

Rainy River District Immigration Study

Final Report

RRFDC

AUGUST 24, 2006

APPROVED BY RRFDC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NOVEMBER 21, 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rainy River District (RRD) is experiencing the problems of economic stagnancy and population loss. Meanwhile, as one of the biggest immigrant recipient countries, Canada is facing the challenge of over concentration of immigrants in limited urban centres. Both the internal and external environments trigger the District's interest in exploring the possibility of introducing immigrants to the community for its sustainability.

A review of federal and provincial governments' recent immigrant dispersal initiatives justifies the policy feasibility for small or remote areas like the District to initiate an immigration campaign. Our surveys and interviews with stakeholders in the District reveal local opinions on recruiting and retaining a larger number of immigrants. While the community support such an initiative in general, several concerns are raised: 1) insufficient job opportunities for a large influx of population will diminish the District's ability to recruit and retain immigrants; 2) lack of government support for encouraging immigrants to move to Northwestern Ontario will further reduce attraction of this area; 3) the District is inexperienced in dealing with complicated immigration issues.

Based on the understanding of local situation, we investigate four types of potential target immigrants for the District. Additionally, we conduct a series of case studies on small or remote areas with successful immigration experience. Finally, recommendations regarding developing an immigration strategy for the RRD are provided. All of them are preliminary and open to discuss. Short term strategies are as follows. 1) Establish a regional immigration committee. 2) Involve the community to brainstorm. 3) Start with a pilot project focusing on self-sustained immigrants. The primary target group is European farmers, especially from Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands. International students are the other target group. 4) Actively participate in related government immigration programs. 5) Ensure the delivery of positive message about the District.

In the long term, the District should: 1) Ally with other Northern Ontario communities; 2) Lobby provincial and federal governments for incentives for immigration to Northwestern Ontario; 3) Collaborate with local employers and business owners to identify specific labor needs and business opportunities; 4) Launch multiple marketing initiatives; 5) Establish a visible and consistent service centre; 6) Educate and involve the public.

Table of Content

1	INTRODUCTION.....	5
2	BACKGROUND.....	6
2.1	Economic and Population Challenges in the Rainy River District.....	6
2.2	Imbalanced Dispersion of Immigration in Canada.....	7
3	CURRENT IMMIGRATION INITIATIVES AFFECTING THE RRD.....	8
3.1	National Initiatives.....	8
3.2	Provincial Initiatives.....	9
3.3	Local Initiatives.....	10
3.4	Other Initiatives.....	11
4	IMMIGRATION IN THE RRD.....	11
4.1	Survey in the RRD.....	12
4.2	Immigration Trends in the RRD.....	12
4.3	Survey Results.....	13
4.4	Survey Analysis.....	17
4.5	Limitations of the Survey.....	19
5	POTENTIAL TYPES OF IMMIGRANTS TO THE RRD.....	20
5.1	Farmers.....	20
5.2	Medical Professionals.....	25
5.3	Skilled Trades and Technology.....	26
5.4	International Students.....	26
6	CASE STUDIES.....	30
6.1	Top Immigrant Recipient Towns in Canada.....	30
6.2	Manitoba.....	32

6.3	Quebec.....	38
6.4	Carleton Region, New Brunswick.....	39
6.5	Schenectady, USA	41
7	RECOMMENDATIONS	41
7.1	Short Term.....	41
7.2	Long Term.....	44
8	CHALLENGES	46
9	CONCLUSION.....	46
	REFERENCES	47
	APPENDIX 1	
	INTERVIEW LIST.....	50
	APPENDIX 2	
	SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....	52

1 Introduction

- **Purpose of the study**

There has been a lot of discussion about starting an immigration campaign in the Rainy River District (RRD). A Community Summit was held in January 2005 in Fort Frances, and immigration was further identified as one of the District's six strategic directions. Accordingly, the Rainy River Future Development Corporation (RRFDC) initiated an immigration study and this report is the outcome of the study.

The report's target readers are stakeholders in the District. It serves as a background report to provide them with an understanding of both general immigration issues and local condition, and proposes related recommendations. For people familiar with the immigration topic, they can skip other sections and go directly to section 2, 4, 5 and 7, which will provide specific information of immigration in the RRD.

- **Study methods**

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect information for the study. First, a range of literatures were reviewed. In addition, we conducted a survey with existing District immigrants. The quantitative results provide an overview of the current immigration situation. Finally, we interviewed key community leaders and target immigrants to obtain more in-depth information.

- **Structure of the report**

The report is structured as follows. The second section points out the factors that trigger the District's interest in immigration by introducing the District's economic and population challenges as well as Canada's imbalanced immigration distribution. The third section reviews immigration policies and initiatives relevant to the District to present the external policy environment. After this, the fourth and fifth sections analyze our survey and interview results which provide a picture of the local immigration status. The sixth section studies a number of notable immigration practices in similar communities, shedding some lights on developing appropriate programs for the RRD. Finally, recommendations towards establishing a regional immigration strategy are provided. Limitation and challenges of the study are also discussed at the end.

2 Background

The idea to launch a District immigration campaign is driven by internal and external forces. Locally, the challenges of economic stagnancy and population loss require robust inward investment and a steady population. Meanwhile, more and more concerns are raised due to the high concentration of immigrants in limited urban centres, which contributes to the necessity and possibility of recruiting immigrants to small or remote communities like the RRD.

2.1 Economic and Population Challenges in the Rainy River District

- **Economic Challenges**

The RRD is facing various economic challenges. As the economic and administrative centre of the District, the Town of Fort Frances continues to lose jobs in its major industries and government services. Its existing property-based municipal tax structure has been declining for the past three years and does not provide an adequate tax base for the community. Recent commercial/industrial re-assessments have further reduced the funds available. While Emo appears to have had a slight boom, the Town of Rainy River continues to decline over the past few years.

The mainstay of the District's economy continues to be the Abitibi Consolidated Inc. pulp and paper mill situated in Fort Frances. The company has experienced some difficult times over the past few years while being affected by such recent trends as the high price of energy, high costs of wood fibre and the increasing value of the Canadian dollar. Some local manufactures continue to grow. However, there is a lack of inward investment helping regenerate the industrial sector in general.

A Wal-Mart and a Canadian Tire have been built in the west end of Fort Frances, which attracts additional retail and service businesses to transform the Town into a regional shopping centre. However, the expansion of the big box retail also jeopardizes the traditional local businesses.

Agriculture is the key industry in the District, but it has been struggling in the last 3 years. The U.S ban on Canadian beef following the mad cow disease has greatly affected the financial viability of local cattle producers. A regional abattoir has been proposed recently, which may be able to help improve the cattle industry by reducing their cost, but more progressive efforts are needed in order to revitalize the agricultural sector and the vast rural communities.

- **Population Loss**

As most other communities in Northern Ontario, the RRD is facing the problem of population loss. According to Statistics Canada, the District population dropped by 4.4% from 1996 to 2001, while Ontario's population increased by 6.1% during the same period (Table 1). Though recent population figures are not available, it is estimated that the trend is still declining.

Table 1 Population Change in the Rainy River District (1996 – 2001)¹

Community	1996	2001	Change (%)
Ft. Frances	8790	8315	- 5.4
Atikokan	4043	3632	- 10.2
Emo	1366	1331	- 2.6
La Vallee	1130	1073	- 5
Rainy River	1008	981	- 2.7
Alberton	1027	956	- 6.9
Chapple	909	910	0.1
Dawson	631	613	- 2.9
Morley	478	447	- 6.5
Lake of the Woods	436	330	- 24.3
Rainy River District	23138	22109	- 4.4
Ontario	10,753,573	11,410,046	6.1

Source: Statistics Canada. 2002. 2001 Community Profiles. Released June 27, 2002. Last modified: 2005-11-30. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 93F0053XIE.

The problem of a declining population can be attributed to the large number of aging population and increasing out-migration of youth in the RRD, and Northern Ontario as a whole. Between 1996 and 2001, out-migration of youth averaged 19% in Northern Ontario, compared to the provincial youth in-migration increase of 4.7%.²

2.2 Imbalanced Dispersion of Immigration in Canada

• Concentration of Immigrants in Urban Centres

Canada is a major immigration recipient country in the world. An annual range for the number of immigrants admitted into the country is established by the federal government, in consultation with the provinces, the territories and key stakeholders. In the past 10 years, Canada has received, on average, 220,778 immigrants and refugees each year.³

However, the geographic distribution of immigrants is skewed. Recent immigrants initially settle in a limited number of locations. Three provinces have attracted most of the immigrants. In 2001, 56% immigrants live in Ontario, 18% in British Columbia, and 13% in Quebec. Additionally, in each of these three provinces, immigrants have concentrated in the largest

¹ Geographically, the RRD consists of 10 regular towns and several first nations reserves. To simplify the discussion, the table only lists population changes in the 10 regular towns. Details about the first nation reserves are available on <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/standard/popdwell/Table-UR-M.cfm?T=1&PR=35&CD=3559>

² Northwest Training and Adjustment Board, 2006.

³ <http://www.how2immigrate.net/canada>

metropolitan areas: Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Overall, 18 percent of Canada's total population in 2001 were immigrants with only 11 percent of them living in non-urban regions.⁴

- **Need for Immigration Dispersion**

Immigrants are of great value to Canada, but the congregation of immigrants in larger centres has been a significant concern to policy-makers. There is a strong call for dispersal actions for the following reasons.

First, there is an equity issue which pits the gains from immigration in major urban centres against the costs of supporting this program on the rest of Canada.

Second, the congestion situation in immigration centres has to some degree negatively affected local employment, housing, education, health care and other fields. This argues for government interference to reallocate immigrants to non-traditional immigration areas such as second tier cities or smaller and rural areas.

Last but not least, most of the smaller regions and rural communities are facing severe challenges of out-migration. It is possible that appropriate types of immigrants can help reverse the population trend in these areas while release the burdens in crowded urban areas.

