newcomers. It is then up to the newcomers themselves which services they would like to utilize.

Needs assessments should include:

- Basic supports: medical and enrolment social insurance number application
- Housing (longer term)
- Orientation (specific and focused on needs)
- Language evaluation/training as necessary
- Employment and training issues
- Health and medical needs
- Educational needs and goals
- Income support issues
- Recreation, leisure, faith and spirituality

Connecting with community should include:

- Public services
- Social connections
- Employment networking
- Faith community
- Ethno-cultural community
- Volunteer opportunities
- Sustaining settlement support

The full process of adaptation and integration will vary with individuals. It can take from months to years. Listed below are some factors to consider after the initial three months.

Follow-up should include:

- Housing (is it still or has it become a problem?)
- Language assistance
- Orientation on case-specific topics (i.e. buying a car, learning to drive)
- Medical/health issues that may be inhibiting successful settlement
- Economic self-sufficiency connected to employment issues
- Education goals still to be realized or planned for
- Cultural or religious needs, perhaps not yet met in your community
- Social and leisure opportunities

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All of the above factors at each phase of settlement are ideas taken from the experience of settlement workers and feedback from newcomers themselves. However, every community is unique, as are its newcomers. The best source of ideas on making a community welcoming will be newcomers themselves.

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Appendix 2 - LOCAL WELCOMING COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

The lead agencies in Vancouver, Victoria, Prince George, and Kamloops will establish four local welcoming community planning committees.

The local welcoming community planning committee may be comprised of representatives of the following stakeholders: government departments, settlement organizations, social and health service providers, economic development associations, chambers of commerce, academic and training institutions, immigrant and refugee community leaders.

The local welcoming community planning committee will suggest a variety of approaches that involve building partnerships, and reviewing and identifying community resources and options for the strengthening and sustaining welcoming community for immigrants. The committee will analyze brief longitudinal study results; plan, implement, and evaluate the project; and will recommend and take follow-up action of the project.

+A terms of reference framework will be drafted for the local welcoming community planning committee to further develop their own terms of reference, recognizing differences in geography, capacity, initiatives and priorities of each city.

+A Draft Terms of Reference Framework

Follow-up actions and recommendations, from a community development perspective, following data analysis and feedback of the both interviews from the nineteen interviewees:

1) Considering your *community development resources (i.e. **human, financial, natural, and infrastructure), in the context of immigrants' and refugees' settlement and integration needs and issues, strengths and skills, what are some short, medium and long-term follow-up actions your community could take from a community development perspective?

   *In the context of community development (i.e. the planned evolution of all aspects of community well-being – economic, social, environmental, and cultural) consider all of your resources, which could support and enhance greater inclusion of newcomers.

   **_Human_ – healthy families, lifestyles and community; diversity, skills, education and training; career planning and employment; effective and legal hiring practices; workers compensation and pensions; and human rights and labor laws.

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Financial – economic development opportunities, municipal, provincial and governmental grants/funding avenues, local business/industry, fundraising opportunities, banks and other financial institutions, community loan funds, cooperatives.

Natural – land, air and water; minerals and surface/subsurface metals and ores; oil, gas and petroleum; trees and other plants; wildlife; and the standards, legislation and policies relating to the above (so that they are managed properly and sustained over time)

Infrastructure – political systems and leaderships needed to support a community, as well as the policies, standards and laws established in the community. When considering future steps, it's important to consider what infrastructure is required, what the relationship is to what currently exists, and whether or not there are policies or existing support systems to which contact or adherence are required (the initiatives and priorities of each city).

2) Considering the health of your community (i.e. it's strengths and weaknesses), what are some recommendations you could make for strengthening and/or enhancing your community so that it could embark on new/enhanced community initiatives, in the future?

Timeline, Minimum Number of Meetings and Meeting Responsibilities

***Minimum Number of Meetings**: 3

NB: Prior to first meeting, committee members should be emailed/sent project questions, objectives, and an outline of the project's structure (i.e. who is on the project advisory committee – lead agencies – and the local welcoming committee's role, generally, as outlined above). You may wish to organize a short meeting to answer questions, provide any necessary clarification, and initiate introductions.

1st Meeting: **June 6th to July 31st**

(*To take place after first round of interviews are completed, summarized and have been sent out to committee members for their review/consideration).* Send out summarized interview data prior to this first meeting. Members should read summarized data prior to meeting and pull out themes. The meeting may consist (depending on whether you previously met or not) of introductions, a fielding of questions and a sharing of themes pulled out. The focus should be on practical next steps, ideally from a community development perspective. Members should begin thinking about their role given their particular agency and position within the agency in terms of how they can contribute to the next steps given the emerging information from the interview data. During meeting, themes should be noted by lead agency. Interview process/outcomes are discussed.

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2nd Meeting: September to October 18th
(To take place following second set of interviews, once they have been summarized and sent to members for their review and consideration). This meeting should see some changes/refinement of future roles/next steps, based on second interview data.

3rd Meeting: Sometime during the month of January 2006
(To take place following project report's completion on January 6th). Final project report will be submitted and disseminated to all lead agencies, which will pass it along to committee members. Committee members should read report and think about next steps, prior to this meeting.

***Meeting Responsibilities: At each meeting a chair and note taker should be assigned.**

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Appendix 3 - QUESTIONNAIRE – FIRST ROUND OF INTERVIEWS

For the purpose of this action research, well-being or wellness will be defined as how well an individual has adjusted to Canadian society. Its subjective indicators are the subjective individual judgment on life domains such as spiritual, emotional, physical, intellectual, social, occupational and environmental.

Code # **City:** **Date and Time of Interview:**

Part A: Identifying Information

1. Gender of respondent:

___ Female ___ Male ___ Other

2. How old are you?

___ 19-25 ___ 26-30 ___ 31-40

___ 41-50 ___ 51-60 ___ 61+

3. What is your immigration status? (N = Now A=Arrival)

___ Immigrant ___ Refugee ___ Refugee Claimant

___ Canadian Citizen

4. If you are an immigrant, what category did you arrive under?

___ Principal Applicant ___ Dependant ___ Family Reunification

5. What country were you born in? _____

6. When was your official landing, in Canada? _____ (month/year)

7. When did you start living in this city? _____ (month/year)

8. What language do you speak most often at home? _____

9. What is your ethnicity? _____

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Part B: Wellness and Welcoming

10. Do you feel you have experienced difficulties in settling in the city for any of the following reasons (check all that apply)

___	Ethnicity	___	Gender	___	Religion
___	Age of children	___	Size of Family	___	Disability
___	English Language	___	Age	___	Employment
___	Housing	___	Discrimination		
___	Social Support Network		Other _____		

11. Please tell me more on each of the above checked reasons:

12. What does wellness mean to you?

13. How can you improve your wellness?

14. How can other people, e.g. friends, community and government help you to improve your wellness?

15. Did you feel welcomed when you first arrived in this city? And why?

16. Are you feeling welcomed now that you are in this city? And why?

17. How can the city and the community improve in welcoming immigrants and refugees to stay in the city?

18. Any other comments

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Appendix 4 - QUESTIONNAIRE – SECOND ROUND OF INTERVIEWS

Code#: City: Date and Time of Interview:

1 What is your immigration status now?

____ Immigrant ____ Refugee ____ Refugee Claimant

____ Canadian Citizen ____ Immigrant Applicant

2 What language do you speak most often at home? _____

3. It's been _____ months since our first interview. In this second interview, we are interested in learning what, if anything, has changed for you. In the first interview, you said you experienced difficulties in settling in to the city because of *(for example)*: Employment, English, and a lack of a social support network *(Interviewer: please review each interviewee's areas of difficulty by reading to them how and why they were identified as difficult areas).* So, the first question is what, if anything, has changed in each of these areas? For instance, you said it was difficult finding a job in your area of training. Has that changed? If it has changed why has it changed? And, who or what helped the situation to change? *(Interviewer: for each area identified, get all of these details about the change)*

4 How have the changes you mentioned affected your feelings of emotional and mental well-being?

5 In our first interview, you said you felt (or didn't feel) welcomed when you first arrived in _____ (*name of city).* Are you still feeling welcomed (not welcome)? Please tell me about any changes, and explain why the situation changed (i.e. who or what were responsible for the changes).

6 In our first interview you said (*Interviewer: please read out what he/she said in #17 of first interview*). Now, ____ months later do you feel you know the community more? And, if you now feel you know the community more, do you see other ways that it can improve in welcoming new immigrants and refugees to stay here?

7. Lastly, can you tell me the specific reasons why did you choose to settlement in this _____ city? Why not in the big city (Vancouver and Victoria), or small city (Kamloops and Prince George)?