3 Current Immigration Initiatives Affecting the RRD

While the external environment justifies the possibility of promoting immigration in the RRD, no immigration policies are currently in place in the District, and there is no real coordination between governments on immigrant settlement in Northwestern Ontario. In this section, we briefly review different levels of policies or actions that have a focus on immigration in small or rural communities. The purpose is to reveal the policy context within which the District will be operating, thus facilitating the development of a strategy compatible with other initiatives.

3.1 National Initiatives

Canada has had a growing interest in a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants throughout the country over the last few years. Some immigration policies have attempted to encourage immigrants to settle in smaller communities in the less-populated provinces. For example, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), the primary organization shapes the face of the population of Canada, has adopted regionalization as an integral part of its Sustainable

⁴ Beshiri, Roland, 2004.

Development Strategy and launched several initiatives to encourage immigrant dispersal.⁵ The regionalization strategies are aimed at sharing the social and economic benefits of immigration more evenly across the country, while at the same time reducing the environmental strain on the largest cities whose infrastructure and carrying capacity are already overused.

As part of their efforts in promoting dispersion, CIC conducted or supported various studies on this topic. A recent one is the study “Immigration in Rural Canada: Research and Practice” conducted by the Rural Development Institute in Brandon University. The program analyzes the opportunities and challenges facing rural immigration recipient areas; provides practical lessons for small communities wishing to develop strategies for immigrant attraction, settlement and retention. In addition to this, some notable federal government initiatives include Provincial Nominee Programs, incentives for international students to study and stay in non-traditional areas, introduction of doctors to small or remote areas, and so on.

3.2 Provincial Initiatives

As the largest immigration recipient province in Canada, Ontario government pays more and more attention to diverting immigrants to non-traditional immigration areas. The most recent and prominent initiative is the Canada – Ontario Immigration Agreement signed between the Province and the federal government in November, 2005. The Agreement explicitly recognizes that attraction and retention of immigrants in smaller and northern communities is one of the key immigration issues for Ontario. Some identified problems in smaller and northern communities include:

- A **shortage of entrepreneurial skills, medical professionals and skilled labour** in the industrial and mining fields is a main barrier reducing productivity and limiting commercial investment in these areas;
- **National immigration policy biases** reduce the ability of smaller and northern communities to compete for immigrants;
- Rural and northern communities have **limited awareness** of the social, economic, and cultural benefits of Canada’s immigration policies.

The Agreement proposes several strategies addressing the above issues. One important component is the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) which will allow Ontario to select immigrants to settle in targeted areas in the Province. Other strategies include,

⁵ One of the studies called “Towards a more balanced geographic distribution of immigrants” clearly indicated their direction to attract and retain newcomers to non-traditional destinations. The report studied the settlement and mobility behavior of immigrants and past efforts to direct immigrants to particular destinations. Its review of immigration practices in Canadian small towns (esp. one industry towns) and the north region provide useful references for the RRD.

1. Better **promotion of the benefits of immigration** by senior levels of government (because most smaller communities lack resources to invest in this type of public awareness activity)
2. Support for **marketing immigration opportunities** in their communities and **information sharing** to support targeted outreach to skilled immigrants (because small communities need to work together to improve local economic development)
3. A clearinghouse for **best practices** to support smaller municipalities
4. **Corporate income tax incentives** for rural and northern employers to promote the hiring of immigrants and to assist employers with additional training costs
5. **Support for settlement and integration** activities for immigrants in every part of Ontario
6. **Flexibility for visa students to work off campus**, improving ties to the local community. CIC is currently piloting increased flexibility for students in some locations to work off campus. The Agreement suggested this pilot project should be assessed with a view to creating a suitable framework that allows visa students in all rural and northern communities to work off campus.
7. Better **recognition of qualifications of skilled trades persons**

The Agreement was signed between the Province and the previous federal government, so it is not sure if the actions will be fully recognized by the current federal government. Currently, the government is conducting a series of public consultation for the Agreement, so the RRD should involve in the related activities to have its voice heard. Particularly, the District should look into the possibility of using the PNP to recruit immigrants with desired resources and skills.

3.3 Local Initiatives

In general, various groups in the District have approached immigration in a fragmented manner. While there is no official initiative, non-governmental bodies have been recruiting immigrants to the District and providing related services for a long time. For example, religious groups in Fort Frances and Emo have sponsored a number of refugee families and provided substantial support to help them settle in the District. Some local businesses, especially restaurants, have also recruited foreign workers and helped them apply for immigration. Such unorganized grass-root efforts have contributed to the District's existing immigration status.

Recently, the RRD held a district wide summit with the purpose of identifying common concerns and opportunities to improve the economy of the community. Immigration is one of the six key directions identified in the summit.⁶ Related action strategies include: create database of business and relocation opportunities; encourage value-added agriculture production. The discussion also confirmed that the District's target should be economic class of

⁶ The six directions include tourism, agriculture, import substitution, value-added wood products, immigration and retail.

immigrants, such as entrepreneurs, investors, and self-employed. This report can be deemed as an extension of the summit's discussion.

3.4 Other Initiatives

In addition to government policies, there are different non-government efforts targeting immigrant dispersal. For instance, the Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professional and Trades (PROMPT) is a non – government coalition of immigrant professional and trade associations with a mandate to improve economic and social integration of these types of immigrants to Canada and they are actively promoting sustainable immigrant dispersal in various communities.

Their recent research argues that dispersion strategies focusing on incentives to channel immigrants to live in specific places do not produce long-term sustainable regional development outcomes in Canada. Most immigrants move from the original place of settlement as soon as they have served the required immigration term because these policies look at immigrants primarily as a source of labor and fail to integrate them into the community.

Based on this, the PROMPT developed a community – driven engagement model called “smart settlement” and the key components are three building blocks, including proactive local leadership, multiple local institution support, and collaborative local or regional infrastructure for learning and advancement of human capital. The idea is to help immigrants integrate into the community instead of only treating them as labor supply. The RRD can take the model into consideration when developing its own strategy.

4 Immigration in the RRD

As mentioned before, immigration is not a new concept to the RRD, but no formal research on this topic has been done. Therefore, we conducted a survey with immigrants living in the District in order to obtain a better understanding of the local immigration situation.

In brief, the survey shows that the District is merely affected by the large amount of immigrant influx to the country in the recent 10-15 years. The majority of the existing immigrants came to the District 15 years ago from a variety of countries and family connection is the main reason for them to stay here. While most of the respondents support recruiting more immigrants to the District, lack of suitable employment opportunities is a main concern. More details about the survey will be shown in this section.

4.1 Survey in the RRD

The survey was conducted between December 2005 and March 2006. The target is existing immigrants in the District, preferably those coming within the last 15 years. The questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1. Four topics are covered in the survey:

- basic information about the District's existing immigrants;
- reasons why people move into and stay in the District to settle;
- the potential to attract new immigrants to the RRD; and
- support and services needed for new comers.

Due to the limited information, we relied on personal knowledge and connection to establish an initial survey list, and more contacts were added by the respondents during the survey process. Therefore, this is not a random selection process, which may affect the accuracy of the results.

However, the snowball sampling method is acceptable at this stage because it is low cost and time efficient, as well as easier to monitor and control. In addition, the current survey does not attempt to develop a comprehensive profile of local immigrants, but only to set up the background for discussion on a possible immigration strategy.

60 immigrant families have been approached, and only one person in each family was allowed to answer the questions. 26 have completed the survey by July 2006. Depending on the availability of the respondents, the survey was carried out in 3 ways:

- filled out by the respondents and mailed back to the RRFDC;
- answered by the respondents on the phone; and
- completed by the respondents in a face-to-face interview.

4.2 Immigration Trends in the RRD

Our informal conversations with these immigrants show that various immigrant groups have arrived at the District over the last few decades. An important stream is the European-origin farmers immigrated to the District, and the most recent one came in 2001. About 20 to 25 years ago, dozens of refugees from South Asia, mainly Vietnam and Lao, were directed to the District by humanitarian groups. While only a few remain in the District, most of these refugees have left for larger cities. More recently, there are a number of Philippine women working in the District as caregivers (non-immigrant status). Some of them have changed to other jobs or established their own families after they settled down, and obtained their immigrant status gradually.

In addition to these visible immigration trends, there have been a number of individual immigrants moving to the District because of family connection or employment opportunities. However, no formal immigrant recruitment campaign has ever been launched, and the retention rate seems to drop in the recent 5-10 years.

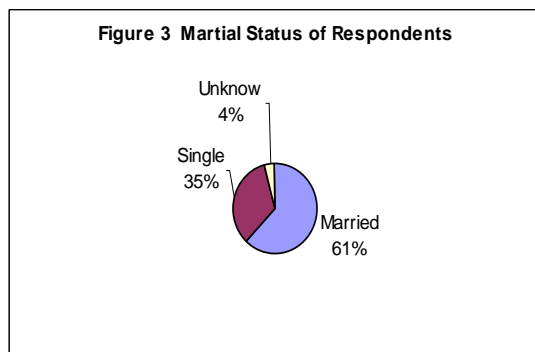
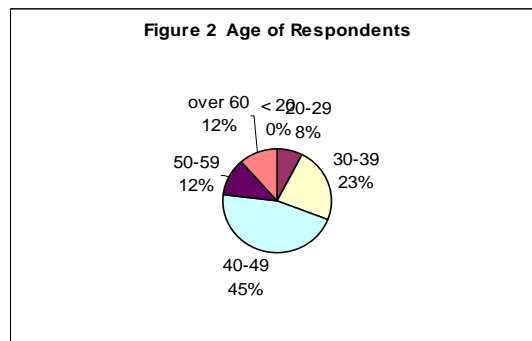
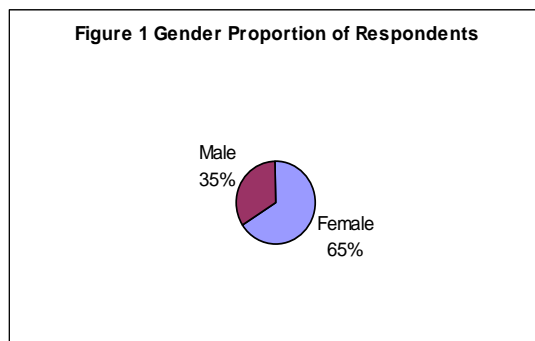
4.3 Survey Results

Two type of information will be presented in this part:

- Respondents' own immigration experience and current situation;
- Respondents' comments and suggestions regarding a District immigration campaign.

• Basic Information

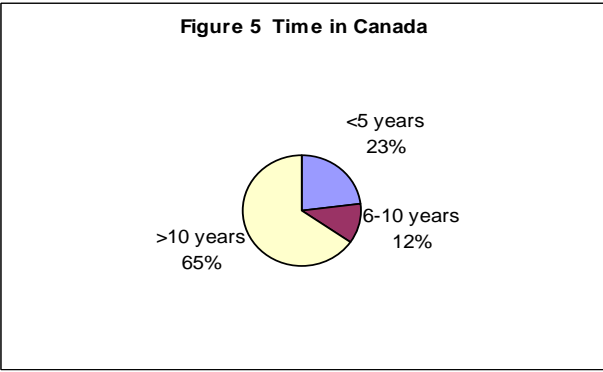
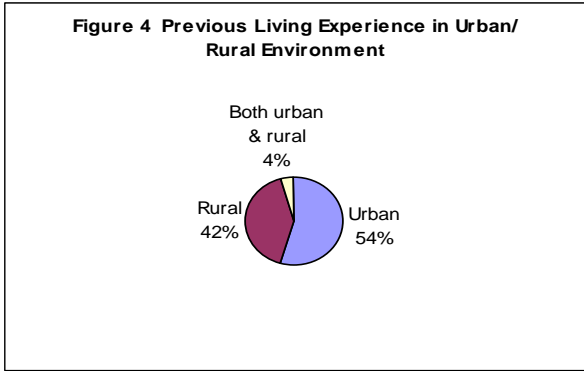
65% of the respondents are female and 35% are male (Figure 1). The majority are in the age group of 40 – 49, followed by the groups of 30-39, 50-59 and over 60 (Figure 2). 61% are married (Figure 3).



• Origin and Staying Time

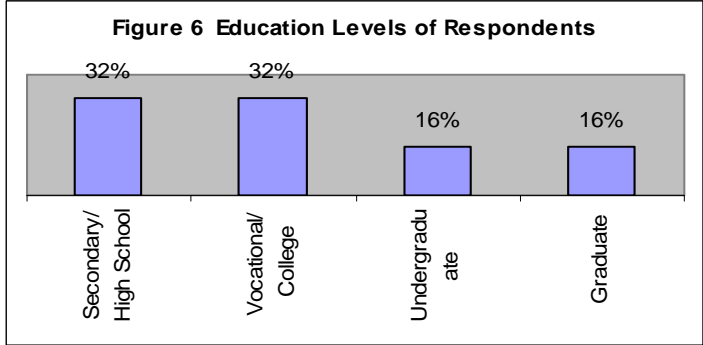
The respondents originally come from a broad range of countries, including Philippine, Vietnam, China, Japan, India, USA, England, Germany, Switzerland, France, Portugal, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Sudan. 96% can speak English, and 12% among them speak both English and French. In addition to one or both of Canada's official languages, 88% knows a third language (i.e. their first language).

These immigrants predominantly lived in urban areas before they moved to the RRD (Figure 4). 65% have lived in Canada for over 10 years. Only 23% came here in the last 5 years (Figure 5). The average time they have stayed in Canada and RRD is 15.8 years and 14.6 years respectively.



• Education

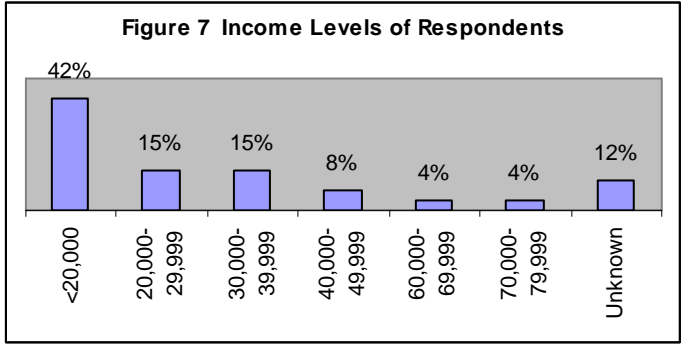
All of the respondents have at least secondary education background and 64% have received post-secondary education (Figure 6). Besides formal schooling, 54% have additional training or skills, such as cooking, teaching, mechanics, and so on.



• Work and Income Level

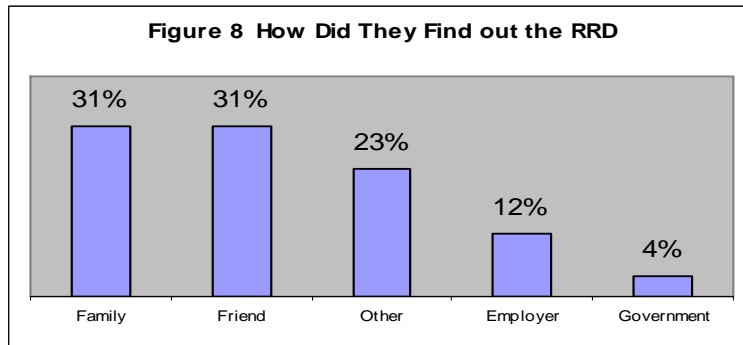
Most of the respondents' current occupations are different from those before they came to the RRD. Government related services and self-employed account for a good proportion of their current occupations.

42% of the respondents said that their individual annual income is below \$20,000, and the highest income is reported in the 70,000 - 79,999 bracket (Figure 7).

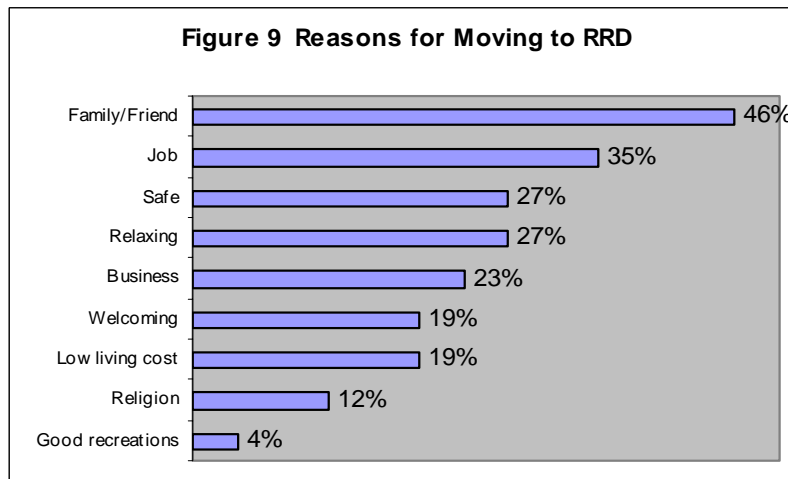


- **Recruitment**

Most respondents were exposed to the District by family members or friends. Only 1 person heard of the District through government channels (Figure 8).



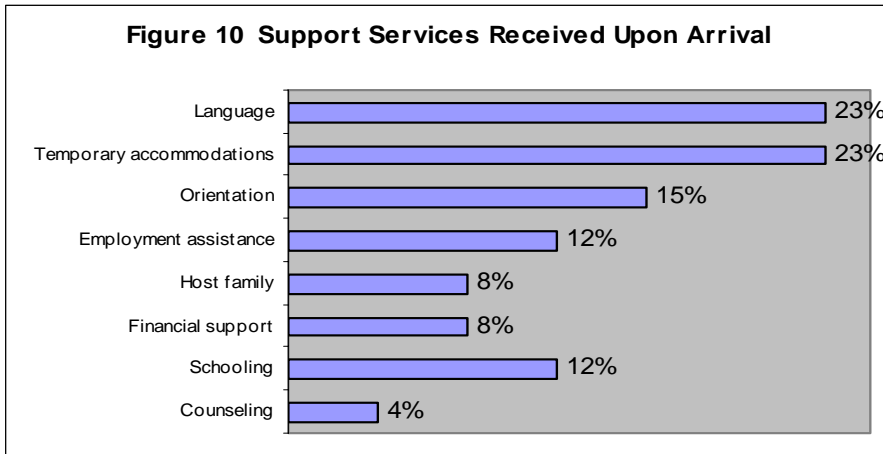
81% of the respondents chose to move to the District themselves, while the rest planned to locate in other destinations when they first immigrated to Canada. The reasons why the respondents decided to locate in the District vary, but family/friend connections and job opportunities are most highly rated (Figure 9).



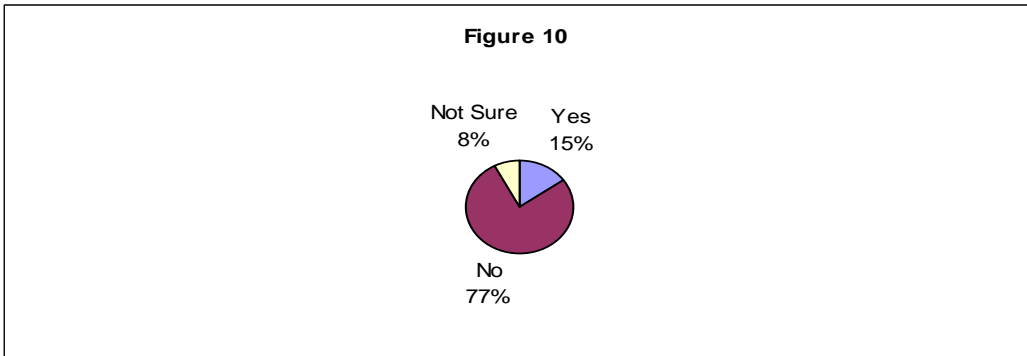
- **Settlement**

77% of the respondents move to the District with accompanies (mainly family members). After they arrived, 62% of the respondents said there were acquaintances coming to the RRD following them.