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Appendix 5 - PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE LOCAL WELCOMING COMMUNITY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Project Advisory Committee

Sherman Chan	MOSAIC, Director of Settlement Services/Principal Researcher
Jean McRae	Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria, Executive Director
Trudy Dirk/ Lloyd Loveday	Kamloops Immigrant Services Society, Executive Director
Baljit Sethi	Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George, Executive Director
Dr. Mambo Masinda	MOSAIC, Bilingual Counsellor (French/African)
Dr. Iraj Poureslami	Adjunct Professor, Institute on Health Promotion Research UBC

Local Welcoming Community Planning Committee Participants

In Kamloops

Lead Agency	**Kamloops Immigrant Services Society**
Ellen Ahearn	Service Canada, Kamloops (HRSDC)
Verna Albright	Refugees and Friends Together (RAFT)
Lynda Fisher	Refugees and Friends Together (RAFT)
Leah Dawson	Boys and Girls Club
Wendy Hulko	Seniors Outreach Society and Thompson Rivers University School of Social Work
Joanna Maxwell	Seniors Outreach Society, Kamloops Immigrant Services, Chinese Cultural Association, and Kamloops Community Response Network
Ray Jolicoeur	Kamloops Social Planning Council
Paula Schmidt	Kamloops Social Planning Council
Bob MacIntosh	Kamloops Social Planning Council
Jack Legebokow	Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD)
Ron McColl	City of Kamloops
Picu Multani	Interior Health, Mental Health
Ray Stothers	Member of the public
Kris Weatherman	Interior Health, Public Health
Liz Lyne	Kamloops Multicultural Society
Christine Lougheed	Legal Services
Dawn Zander	Service Canada, Salmon Arm (HRSDC)
Jina Clayton	Kamloops Immigrant Services Society, Research Assistant/ Interviewer

In Victoria

Lead Agency	**Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)**

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Erin Dale	Ministry of Community Services, Stopping the Violence Branch, Contract Manager
Susana Guardado	ICA, Coordinator of Women's Programs
HyeSoon Kim/ Tomoko Okada	ICA, Coordinator of Settlement Services
Jean-Marie Rubayita	Community worker and ESL Teacher
Alvaro Moreno	ICA Research Assistant/Interviewer

In Vancouver

Lead Agency	**MOSAIC**
Manindar Bajwa	PICS, Settlement Support Worker
Eleanor Campbell	Multicultural Helping House Society, Executive Director
Ansar Cheung	SUCCESS, Settlement Program Director
Regina Li	SUCCESS, Settlement Program Manager
Dr. Mambo Masinda	MOSAIC, Bilingual Counsellor (French/African)
Michelle Park	MOSAIC, Bilingual Counsellor (Korean)
Saleem Spindari	MOSAIC, Bilingual Counsellor (Arabic/Kurdish)
Baldwin Wong	City of Vancouver, Multicultural Social Planner
Dr. Miu Chung Yan	Professor, UBC School of Social Work and Family Studies
Kamala Sproule	Researcher/Coordinator

In Prince George

Lead Agency	**Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George**
Sharon Pannu	Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George, Research Assistant/Interviewer

NB: due to city's small size Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society of Prince George chose to use its own internal resources and its pre-existing wide-spread community connections, as a welcoming committee (i.e. key individuals responsible for planning, organizing and mobilizing other key community stakeholders)

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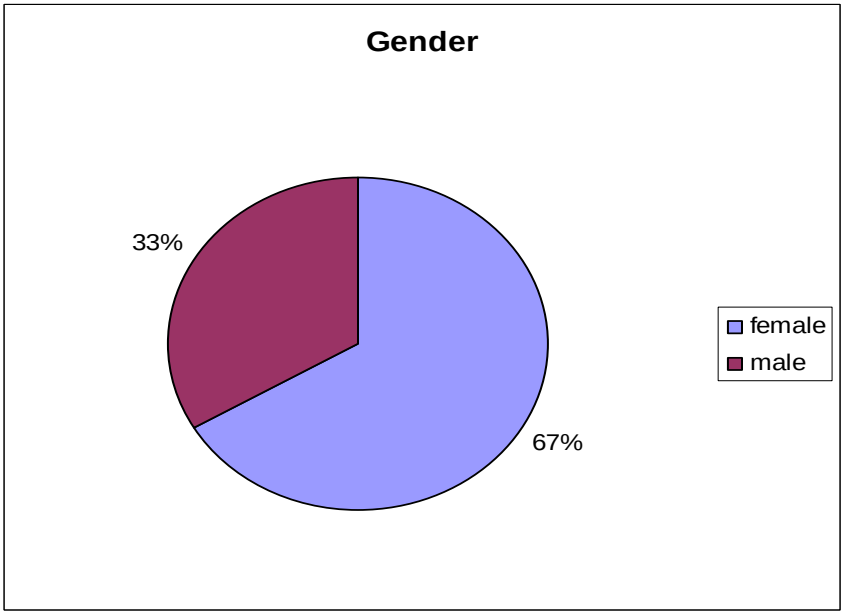
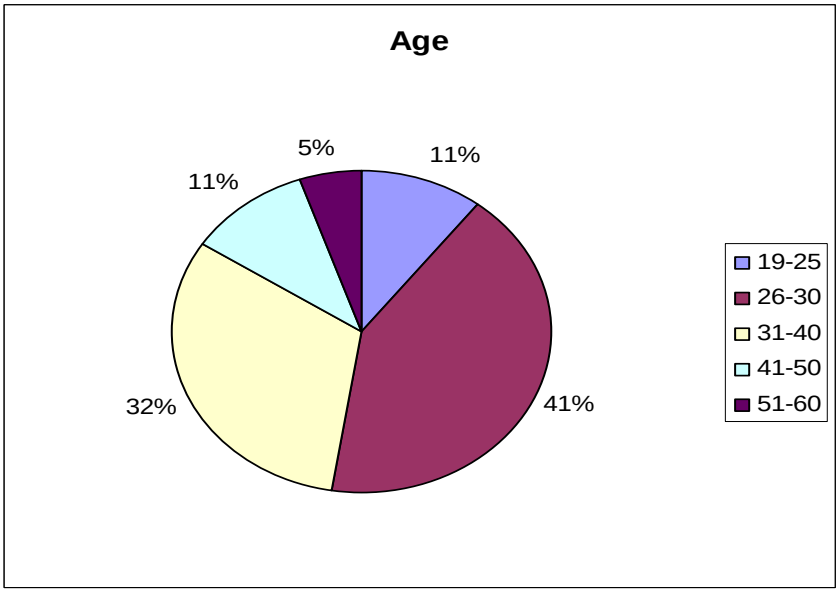
Appendix 6 - PRINCE GEORGE DEMOGRAPHICS: RESPONDENTS





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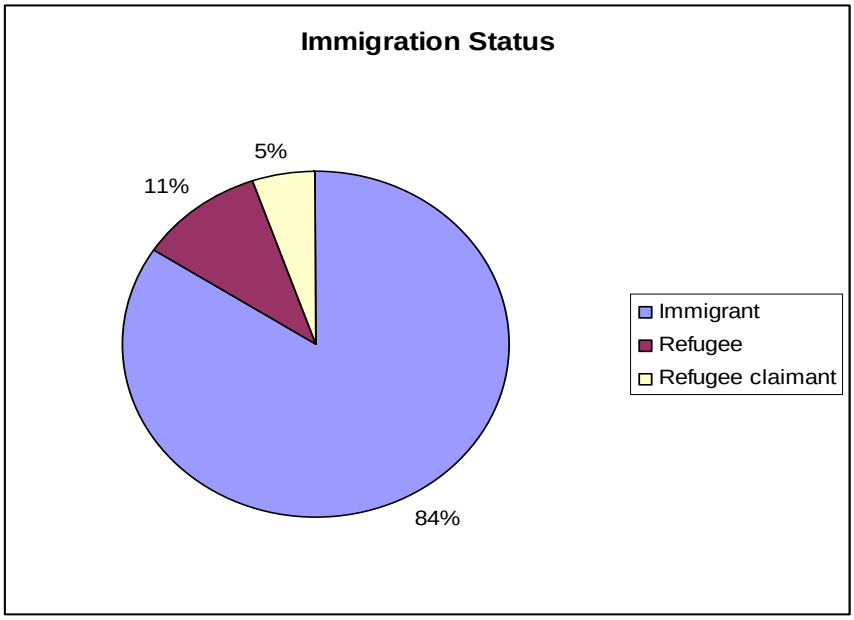
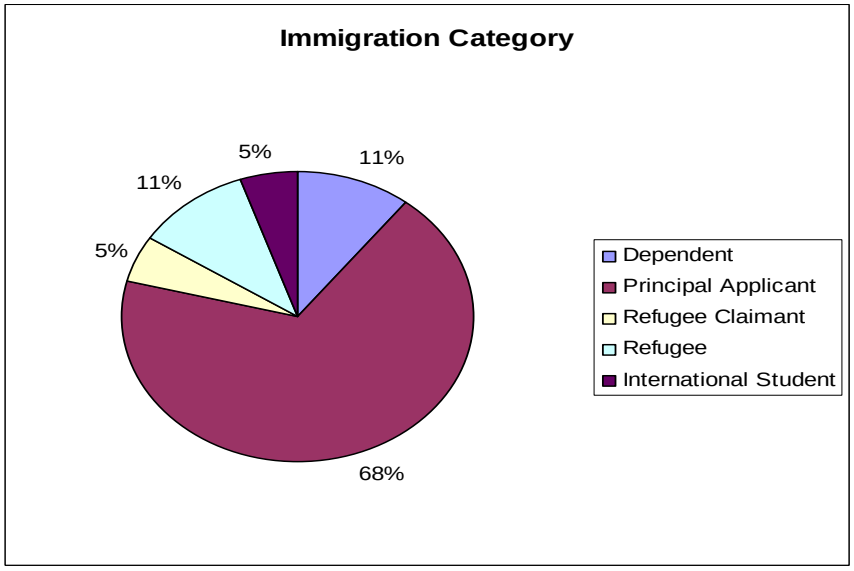
Appendix 6 Prince George Demographics