Most of the respondents reflected that there were not enough support services upon their arrival. The services they received are show in Figure 10. Such services were mainly provided by informal channels, including families, friends or churches, so they are not guaranteed for each new comer.



77% of the respondents have no intention to leave the District, and the main reason is long-term family and community connection established here.

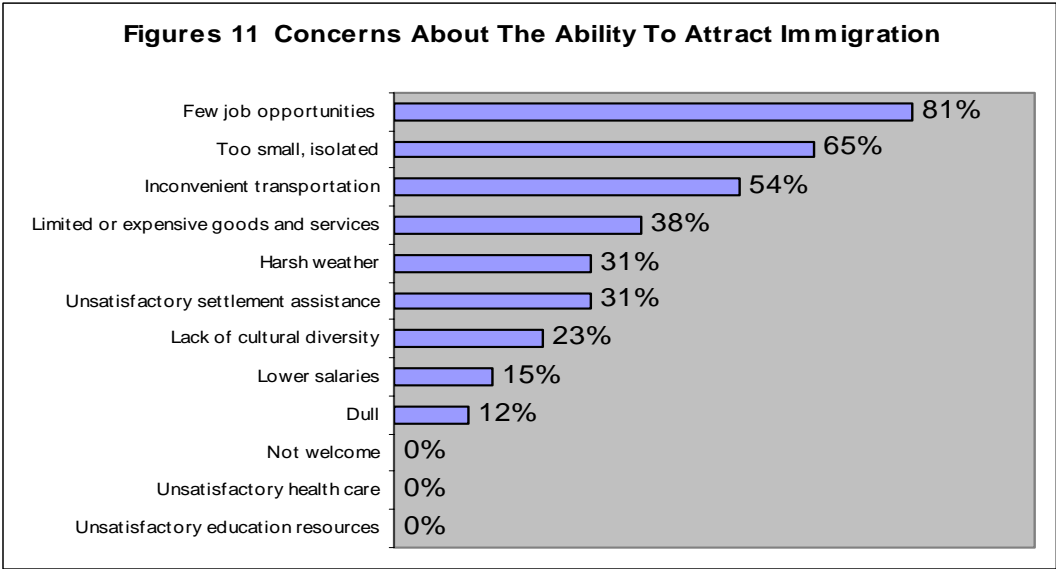


• **Attitudes towards an immigration campaign**

The respondents listed the District’s advantages of attracting new immigrants.

- Safety. The District is a great place to raise kids in this regard.
- Quiet community and nice natural environment. The Lakes is an important asset.
- Lots of space and land.
- Affordable housing.
- Friendly and helpful community.
- Convenient transportation (lots of parking).
- Easy access to U.S.
- Good and fairly inexpensive recreational resources, such as fishing, hunting, camping. Some respondents mentioned that the District provides a variety of recreational activities for the retired.
- Opportunities for tourism businesses.
- Farming opportunities. One respondent wrote that “excellent place to start organic farming for livestock or bee/honey production”.
- Logging, carpenter

While 84% of the respondents agree with the idea of attracting more immigrants for the District’s social and economic sustainability, a few common concerns are raised. The respondents think that lack of job opportunities is a major barrier affecting the RRD’s ability to attract immigrants. Small and isolated environment is also a big concern. However, they are all satisfied with the education and health care resources and agree that RRD is a welcome community to new comers (Figure 11).



4.4 Survey Analysis

- **Existing situation**

According to the survey, the existing District immigrants share some common characteristics:

- There are not many recent immigrants and most of them have settled down in the District for a long time.
- Europeans account for a large proportion of the District’s immigrant populations.
- The majority of immigrants stay here with their family members, which is an important reason for them to remain in the District.
- Education level is relatively high.
- English as second language (ESL) training is rated the most desired support service. Language is not a problem for most of the immigrants now, but it was a serious problem for non-English speakers when they first landed in Canada.
- The reported income level seems low, but these numbers may not point to a low-income problem, as the respondents seem to be cautious about revealing their income levels.

- **Attitude towards immigration**

In general, the respondents agree with the benefits of attracting new comers to the District. However, it is widely regarded that given the RRD’s current social and economic situation, especially the limited job opportunities, it is not feasible to recruit a large amount of immigrants

in the short-term. The attitude is that the District should not proceed with an immigration campaign until it can assure that the new comers will be self-sustained.

The survey shows that people with capital or trade skills are the most desired types of immigrants. In addition, farming, forestry and tourism are considered as possible investment fields for business immigrants. Some people suggested recruiting international students, especially high school students, who may be able to contribute to the economy and have the potential to evolve into immigrants to this area.

• **Recruitment/Attraction**

Job opportunities, as expected, are regarded as a powerful “pull” to attract these immigrants. However, family and friend connection is the highest rated reason why these immigrants chose to remain in the District. This might not mean that personal connection is more important than employment opportunities. Instead, considering the local job market situation, it may imply the lack of appropriate career opportunities to retain immigrants. Some cases also show that a few new immigrants, mainly females, came to the District through international marriages.

While the environment (nice and quiet neighborhood, abundant recreational resources, lots of space to expand, and affordable housing) is widely regarded as an asset of the District, only a few respondents moved to the District for this reason. The environment element seems to be a bonus rather than a critical factor in immigrants’ location decisions.

Since the RRD has no immigration marketing initiative, many respondents provided suggestions regarding proactive marketing actions. Promotion websites, brochures, and other advertising tools are widely suggested, but the most effective recruitment method is thought to be sending local representatives abroad to promote the area. In addition, providing incentives for target types of immigrants are often mentioned. Some respondents reflected that it takes 5 – 7 years for a skilled worker to immigrate to Canada from some countries. If the District can help facilitate the process, it will be more attractive to such types of immigrants.

• **Settlement**

Due to the small number of immigrants and insufficient demand, settlement services are currently not well established in the District. Various types of community services exist, but there are no specific programs for immigrants.

For the existing immigrants, when they first came to the District, they did have difficulties finding out available services due to the unfamiliarity with a new place, language barriers, and other reasons. For example, a few respondents mentioned that they were not familiar with the health care system and had difficulties with the OHIP application process or reserving a family doctor. A recent landed immigrant told us about her difficulty in finding out information from the community about how to get a U.S. visa, so it took her 2 weeks to search for information and \$50 to call the American embassy to find out that she needs to book a face-to-face interview in Toronto or Ottawa to get the visa.

To facilitate the settlement services, respondents recommended establishing a one-stop service office to deal with immigration issues. This type of organizations has been set up in most immigration recipient cities. Some examples will be included in the case studies section.

- **Retention and integration**

The respondents mentioned several stories about immigrants moving out of the District to larger cities for better job and education opportunities. While it is unable to track the retention rate without a systematic study, the general sense is that the rate is not high.

The friendliness of the community is highly praised by the respondents, but the concern of enhancing public awareness of immigration is raised. One respondent mentioned the problem of nepotism in the local business community, “We need new business that will employ on ability and not family connection.” He has witnessed that some people came to the District but moved out after trying to start a business or integration without success. Another story is a respondent’s experience in working in the retail industry. At the beginning, some customers felt uncomfortable about being served by a visible minority, and it took some time for them to get used to it. As the respondent said, it is usually the unfamiliarity with a new culture or ethnic group that makes people uncomfortable with some types of immigrants. After the local public become used to a more and more diverse population, they can usually get along with immigrants. Other small communities’ experience has also shown that it takes time to build up public acceptance.

4.5 Limitations of the Survey

As mentioned at the beginning, nonrandom sampling and limited samples used in this survey may introduce biases to the results because the samples are likely to be unrepresentative of the complete immigrant population in the District. However, the current survey focuses more on descriptive information, which will be less affected by the sampling method and still be able to provide some understanding of local immigration status.

5 Potential Types of Immigrants to the RRD

The above section provides a picture of the immigration condition in the RRD. Based on this, we further conducted 20 in-depth interviews with key community leaders and target immigrants to investigate the appropriate types of immigrants for the RRD. Three key questions were asked in the interviews:

- What types of immigrants should we target?
- How does the District attract them?
- How does the District retain them?

Based on the local employment/business opportunities and existing immigrant clusters, four potential target groups are discussed, including European farmers, medical professionals, skilled trades, and international students. Farmers and international students are examined in greater details because of the availability of information, but summary will also be provided for the other types. In general, this section tends to trigger further discussion on the topic of immigrant types rather than setting any policy direction for the District at this moment.

5.1 Farmers

This section will discuss the potential to attract European farmers to the District. The primary reason to focus on European farmers is that they account for the majority of immigrant farmers in the area, even in the country. Some of their characteristics are suitable for the District, such as knowledge and experience with the cold weather; relatively strong financial ability; proficiency in English.

• Current Situation

Where are the existing immigrant farmers from?

In this study, immigrant farmers refer to people emigrating from other countries to the District to conduct farming. While no exact number is available, they only account for a small number of the District's farming population. Similar to the national pattern, these farmers are primarily from Switzerland, Germany, Holland, France, Austria and United States.

We divide immigrant farmers in the District into two groups: those came around the Second World War and those came in or after the 1980s. Our interviews focus on the latter group because their social and economic backgrounds are more similar to the current immigrant pool. Among the interviewees, the most recent immigrant farmer came in 2001.

What do they do?

In terms of farming operation, there are no obvious differences between immigrant and local farmers. Most of them are beef farmers, with two or three dairy farmers, and a small number own some agriculture retail business.

How did they find out and decide to come to the RRD?

Family/friend connection is the single most important way that the interviewees were informed of farming in the District. Employers, government bodies and farm realtors are other channels through which the farmers obtained information. However, the messages they received about farming in the area are generally negative. Each information channel is discussed as follows.