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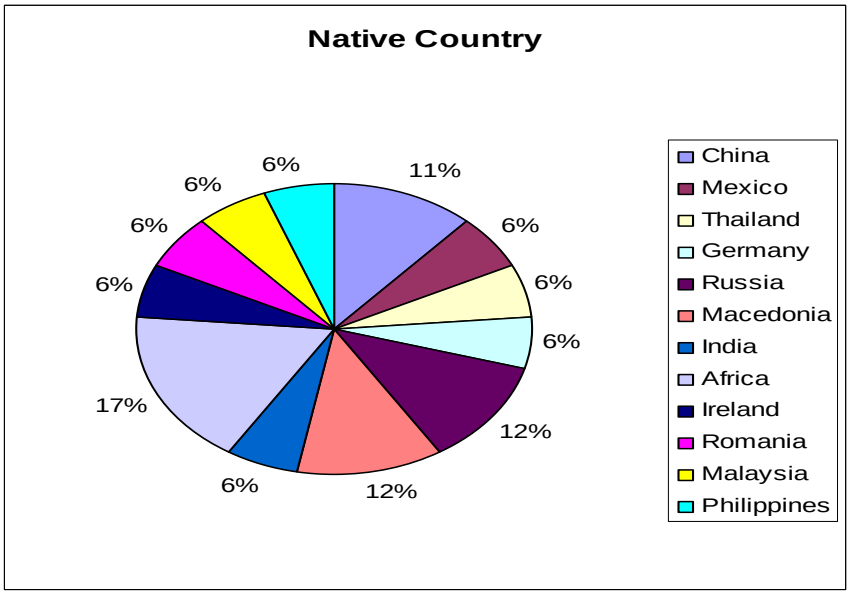
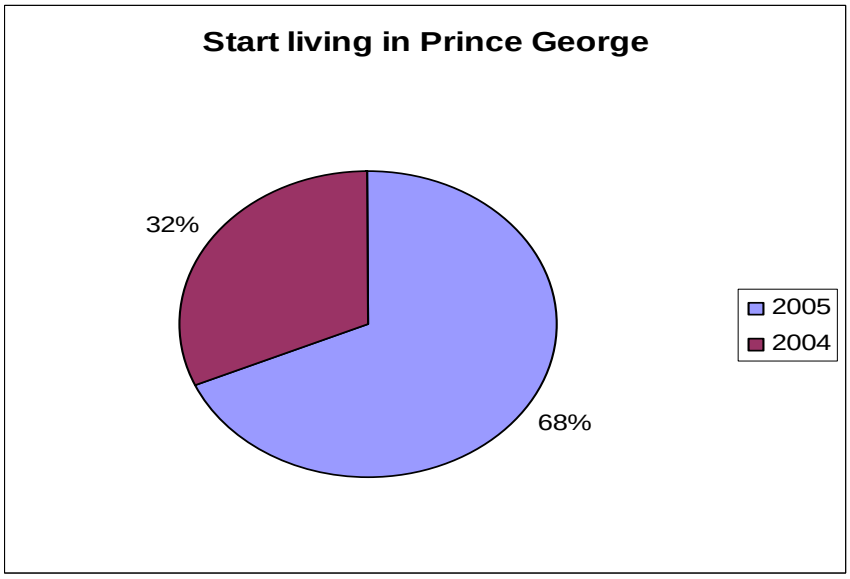
Appendix 6 Prince George Demographics: Respondents





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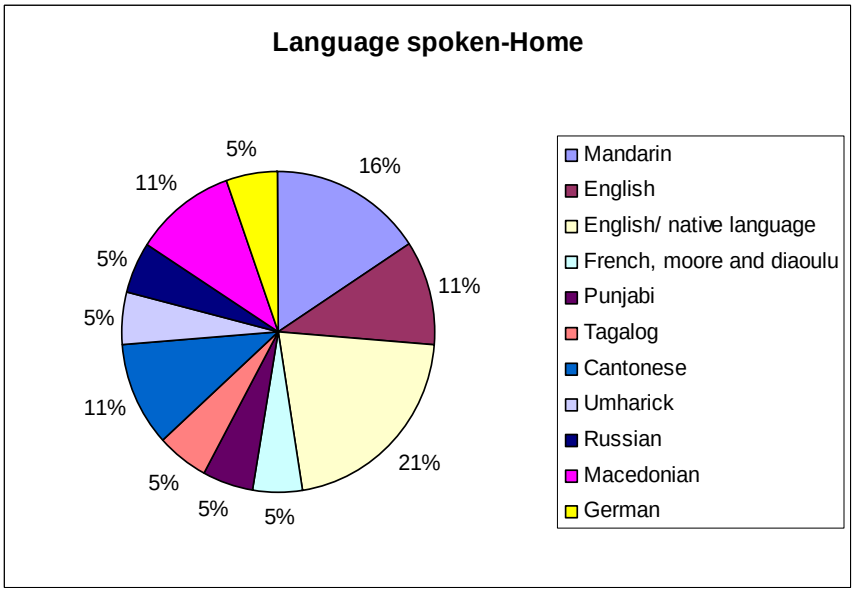
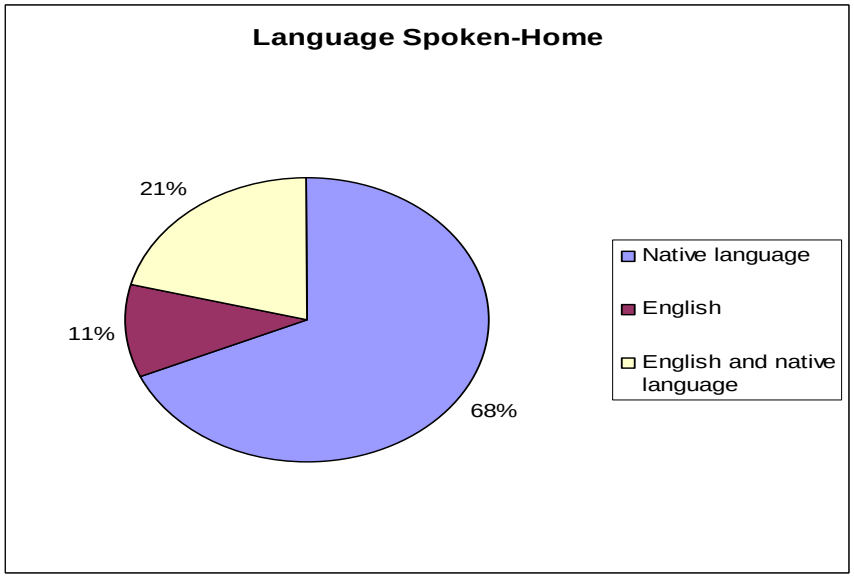
Appendix 6 Prince George Demographics: Respondents





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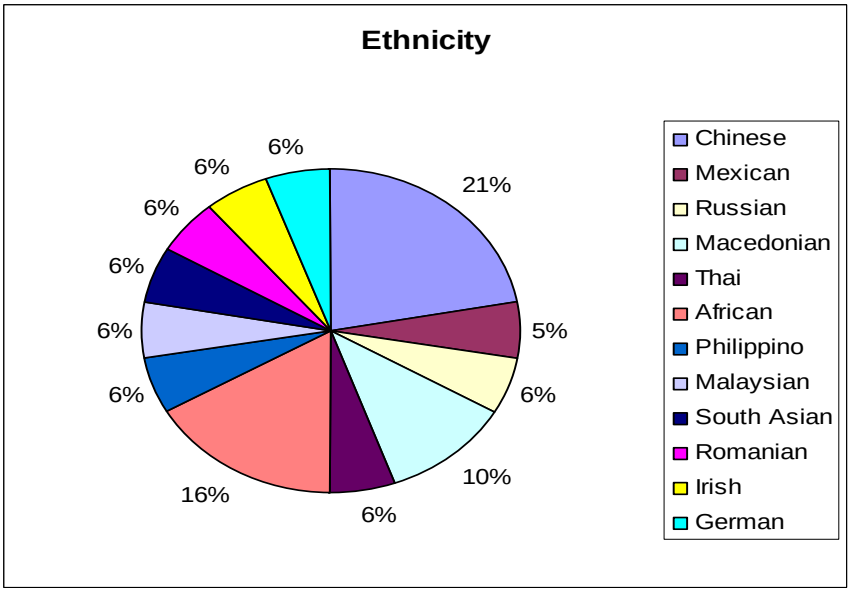

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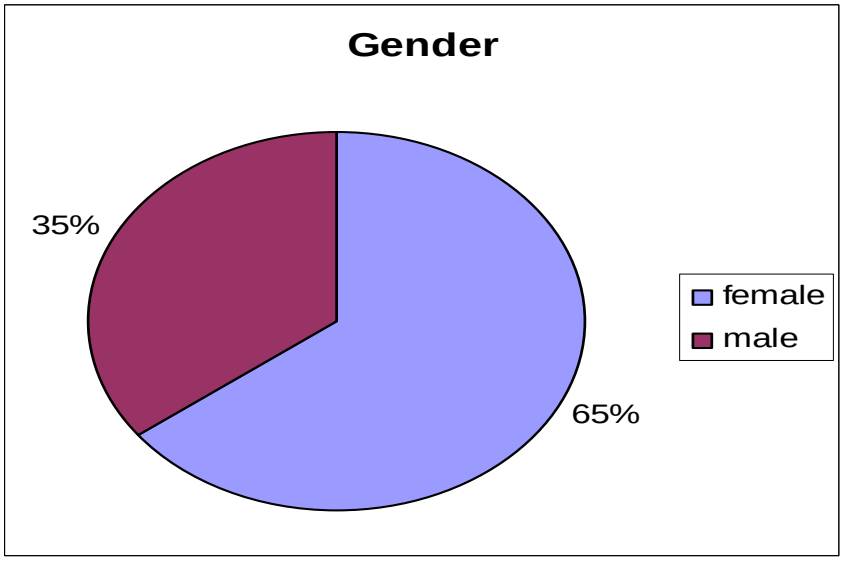
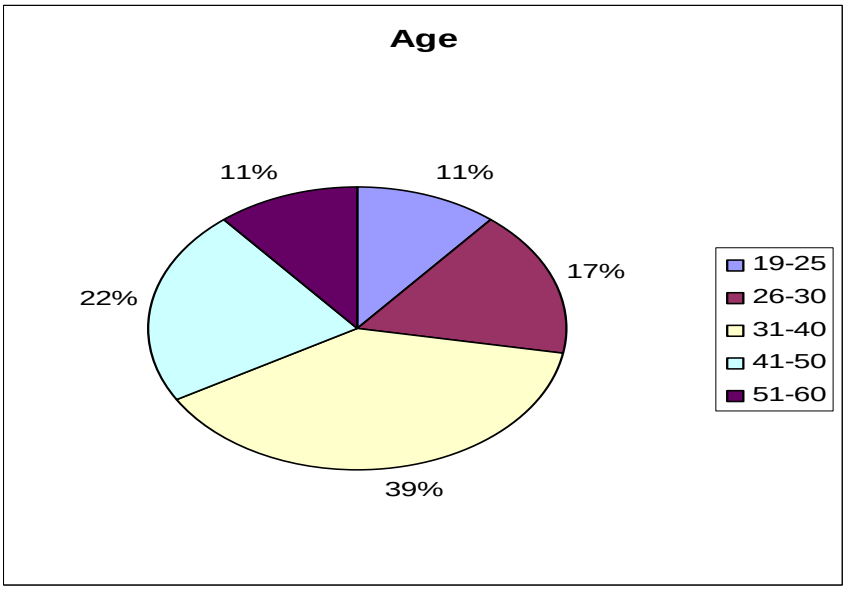
APPENDIX 7 - KAMLOOPS DEMOGRAPHICS: RESPONDENTS





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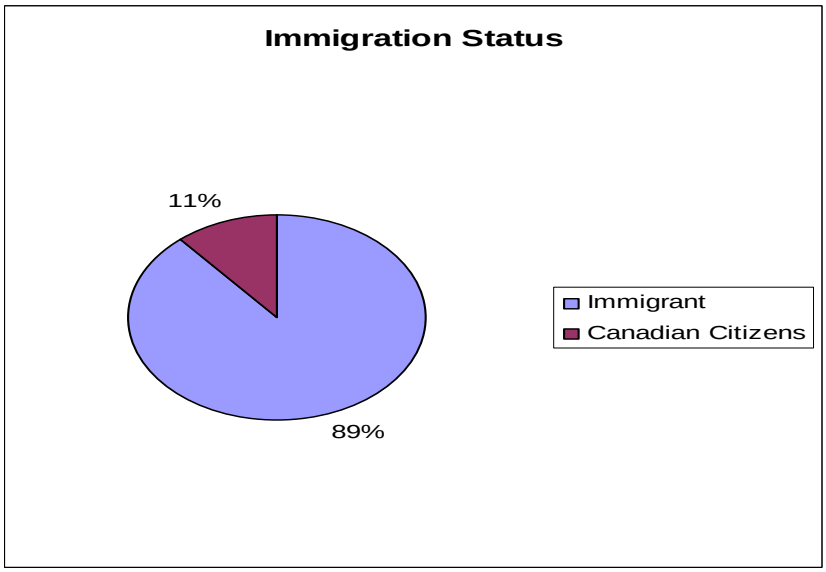
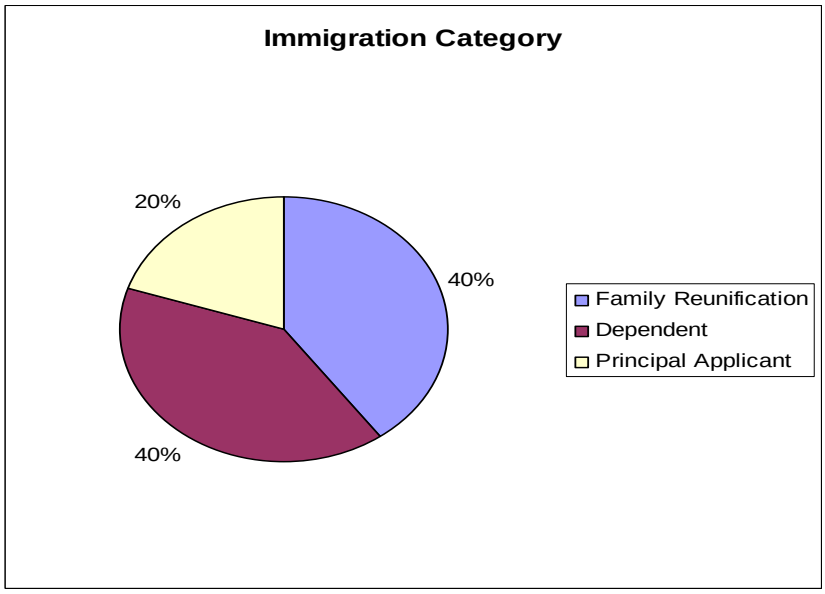
Appendix 7 Kamloops Demographics: Respondents





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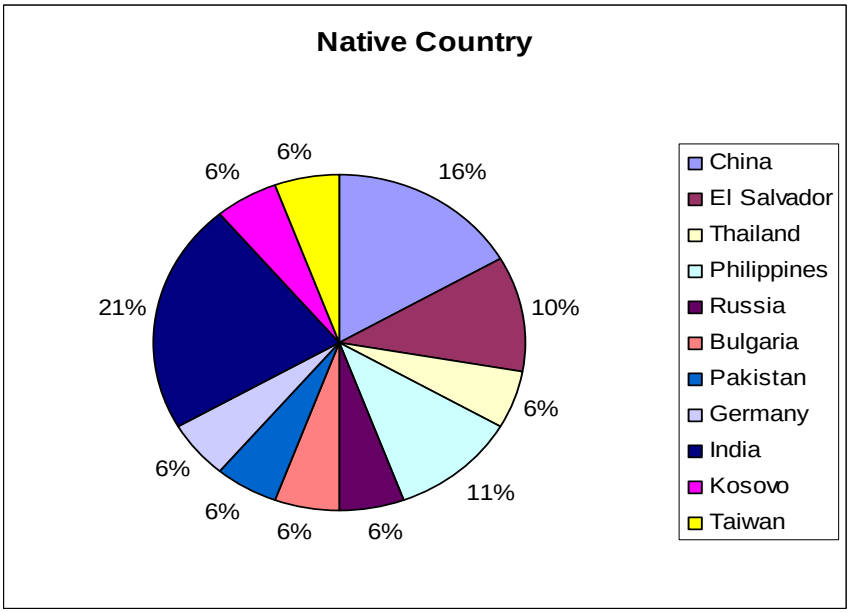