Family connection

Family A has a broad family connection in the District. They moved to the District from Switzerland in 1961. In 1975, their relatives, Family B, followed them to settle in the District from France. In 2001, introduced by Family A, their relatives Family C from Switzerland settled here. According to the interviews, Family A, as the core information channel, is still helping other acquaintances to immigrate to Canada, especially the District.

Friend connection

Certain interviewees reflected that the RRD was not their first choice when they were searching for farming opportunities in Canada. Some of them decided to settle here because of acquaintances. For instance, a dairy farmer D was more in favor of Manitoba when he first saw the differences between the land in the RRD and the prairie. However, he finally chose here due to his connection with a friend moving to the RRD before him.

Employment opportunity

The Family E came from Germany and invested in farming in the District in the late 1970s. In 1980s, they invited another Germany farmer, F, to manage their large-scale farm in the RRD. Without sufficient capital, F failed to immigrate as a business immigrant at the beginning. Therefore, Family E created a farm manager position and tailed the job requirements solely to F in order to qualify him as a professional worker to immigrate to Canada. In 1990, F succeeded in moving to the District with his family and started working for Family E's farm. He gradually established his own farm and now becomes one of the District's largest cattle farmers.

Farm realtors and government officials

In addition to personal relationship, some of the farmers also consulted farm realtors or Canadian government officials with investment information before they immigrated to Canada. However, they all received negative comments on the RRD. Both the realtors and officials suggested them not farm in the RRD for the following reasons: isolated; the land is not flat enough; small population/market. These farmers were often recommended to invest in Alberta, Manitoba, Quebec or Southern Ontario. If the District decides to seek for agricultural immigrants, it is highly necessary to cooperate with upper levels of governments and real estate agencies to change the negative image of local agriculture environment.

What are the strengths of farming in the RRD?

We interviewed several immigrant farmers and local agriculture professionals, and collected their ideas about the District's strengths comparing to farming in Europe and other parts of Canada.

Low cost of land

A lot of these immigrant farmers could only rent a farm when they were in Europe because of the prohibitive land price. The relatively affordable and spacious land in the District makes it possible for them to own their own farms, which becomes the most attractive thing to them.

The District's land price is not only much lower than that in Europe, but also than other major agricultural areas in Canada. According to an Austrian farmer came in 2001, the land price in Alberta was almost twice higher than this District.

In fact, the wealthiest European farmers usually immigrate to Alberta or southern Ontario. Farmers chose to locate here usually have limited capital but a strong will to continue farming. Given the significant land price difference, they are willing to locate in a relatively isolated area.

Nice natural environment

The water and hilly landscape are also regarded as an attraction to some farmers who have special preferences to the natural environment. One of the Swiss farmers pointed out that the bushy and hilly environment is similar to the farming environment in Switzerland, so they like to stay here instead of purely flat land.

Friendly community

All interviewees think the community in general is open and friendly to immigrants, and will be able to welcome more new comers. Local churches are the main immigration service provider, and they have become an important channel for these European farmers to integrate into the community.

Potential to develop natural/organic farming

Compared to the above points, this is a less commonly mentioned strength. However, the Rainy River Agriculture Federation has conducted some research on developing natural/organic farming in the RRD, which raises the possibility of using this as a selling point in the immigration campaign.

Some key reasons support the idea of natural/organic farming in the District. First, the area is not the target market of most agricultural chemical companies, which interestingly preserves a clean and pristine environment for its agriculture products. This enables the District to more easily cultivate genetic modification free products, which are gaining more and more attention in the market.

Second, financial return on natural/organic farming is higher, allowing farmers to make a living solely by farming on relatively smaller farms. Currently, most of the District's beef farmers are

part-time farming because the size of their farms is not big enough to support the family. Meanwhile, it is difficult to expand the farms due to ownership, available land for sale and other reasons. Therefore, it is potential to develop natural/organic farming to optimize the value of small size land.

- **Opportunities**

Based on the above discussion, we identify the following opportunities for the District to target European farmers in its immigration strategy.

Overseas network

Existing European farmers are a great asset to the District's potential immigration strategy. Lots of the interviewees have introduced the District to their acquaintances or even tried to help them immigrate to the area. Therefore, the most effective marketing method is to tap into existing immigrants' network with the countries they departed and increase the District' overseas visibility.

Experience of existing immigrant farmers

The District has a stable pool of European farmers and their immigration experience will help the community properly respond to the needs of new comers if an immigration campaign targeting foreign farmers will be initiated.

The District didn't receive a large number of immigrants, so local residents or organizations usually are unaware of some difficulties or specific needs of this group, such as language, health care, legal issues, and farming knowledge in this case. Particularly, some immigrant farmers reflected that they did not obtain sufficient advice or support for farming from the community when they first moved here because of language barriers, lack of connection or other reasons. Therefore, it took them a long time to master the farming skills in this area. For example, one farmer tried to grow grain for several years but finally gave up because of the area's wet weather. Another cattle farmer experienced a difficult time when he first started raising cattle here because some of his cattle were affected by a local disease which he had never seen before. Without much help from local farmers due to language or network problems, he lost several sick cattle.

Active agriculture community

Socioeconomic environment is as important as natural conditions to immigrant farmers' relocation decision. Currently, the RRD's agricultural community is actively working on revitalizing the industry. The Rainy River Federation of Agriculture has conducted a study, namely "Opportunities for Growth of the Agricultural Sector in Rainy River District", which proposes the direction for future development. There is no guarantee to business success, but an active farming community will be able to create a positive image and increase investors' confidence.

In addition, key stakeholders in the agricultural sector have expressed their interest in and support of the idea of attracting immigrant farmers, which will facilitate related immigration actions.

• **Challenges**

Canada is a popular destination to European farmers because of its affordable and spacious land, as well as the less rigid regulations. However, changes in the local and foreign agriculture industry have presented more and more challenges to recruiting European farmers to the RRD nowadays.

On one hand, the farming population in Europe is declining. On the other hand, the District's agriculture industry is at a disadvantage comparing to other farming areas in the country. Some of the challenges include:

- Far from major markets and high transportation cost;
- Insufficient agricultural infrastructure and lack of equipment supply;
- Small size of available farmland;
- Unfavorable regulations and conditions, such as the expensive dairy quota in Ontario;
- Lack of upper levels of government support to the isolated area; and
- Lack of cultural activities and social vibrancy in the rural areas.

Dairy Quota

There is a designated quantity of milk allowed to be produced per day for the Canadian market, and farmers have to obtain a dairy quota license in order to have the right to produce a specific amount of milk per day in Canada. Each province allocates its share of the fluid and industrial milk production among its quota holders, and quota can only be purchased from other quota holders (i.e. dairy producers). Supply and demand determines the price of quota in each province separately.⁷

While the dairy quota system protects the business of quota holders, it is expensive for new producers to join the industry. Manitoba is one of the cheapest places to buy dairy quota because of its lower operation costs and cheaper land, while Ontario's price is among the highest in Canada. The right to produce 1 kg milk (dairy quota is measured by kilograms of butterfat) is currently worth about \$30,000 in Ontario, but it is only \$23,000 in Manitoba.⁸ This significant price difference is discouraging to attract new dairy farmers to the RRD.

In addition to domestic competition, some European farmers also shift their investment interest to other low cost and more productive agricultural countries, such as Brazil. This further increases the challenges for the District to compete for such immigrants.

⁷ http://services.milk.org/services/producer/quota_exchange-more.html

⁸ <http://www.dairyinfo.gc.ca/cdicsmimilkq.htm>

5.2 Medical Professionals

It is highly desired to recruit foreign trained talents to fill the medical professional gap in the District and throughout the country. However, given the rigid restriction of credential recognition, it is beyond the District's capacity to eliminate the nation-wide barriers to introducing such professionals right now. Therefore, while the District should reflect the needs, medical professionals are not the main target of its immigration campaign.

- **Current situation**

It is known that recruiting medical professionals to small/remote areas in Canada is difficult. Currently, Fort Frances is looking for at least 4 more doctors and a number of nurses. Together with other community organizations, the local hospital has formed a Fort Frances Physician Recruitment Committee working on this issue. Formally, the committee allies with other medical organizations in Northwestern Ontario (such as Kenora, Dryden) to participate in job fairs to recruit medical graduates. They also informally contact some doctors through personal network. Usually, various incentives are provided, such as financial subsidies, temporary housing, and employment opportunities for spouses. However, the interviewees indicated that the result of such local initiatives is limited.

- **Opportunities and Challenges**

The country-wide shortage of medical professionals justifies the need for recruiting foreign trained graduates. Many provinces, such as Newfoundland and Manitoba, rely on foreign trained physicians to provide care, and have over a quarter of practicing physicians trained in the UK or South Africa. Their credentials are well known in Canada and will allow those professionals to gain entry under restricted licenses for some regions. This is also the case for rural areas in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

However, Ontario basically will not license foreign trained medical professionals, even if they are Canadian citizens, unless they have Canadian post graduate credentials in family practice or specialty. This has further increased the difficulty in introducing medical professionals to the District.

Restrictive Licensing of Foreign Trained Medical Professionals

Like most western countries, Canada requires a formal process prior to allowing foreign trained graduates practice medicine in the country. Each provincial and territorial government is responsible for licensing physicians to practice medicine within its boundaries. In order to obtain a permanent position in Canada, both domestic and foreign trained physicians need to get full licensure which involves, as a minimum, writing the Medical Council of Canada (MCC) licensing exams, and obtain approved and accredited post graduate training.

The main barrier for foreign trained physicians is that it is extremely difficult for them to obtain the additional training required, as they usually can only be considered after Canadian-trained graduates

have found residency positions. Moreover, lots of universities don't accept foreign trained graduates, so the competition is stiff. Each province sets aside a few positions for foreign doctors, but in no province is the number of residencies available equal to the number of doctors seeking to fill them. In 2003, 625 international graduates competed for the limited residency positions in Canada and only 67 found a position.