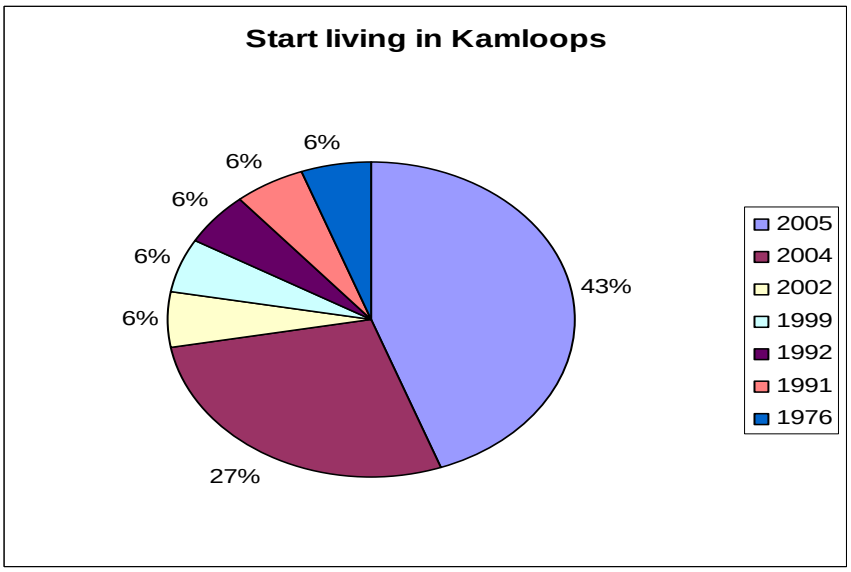

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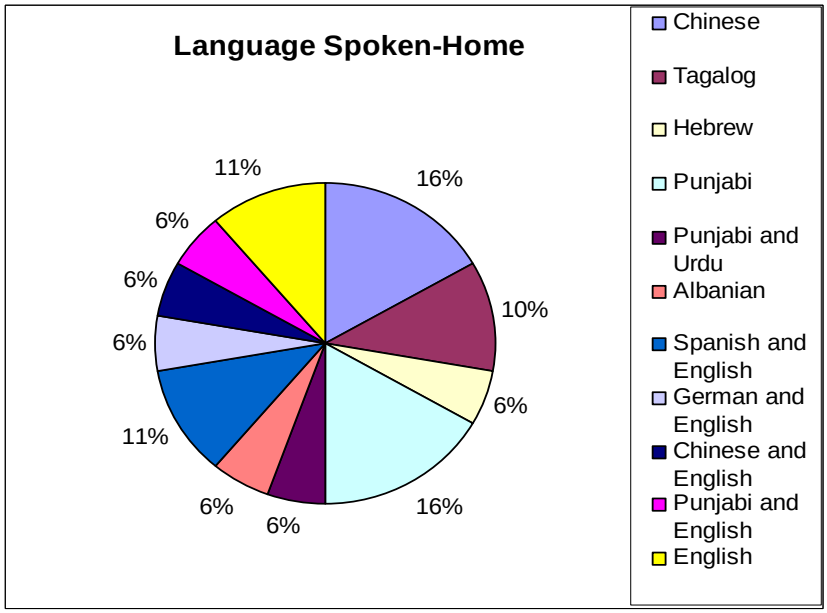

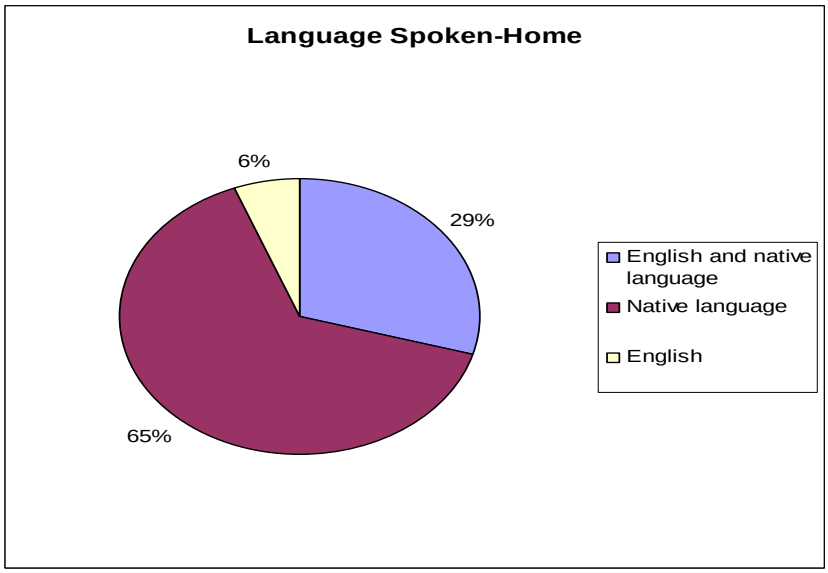

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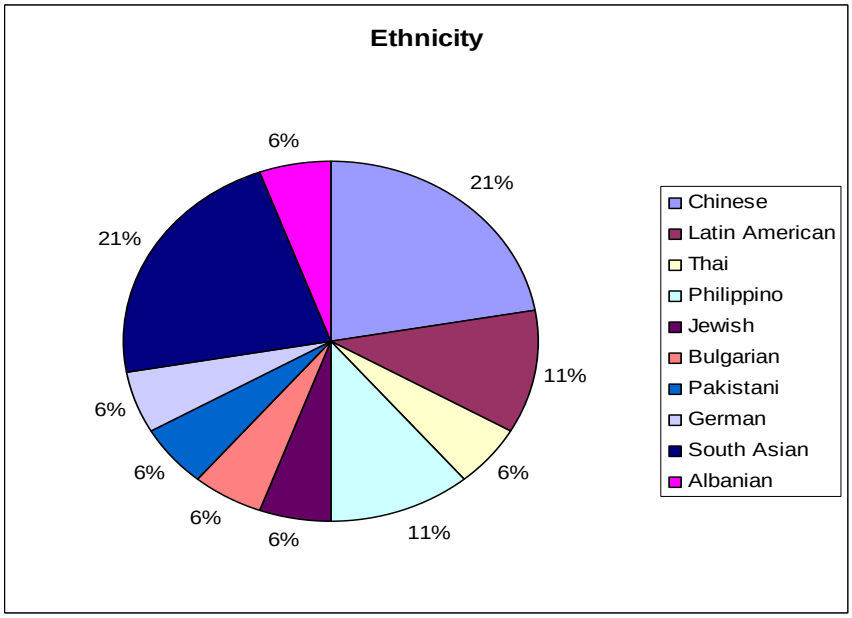

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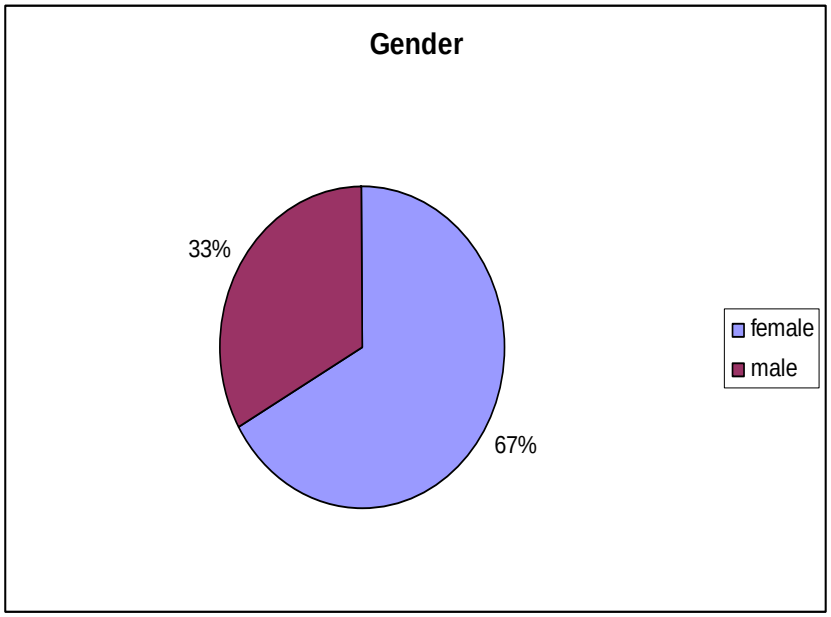
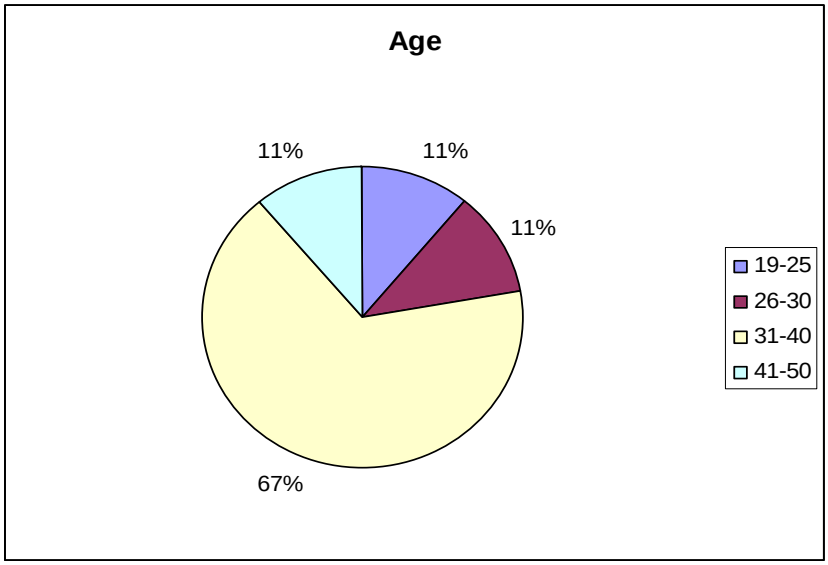
Appendix 8 - VICTORIA DEMOGRAPHICS: RESPONDENTS