In every province the situation regarding residency positions varies: the number of positions available, the rules about how to get them and how long a doctor has to train. While Ontario has the most restrictive requirements, Manitoba, due to its severe shortage of doctors, is known for its flexibility and innovativeness in eliminating barriers to recruiting foreign trained professionals. For example, Manitoba has changed its regulations, creating a new program that allows a foreign graduate to receive enhanced training for up to one year to qualify as a doctor, while other provinces generally require two years training.

5.3 Skilled Trades and Technology

Northwestern Ontario will be short of people with good technical skills training in the skilled trades and technology fields in the next 10 years. Recent studies also indicate that by 2011 there will be 33 occupations facing possible skill shortages in Canada, including industrial electricians, pulp and paper specific trades, machine fitters, sheet metal workers, and gas fitters.

The Northwest Training and Adjustment Board pointed out that the problem of skill shortages in the District can be attributed to its aging population, which is more serious than the province because of the District's long term lack of new immigrants and continued youth out migration.⁹ Related institutions in the District have started some apprenticeship programs to encourage local youth to work in the skilled trades fields. Meanwhile, it is also worth exploring the market of foreign skilled workers and see if it is possible to recruit them to fill the gap in the District.

This study will not expand the discussion because of lack of information about specific local needs for different skilled trades and technologies professionals. Further research on this topic is needed.

5.4 International Students

International students are not Canadian immigrants, but they are of great value to the District's economy. They also have the potential to become immigrants and to integrate into the local community more easily. Given the increasing influx of international students to the country and the available education resources, the RRD should consider participating in the growing business of recruiting international students to the local schools.

⁹ Northwest Training and Adjustment Board, 2006.

International Education Sector in Canada

Canada has a vibrant and growing international education sector. Last year the federal government issued one-year study permits to 14,321 students. This year, the numbers are expected to be even higher. The sector includes but is not restricted to: private English as Second Language (ESL), French as Second Language (FSL) and EFL schools, private high schools, private career colleges, public high schools, public colleges/cégeps, institutes and universities, provincial and federal governments, and a range of national and provincial NGOs and associations. International students traditionally come to Canada to join universities and colleges. However, the trend is changing with high schools joining the fray.

Other than international and intercultural perspectives brought by international students, and linkage between their home countries and Canada, international students are of great economic value to Canada. A manager of international student services and admissions with the Toronto District School Board pointed out that foreign students pay up to \$12,500 a year in tuition and a significant amount of living expenses, depending on the province and grade in which they study.

Countries of origin

The majority of international students in Canada are from Asia, followed by North/Central America and Europe. The top source countries include United States, China, South Korea, Japan and France. It can be anticipated that Canada will continue to experience growth in international students in all levels of study. The increasingly restrictive visa processes in the United States and a growing focus on safety and security will also have a stimulating effect on the international education sector in Canada. In terms of sources, the following areas will be the major growth markets: India, China, United States and countries in the Middle East.

Reasons to study in Canada

Studies indicate that international students generally make their choices first on the **country**, not on the program or the cost or the reputation of a school. A recent Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) survey notes that 60% international students see Canada as the top choice destination. **Safety** is one of the top two reasons for studying here. The other reason is Canada's **quality of education**, which is well-financed compared with other industrialized countries. In addition, some parents prefer their children to develop a neutral North American accent in Canada's schools rather than the posh tones of an educated Briton or the twang of a Texan.¹⁰

Marketing efforts

Marketing is essential in recruiting international students. Canadian institutions have put many efforts to go out to the countries to recruit the students. There is a growing spirit of collaboration and supported by a range of national and provincial committees and expanded more inclusive membership in various associations. An example is the Canadian Education Centre Network (CECN), a private, independent nonprofit marketing body established in 1995 to promote Canadian public-school education to foreign countries. 289 institutions have joined the network, including private and public secondary and post-secondary schools, language schools, community colleges and private career colleges. The network has 20 offices in 17 countries and about 30 staff in Canada. They organize about 40 education fairs per year. Individual schools can attend the fairs and promote their schools.¹¹

According to International Student Services at the University of Winnipeg, consistent attendance at recruitment fairs, print advertising, overseas education agencies and reliance on word of mouth has ~~attributed to as much as 20 percent~~ increases in many Canadian universities.¹²

¹⁰ http://www.fcpp.org/main/publication_detail.php?PubID=816

¹¹ http://www.embassymag.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full_path=/2005/september/28/edu/

- **Current condition**

There are two high schools and a community college, Confederation College, in the District. Currently, it is more appropriate to target high school level international students. The reasons are discussed below.

Post-secondary programs are directly related to employment opportunities. Currently, the local Confederation College provides limited training/study programs, which do not meet the needs of most international students. The Thunder Bay main campus tends to restrain the expansion of programs provided by the Fort Frances campus in the short term, which further diminishes its competitiveness. Moreover, the local job market is not active, so it will be difficult to promote post secondary education to the oversea market. Therefore, the District should turn its focus on the secondary education resources.

Postsecondary Courses Provided in Confederation College, Fort Frances (2006/2007)

Year 1:

[Business Fundamentals \(1 year\)](#)

[Educational Assistant \(2 years\)](#)

[General Arts & Sciences \(1 year\)](#)

[Hotel Management \(2 years\)](#)

[Pre-Health Sciences \(1 year\)](#)

[Pre-Technology \(1 year\)](#)

[Social Service Worker \(2 years\)](#)

Year 2:

[Aboriginal Law and Advocacy \(Two Years\)](#)

[Early Childhood Education \(2 years\)](#)

[Police Foundations \(2 years\)](#)

[Practical Nursing \(2 years\)](#)

The high schools in the RRD are facing the problem of declining student numbers. The Rainy River District School Board has tried to reverse the trend through different means. For example, they have made some efforts to recruiting aboriginal students from north of the RRD, but the result is unknown. Some of the schools, such as Atikokan and Rainy River have tried to attract American students in the past few years. Atikokan has attempted to contact some Japanese education organizations. The vacant CN apartments in these two areas provide the required accommodation for international students. However, these initiatives haven't received much success without extensive marketing.

- **Opportunities**

Increasing Demand

There will be a significant increase in the number of international students seeking an international education in the coming years around the world. According to *Vision 2020: Forecasting International Student Mobility*, a collaborative report undertaken by the British Council, Universities UK and IDP Education Australia, the global demand for international student places in English-speaking destination countries will increase by 160% over the next 15 years to a total of 2.6 million. There is a huge market to be explored.

¹² <http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2005/10/20/65707>

Collaborated national support

Given the economic and social benefits of introducing international students, increasing federal government initiatives focusing on various aspects of international education have been launched. For example, the federal Innovation Strategy outlines the importance of attracting outstanding international students to strengthen the country's innovation capacity and enhance its economic competitiveness. CIC has launched pilot projects in selected provinces across the country to streamline certain immigration procedures and facilitate the movement of international students to non-traditional centres. Foreign Affairs Canada and International Trade Canada also involved a wide stakeholder group in discussions about Canada's foreign policy and Canadian International Education Policy. All these national initiatives create an inductive environment for the RRD to participate in the international education business.

Safety

This is a strong selling point of the District. As mentioned before, security is a high priority for lots of international students and their parents. Recent safety issues about international students in major Canadian cities have caused people's attention. The District is famous for being a world-class safe community. This should be highly promoted in the marketing campaign.

Language and culture

Unlike multicultural and diverse cities, the District preserves the conventional Canadian life style. Relative isolation may be attractive to some international students. For example, it provides a better English environment for non-English spoken students. It can also expose the students to first nations society and culture.

Less distraction

While some families prefer to expose the children to more dynamic city life, some others would like them to concentrate more on studies. Therefore, the small population and less entertaining District may be able to capture this market.

School capacity

According to the local education professionals, the District has sufficient hard and soft resources to support a larger number of students. Though the education organizations do not have much experience dealing with international students, the schools and school board have been working with exchange students and aboriginal students, and both have expressed their confidence in being responsive to a more diverse student group.

• Challenges

Lack of incentives

Compared to traditional international student concentrated areas, the RRD is less attractive because of its relative isolation and lack of activities for the youth. In addition, tuition fees and living costs are no less expensive than urban areas. To increase its competitiveness to attract international students, it is necessary for the District to develop or lobby for some financial or non-financial incentives.

Insufficient infrastructure

A series of infrastructure or facilities will be needed in order to support international students to study in the District. Currently, there are no appropriate housing facilities; public transportation is not available; education related resources such as bookstores and libraries are limited. Temporary arrangement is needed if a large amount of investment in accommodation facilities is not available at the starting stage. The District should consult with high schools in Atikokan and Rainy River for their experience or lessons of reusing existing housing resources to accommodate foreign students.

Limited experience

Dealing with international students is more than merely providing ESL training. It involves immigration regulations, financial support, as well as facilitation among different religious and ethnic groups. It may be beyond the capacity of local schools and requires further support from the community and governments.

6 Case Studies

This section presents case studies of some notable immigration initiatives in small or rural towns in Canada and United States. They are selected based on the success and relevance to the RRD's situation. However, recent immigration changes in small and rural areas are new and not well-studied, and many policy questions remain to be examined. Therefore, the following discussion is exploratory and intends to help brainstorm ideas for the RRD's strategy.

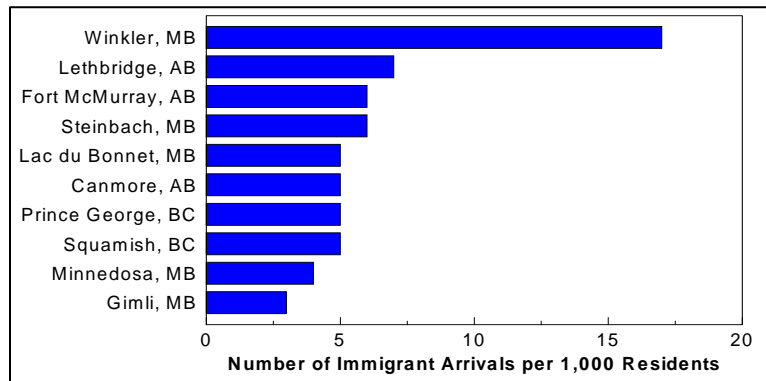
6.1 Top Immigrant Recipient Towns in Canada

Although Canadian immigrants continue to settle initially in a few large metropolitan areas, a few smaller towns or rural areas, predominantly in Manitoba and Alberta, are still successful in attracting new comers.¹³ According to a study comparing the annual arrival rate for immigrants in the 2000 to 2002 period, the ten rural communities with the highest rates of immigrant arrivals are, in rank order¹⁴:

¹³ Beshiri, Roland, 2004.