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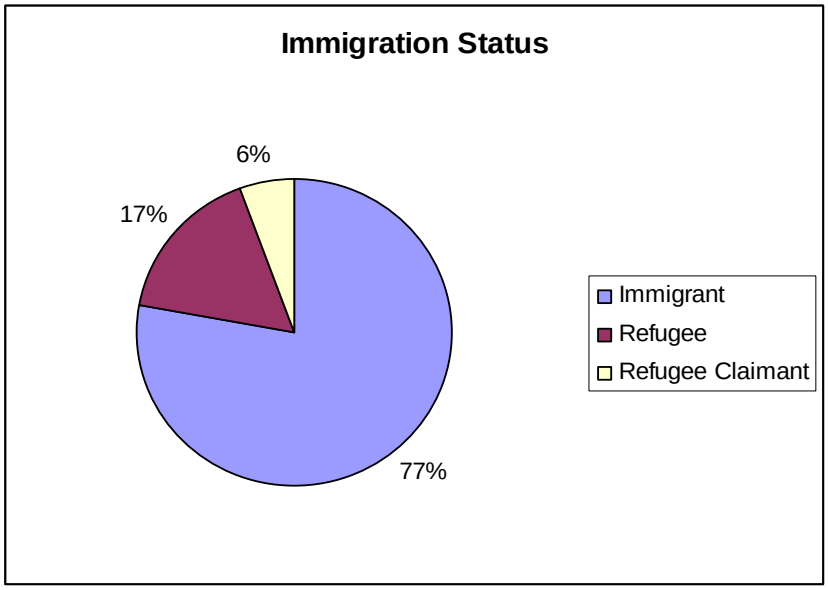
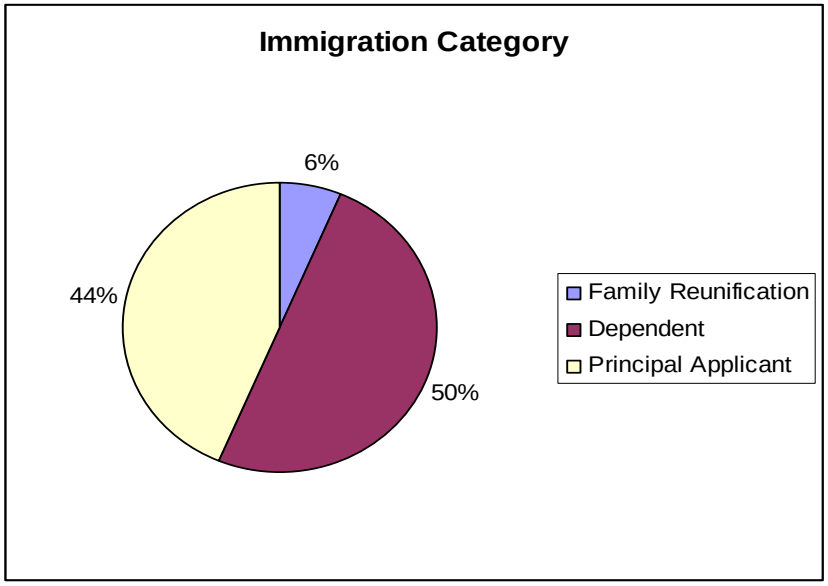
Appendix 8 Victoria Demographics: Respondents





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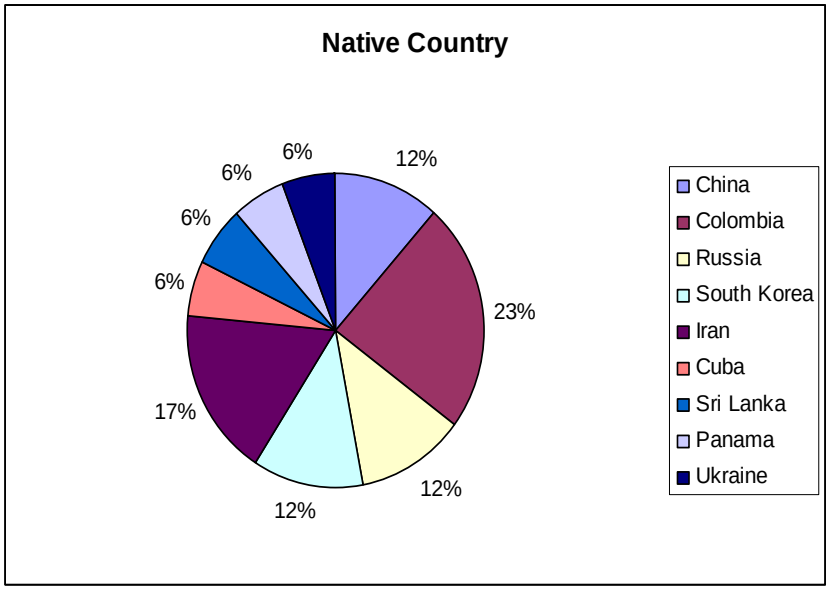

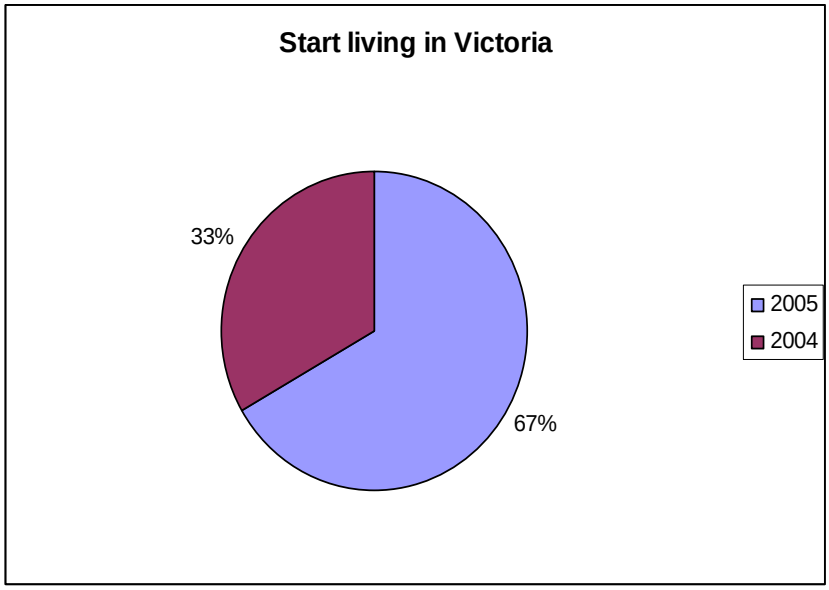

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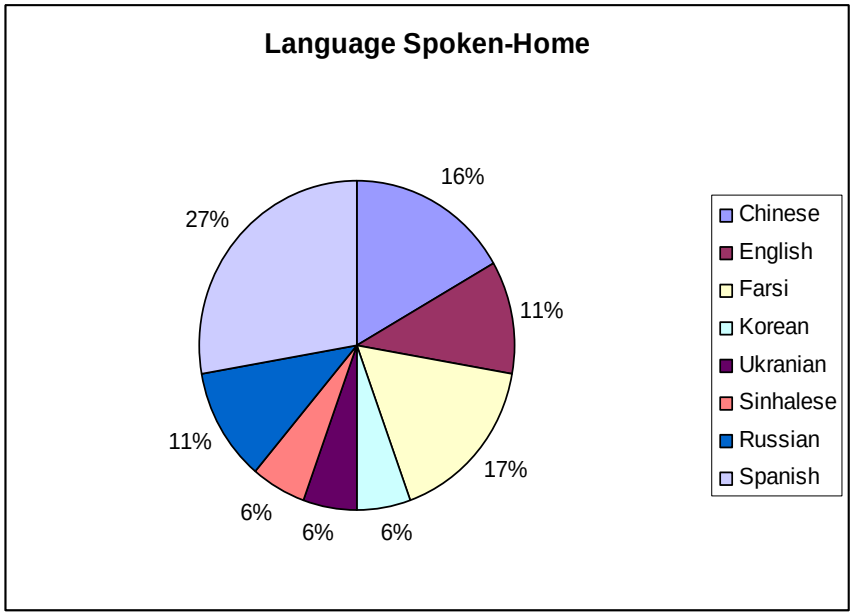