¹⁴ One way to rank areas in terms of recent immigrant arrivals is to calculate the annual rate of new immigrants as a percent of the total population.

Figure 12 Top Ten Canadian Small Town Receiving Immigrants, 2000 – 2002



The successful immigration experience of these small or rural communities will provide some insights for the RRD. In general, immigrant arrivals in these towns show that these new destinations for immigrants are created through employment, community programs, and provincial immigration selection policies. Their experience particularly emphasizes the significance of substantial employment opportunities to attract even a small volume of immigrants to rural areas and small towns. Some common findings are as follows:

- The ten communities are all in the **western areas of Canada**: five are in Manitoba, three are in Alberta, and two are in British Columbia.
- Several of the communities have immigrant **recruitment programs** and work hard to attract newcomers.
- Seven of the ten communities are noteworthy for having a **key employment center** that has created good job opportunities in recent years:
 - Winkler has a large recreational vehicle employer;
 - Fort McMurray has an economy based on the mining of oil sands;
 - Steinbach has two large international trucking firms;
 - Canmore has a growing number of restaurants, motels/hotels, and tourism services based on nearby Banff National Park;
 - Squamish is a popular residential community for workers at nearby Whistler;
 - Minnedosa has a farm machinery and parts plant and a large ethanol plant; and
 - Gimli has a successful Seagram whisky distillery and increasing employment related to tourism and retirement.
- The remaining three communities do not have a single employment centers, but have a **diversified local economy** that offers attractive employment prospects:
 - Lethbridge has been growing steadily in recent years with a relatively strong economy located around the major crossroads for highways in southern Alberta. It is only one hour north of the major east-west U.S. interstate 90 and provides a leading gateway for Alberta’s truck transportation to the U.S.
 - Lac du Bonnet is diversified as an agricultural centre, mining, forest products, and tourism.

- Prince George is located on a major highway and rail crossroads of northern British Columbia. It has employment in forest products, with diversified employment in education, health, government, transportation, telecommunications, and retail and wholesale trade.
- Employment opportunities in education and health exist in some of the larger towns in the list of ten areas, including Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, and Prince George. But most of the employment growth in these ten communities appears to be based on **manufacturing, agricultural, mining and forest products, and tourism**.
- Except for Gimli and possibly Lac du Bonnet, **retirement movements do not seem to be major factors** affecting their employment and population growth.

6.2 Manitoba

The above section has shown what Manitoba has been successfully recruiting immigrants to its rural areas in recent years. Four rural communities are discussed here, including Winkler, Steinbach, Portage la Prairie, and Parkland. They share some common experience in the immigration initiatives:

- The initiatives are largely community driven due to economic reasons rather than directed by the province;
- Job opportunities are crucial;
- Provincial Nomination Program is an important policy instrument;
- Critical mass of immigrants in the area are attractive to prospective immigrants;
- A responsible immigration organization in the area is a must;
- It is critical to prepare for long term settlement and integration;
- Connection among immigrants helps them to integrate to the community;
- Don't overestimate new comers' cultural and linguistic capacity.

Provincial Nominee Program (PNP)

The PNP started in 1998 is the most notable immigration policy instrument in Manitoba. Though Manitoba's absolute number of nominees is small, it already accounts for about 75% of all PNP nominees in Canada.

Right now, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland/Labrador, New Brunswick, PEI, Nova Scotia and the Yukon have PNP agreements. Ontario will also start its PNP in 2006. Under the PNP, provinces can enter into agreements with the federal government giving them a greater role in selecting immigrants to settle in their province. Specifically, under the PNP, provinces can assess skill shortages, set up categories for prospective immigrants, as well as recruit and select immigrants with skills that meet the specific labor needs of the province. For immigrant participants, the PNP has the appeal of faster application processing time and the potential to be matched with appropriate

occupations.¹⁵ Different provinces' PNP experience has shown some success in attracting and retaining immigrants in areas that do not traditionally receive large immigrant numbers.

As part of its PNP, Manitoba has formed partnerships with a number of municipalities, allowing them to actively recruit newcomers to fill their particular labor needs. The province has also used the program to recruit nurses from the Philippines, providing those selected with a license to practice nursing in Canada and guaranteed employment. The Manitoba government treats the program as a success, stating that it could potentially double its immigration levels using the PNP and noting that there is a high retention rate. A survey of 2001/2002 participants found that almost 80% plan to stay in the community in which they are living for at least five years.

Among them, Winkler and Steinbach have a longer immigrant recruitment history. They both experience strong economic growth and are in large demand for human resources. Over the last decade, they have established comprehensive community infrastructure for new comers. Portage la Prairie and Parkland were both inspired by successful experiences in the province and started their immigration initiatives in the last 2 or 3 years. Their both built their strategies basing on substantial research on other areas' experience. Also, they both adopted a phase-in approach to establish related services and infrastructure before moving forward to bringing in a larger amount of immigrants.

According to the RRD's current situation, the examples of Portage la Prairie and Parkland provide guidance for the process of establishing an immigration strategy, while Winkler and Steinbach represent a more mature model in terms of providing settlement and integration services. Details about different steps of the immigration initiatives, such as policy development, recruitment and settlement, are discussed below.

- **Policy development**

Portage la Prairie

The City of Portage la Prairie's immigration plan is in a state of relative infancy, but its planning process is worth studying.

The City's primary interest in immigration was due to their need for both skilled and unskilled labor. In 2004, the City Council heard about immigration successes elsewhere and decided to develop knowledge around this topic. Immigration became the council's top priorities in the same year. Two City employees were assigned to research the matter while consulting with experienced people elsewhere in the province and representatives from Manitoba's PNP to have a better understanding of the program in order to inform businesses and immigrants of all options.¹⁶

From the research, it was determined that the City itself could prepare all necessary services in the initial stages of their immigration strategy. The first step is to develop and account for appropriate services prior to large numbers of immigrant arrivals. Therefore, Portage la Prairie

¹⁵ Krahn et al,2003

¹⁶ Consulted areas include Brandon, Winnipeg, Russell, Winkler and Steinbach

International Agency (PIA) was established, which is a **subset of the local Economic and Community Development Department** and acts as the central hub that can connect immigrants to services available in the community.

The next stage is the development of a strategic plan that will outline the committee and community's work plan for the ensuing year. Responsible for preparing the plan, the PIA is now seeking broader community input.

Parkland

After Parkland identifies immigration as a solution to the area's business succession problem, its Economic Development Practitioners Group initiated significant research on the topic of immigration in 2003. The research produced an elaborate, multi-phased program entitled the *Parkland Immigration Strategy Initiative*. Prior to larger marketing initiatives, the region investigated what groups may be best suited to the area and its needs, and started to organize settlement services to facilitate a more successful transition for immigrants. Those concerned with immigration are seeking a slower pace to arrivals in order to have the opportunity to reflect upon the process, determine what further services and strategies are required and learn the appropriate lessons.

The region hope that a manageable number of arrivals will allow interested parties to gauge the experiences of new families and determine precisely what the challenges are, whether employers are satisfied, and what further community response/needs can be identified before widening the process. Those involved in attracting immigrants hope to be proactive in determining what groups are best suited to the region and develop the supports for facilitating the transition.

- **Recruitment**

Economic drive and PNP

A buoyant economy creates strong attraction to immigrants, and the PNP helps facilitate immigration in Manitoba. Winkler's recent immigration boom begins as a concerted response to the community's economic needs and is enmeshed with developments of the PNP. In the mid – 1990s, the city encountered the problems of numerous unfilled jobs and jeopardizing the expansion in industrial and agricultural sector. The City and Chamber of Commerce approached Manitoba's Citizenship and Multiculturalism, the provincial immigration department, to search for the opportunities to use immigration to address its human resource needs.

At the beginning, community members with **connections in Germany** identified individuals and families who would be a good fit and encouraged them to apply for immigration. However, those who applied were unable to achieve federal points requirements.

At the same time, Manitoba was in the process of negotiating with the federal government the framework of what was to eventually become the **PNP**. They concurrently discussed the prospects of developing a pilot initiative, namely *Winkler Initiative*, which would allow fifty

families to settle in the Winkler area based on their meeting provincial selection criteria, with the province assuming responsibility for care after arrival.

The *Winkler Initiative* contributed to early PNP arrivals, helping establish a critical mass of new arrivals that could provide information to other prospective immigrants and also highlighting Winkler as a desirable area. Meanwhile, the PNP provided greater opportunities to expand the immigration initiative in the area.

Parkland's driving force towards pursuing immigration in the region also came from its need for people to **take over existing businesses**. Experiencing difficulties in meeting this goal, the Economic Development Practitioners Group endeavored to explore whether immigration could be a fit for this need and began talking with Manitoba Labor and Immigration (MLI) to gain further knowledge of immigration options with business components.

Menmonite connection

Prior to the PNP creating a large immigrant stream, Steinbach was already the fastest growing area in Manitoba and a primary destination for new arrivals. One of the community's pull factors is its ability to attract, settle and retain members of the Kanadier population – Mennonites from Mexico as well as Central and South America who have some historical ties to the region and have retained citizenship rights. Connections between immigrants who have arrived and potential arrivals facilitate greater linkages between the area and overseas, offering considerable support, assistance and incentive for greater numbers arriving in the region.