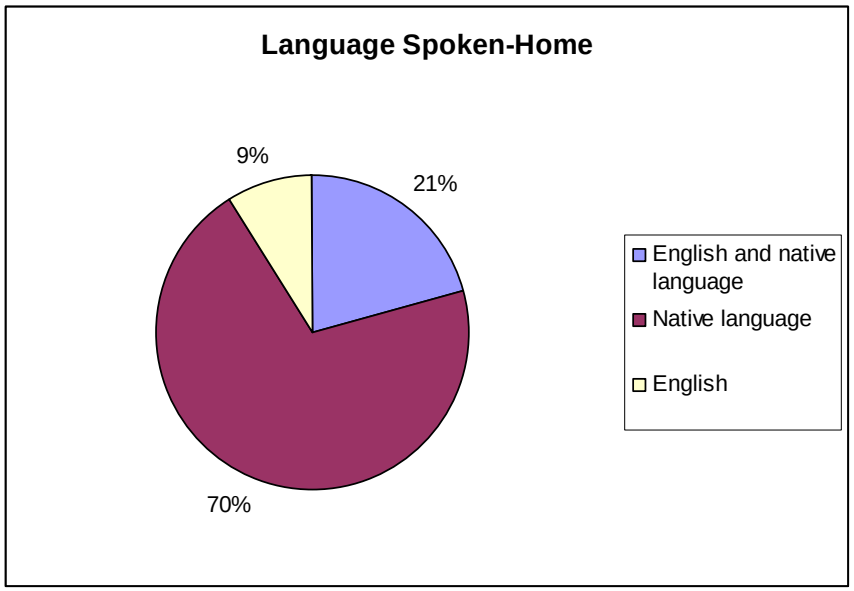

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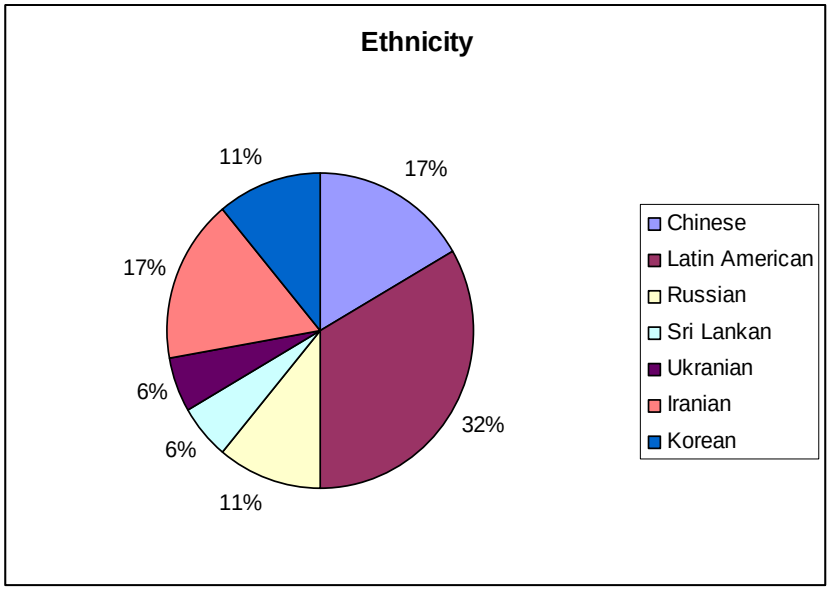

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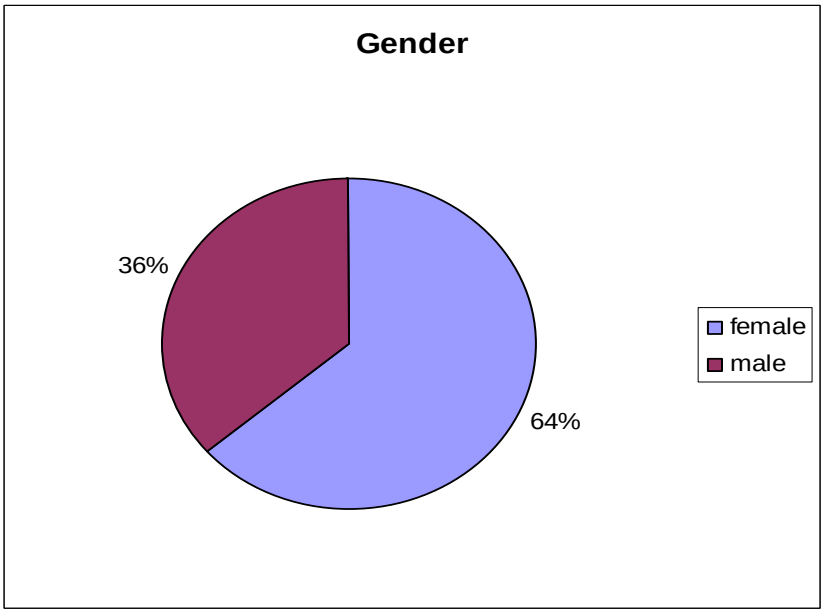
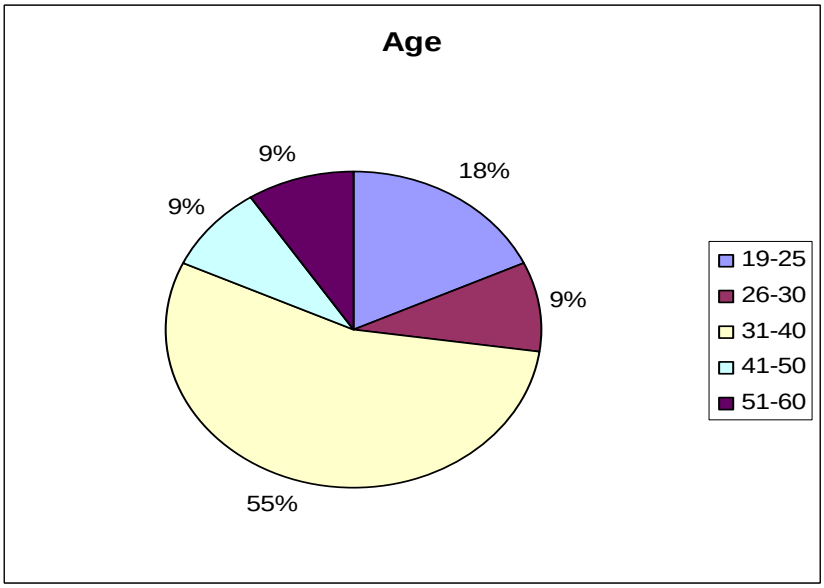
Appendix 9 - VANCOUVER DEMOGRAPHICS: RESPONDENTS





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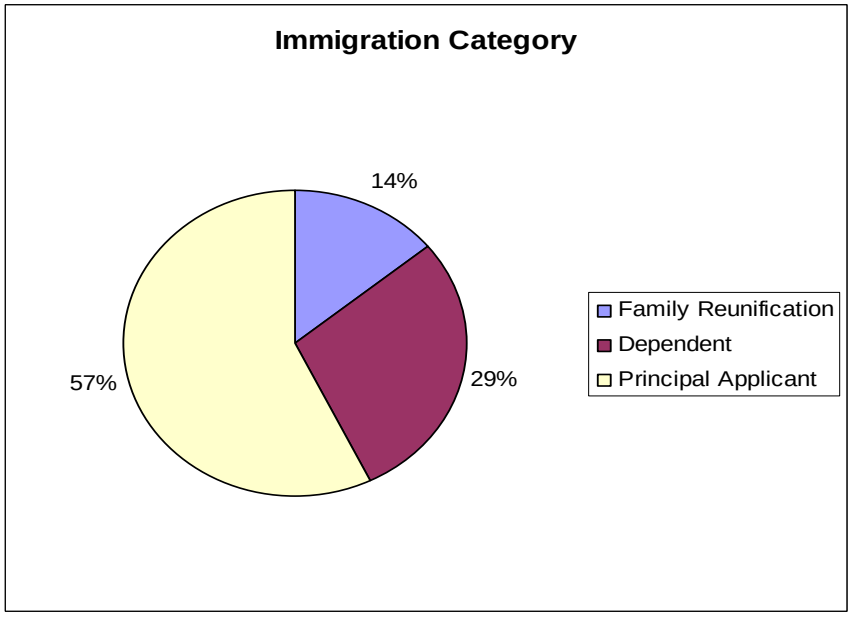
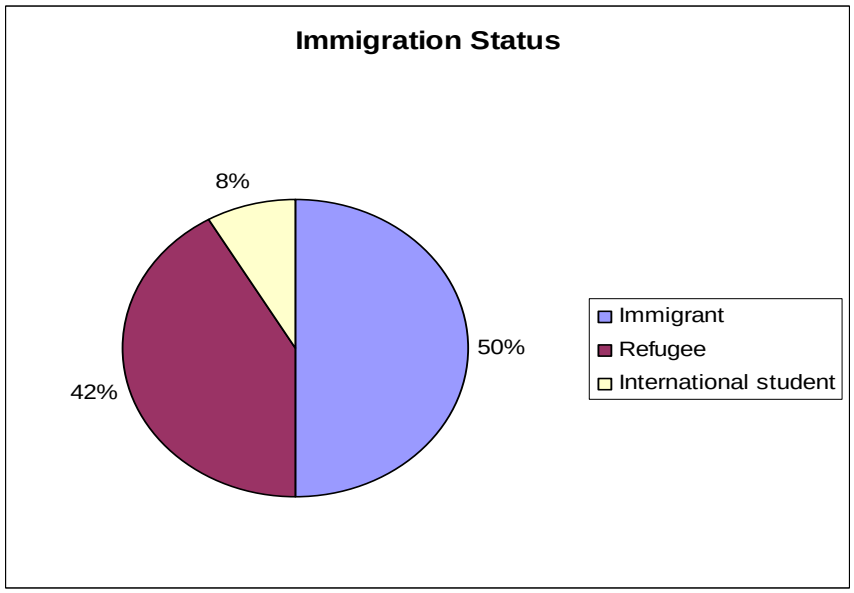
Appendix 9 Vancouver Demographics: Respondents





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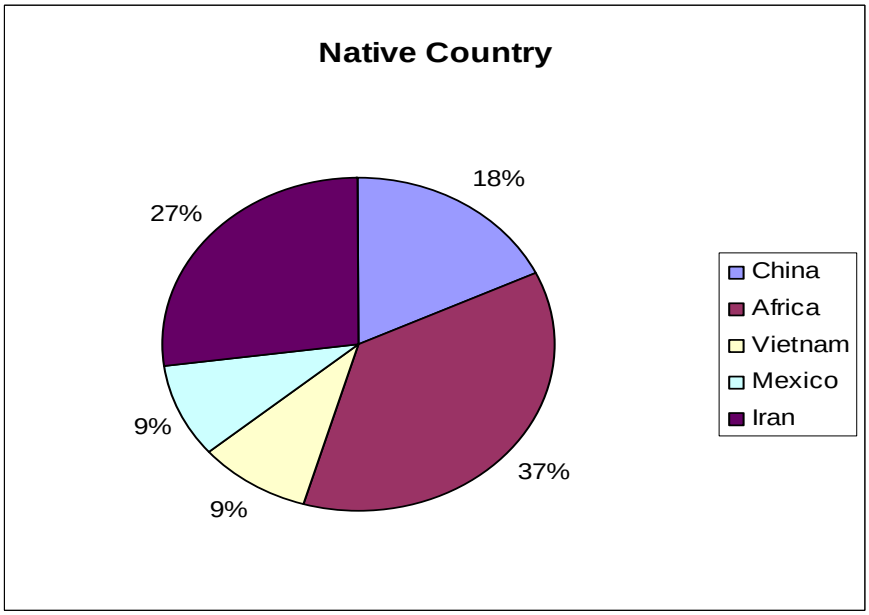
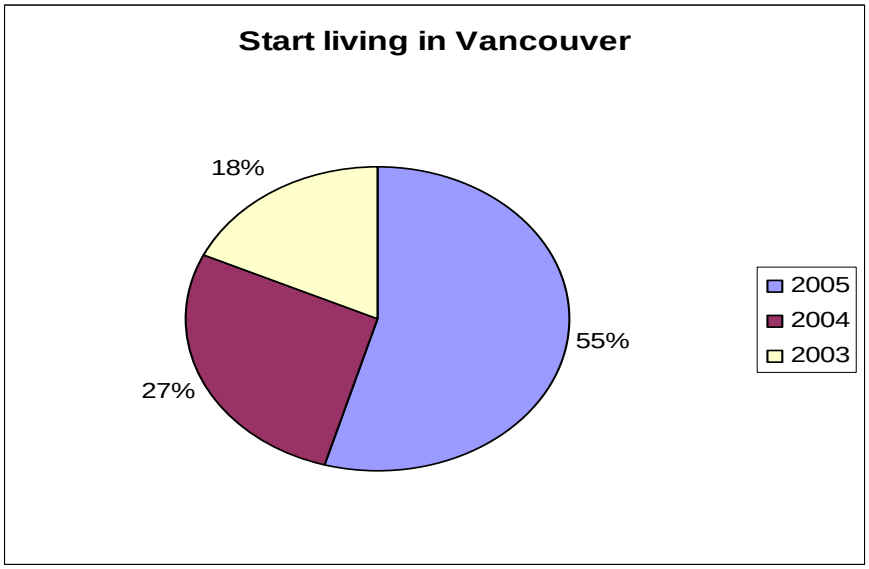
Appendix 9 Vancouver Demographics: Respondents





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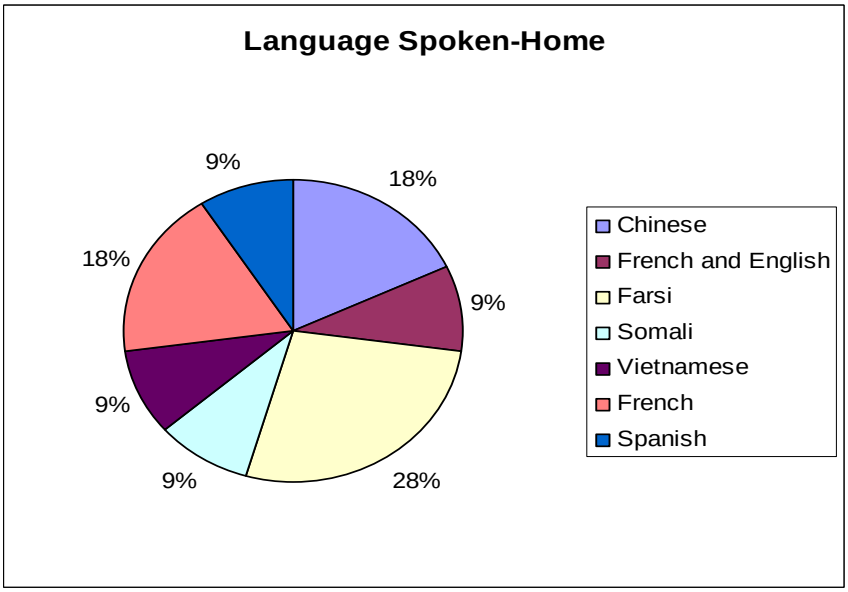
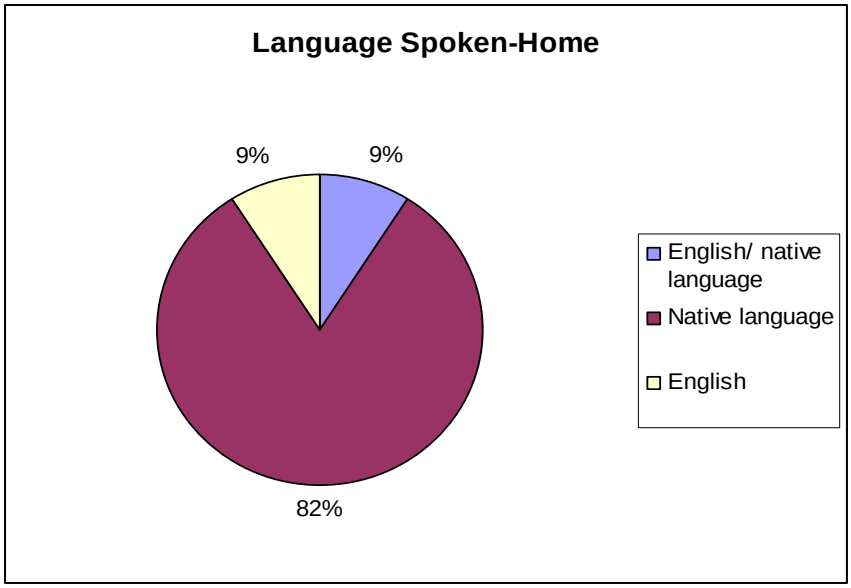
Appendix 9 Vancouver Demographics: Respondents





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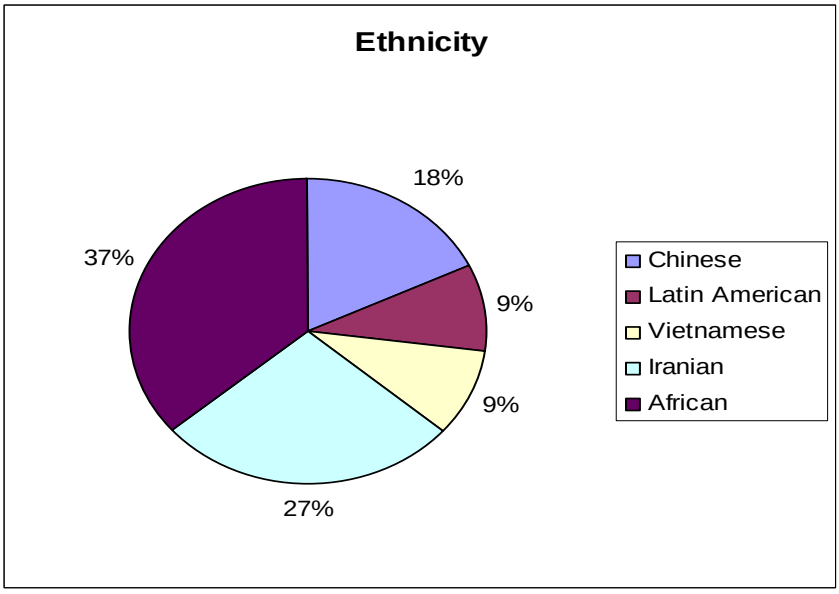

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