Immigration consultants

Consultants have been active agents facilitating the arrival of large numbers of families to Steinbach, though opinions vary considerably about their role and value. Larger businesses in need of employees have contacted the Province to determine how these needs could be met through immigration and immigrant consultants helped them recruited actively in Germany. The result was the arrival of a considerable number of immigrants, mostly from Germany (many of them had previously emigrated from Russia).

Responsive personal interaction

In addition to the economic pull and the PNP, various other recruitment tools are used by these communities. Portage la Prairie has developed an immigration **website**, and established a **partnership** with Winnipeg's International Centre, hoping to market the region as a desirable destination for immigrants in Winnipeg seeking to move to a smaller area. They also highly value the key role of **personal interaction** in attracting immigrants. Since the communication process takes time, a point person is assigned to operate a hub that both immigrants and community members can approach for appropriate information. City staff cited the example of one prospective immigrant family that was enthused when the office responded to the family's email after 4 or 5 other communities contacted failed to do so.

PIA, the immigration organization in Portage la Prairie, is also attentive to its image and stressed they want outsiders to feel that they are dealing with a competent agency which

provides professional, consistent services. Meanwhile, considerable support and a strong mandate from the City Council provide the PIA with the stability to achieve this goal.

- **Settlement**

The success of these towns' immigration strategies lies in not only recruitment and policy development, but also the supports provided in settlement and integration to the community.

One stop immigration service centre/office

Winkler and Steinbach both have a one stop immigration service centre/office centralizing settlement, employment, and language services. Such a centre acts as the main community contact for immigration concerns. Common settlement services offered include:

- Information about **life in the community and Canada**, including health care, education, banking, the law, shopping, housing, etc.;
- Information and assistance on **immigration issues**, including acting as liaison and resource for the community;
- **Reception and orientation** services such as school registration, obtaining social insurance number cards and child tax benefits;
- **Language** interpretation and translation;
- Connection to **ESL** classes;
- Connection to **community services** - doctors, dentists, schools, etc.;
- **Employment related services** such as resume writing, assisted job search and pre-employment counseling; and
- Programming for **youth** and **women**.

Parkland also has a regional service centre, and is now seeking funding to provide a coordinator in each of the 4 - 5 sub regions of Parkland. In one of the sub regions that doesn't have a full fledged immigration centre, they provide related services through an existing community organization run by a **local church**. One staff member will provide weekly hours towards immigration and settlement services, and the office of the existing organization acts as a hub to connect immigrants to the appropriate services.

Language

In response to the need for literacy and ESL classes, all communities provide language training for new comers. Flexibility in programming, partnering, and tapping into community and volunteer resources is essential to meet their growing and unpredictable language needs. For example, Steinbach uses volunteer resources and implements a language partners program, but insufficient human resources exist at present to coordinate such initiatives. Winkler recognizes the importance of "going where the learners are" and offers English classes on site in several communities throughout the region. The language centre in Winkle also engages with workplaces and communities to better address local language needs. In Parkland, one of their regional settlement committees is compiling a **language bank**, a resource list of people in the community who can speak foreign languages and later be called upon for translation services.

Employer/Employment

Cooperation by the business community ensures that immigrants have jobs when they arrive. Many employers in these communities have offered jobs through the PNP. For those without specific job offers upon arrival, they usually enhance their employment opportunities through walk-ups and word of mouth referrals. Some skilled workers are starting their own businesses in these communities. However, it is reflected that immigrants with technical experience and abilities are difficult to find in the local labor pools.

Though all of the four communities have a strong economic growth, immigrants still face different challenges in the labor market. Competitiveness of business environment means English is often required for work; therefore, lack of English compromises integration in the workplace. In addition, underemployment (including not working in one's field), higher wage expectations and credentials recognition are frustrating for immigrant workers, though many have displayed high levels of adaptability.

Education

Winkler's School Division facilitates contact between prospective immigrants and schools during **exploratory visits** to the community. Large numbers of immigrant arrivals provide opportunities by reversing the trend of declining number of students and providing a new cultural element in the schools. These arrivals also provide challenges to the education system. For instance, there is little knowledge of where and when immigrants will settle or what schools the children will attend. Meanwhile, funding does not respond quickly enough to new needs. More importantly, how to ensure immigrant students' inclusion in school is a priority for the schools.

Health

The immigrant population has been identified in the planning of new and enhanced health care services, but there is generally a lag in funding to address these needs. In Steinbach, large and young families have increased demand for primary health care services, many of which remain unmet, and challenges surrounding language impact health care delivery. In Winkler, some new arrivals exhibit unwillingness to or a lack of understanding how to access the system for preventative or on going care. Some staff can offer translation services; however, language differences continue to pose a difficulty for health care delivery. Several new health care workers have been hired to respond to growing demand, and a number of immigrants have been employed in the health care field within the area.

Support from existing immigrants

Successful immigration service provision requires outreach, recognizing gaps and needs and then responding appropriately. Critical masses of existing immigrants in these communities provide significant help in this process. For example, The Mennonite Central Committee and Church elders have assisted with Kanadier settlement and integration in Steinbach.

Housing

In Steinbach, housing remains an issue, with immigrants being wrongly identified as the sole factor contributing to the housing shortage and increased prices. Small lots around Steinbach

are becoming less available, leading to wider dispersal of immigrants in surrounding area, which creates challenges for service provision. Dispersal underscores concerns of social isolation, particularly for mothers, who are unable to access services and have no regular social contact outside the home

Integration

Immigration is deemed necessary for future growth in these communities but it also remains bound to “pains” in the growth processes. For example, immigrants are misidentified as the key reason for the challenges surrounding growth in Steinbach. Meanwhile, many Russian-Germans in Steinbach prefer to establish their own churches and reproduce social/religious practices, often outside of the wider community. This has created some distance between immigrants and the communities, affecting integration in the settlement process. The Steinbach settlement committee has sought to engage the wider community to combat such.

6.3 Quebec

At the provincial level, Quebec has established a comprehensive immigrant dispersion system called the *Regionalization of immigration in Quebec*. The strategy intends to not only share the economic benefits of immigration more widely, but also maintain social cohesion in the Province, which is to reduce the cultural differences between ethnically diverse Montreal and the more homogeneous Quebec outside the metropolis. Their experience of designating target regions and developing sub-regional immigration organizations will shed some light on Ontario’s practice of directing immigrants to non-traditional centres.

- **Target regions**

Since 1990, Quebec has made efforts to direct immigrants to settle outside Montreal. The first step was to disperse a significant share of its annual intake of about 2,000 government-sponsored refugees to nine target regions outside Montreal.¹⁷ In addition, normal immigrants are presented with possible destinations outside Montreal during the immigration process, and also after landing if they opt for Montreal. The province entices immigrants who are already living in Montreal to relocate to Quebec City by providing information sessions, tours and job interviews (i.e. Metropolis Project 2003). The focus is put on employment, and these efforts are directed at families rather than single persons.

The regionalization strategies caused related Quebec departments to allocate resources to these regions and to set up a partnership with regional government bodies to receive and assist immigrants. It also created an appetite for immigrants in some of these regions.

¹⁷ Chicoutimi, Trois-Rivières, Victoriaville, Joliette, Rimouski, Hull, Sherbrooke, Quebec City and Saint-Jerome.

- **Funding**

In terms of funding, Quebec created a fund (le Fonds de développement de l'immigration en région) to lay the groundwork for greater receptivity to immigrants in the targeted areas. In the mid-1990s, more than \$1 million was spent on various projects, including recruitment of immigrants living in Montreal to the regions through visits and job interviews.

- **Regional immigration organizational framework**

The Province put in place a regional organizational framework to decentralize its operations by setting up five regional directorates outside Montreal. The main task of the regional directorates was to prepare different parts of the province for a greater influx of immigrants.

In addition, the five directorates work closely with the related regional governments outside of Montreal and directly involve them in the management of the regionalization program, identifying local labor needs and providing appropriate settlement services. The regional governments also participate in the selection of immigrants. The allocation and delivery of adjustment assistance has been devolved through this way.

- **Challenges**

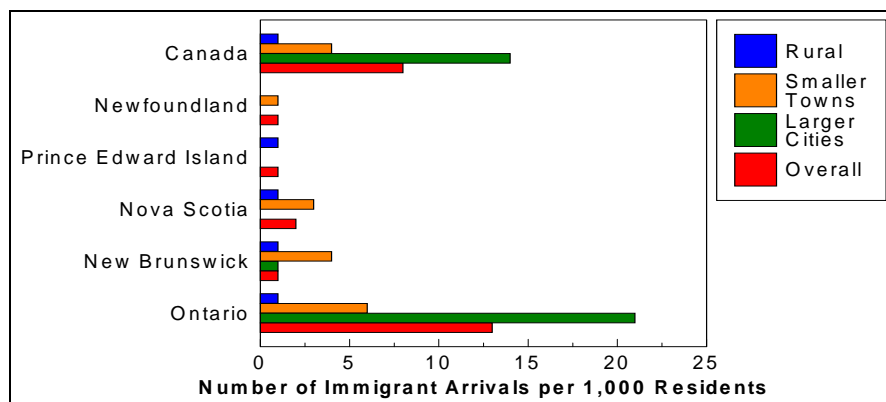
The exact result of the dispersion system is unknown. The extent of control over immigration exercised by the province of Quebec seems limited, because the family class immigrants and asylum seekers are administered by the federal government and the province can only control immigration of skilled workers, the business class, and refugees from overseas. However, the government of Quebec is of the view that the groundwork has been laid for a major increase in settlement of immigrants outside Montreal. In future, they may investigate policies such as reduced entry requirements and financial incentives to help lure newcomers to non-Montreal destinations in the Province.

6.4 Carleton Region, New Brunswick

Atlantic Canada receives a very small proportion of national immigrant inflow, but the majority of their immigrants live in rural or smaller towns, which is opposite to the national pattern (Figure 13). Therefore, some of their policy initiatives that have a focus on rural or smaller areas can provide some lessons for the RRD.¹⁸

¹⁸ http://www.atlantic.metropolis.net/index_e.html.

Figure 13 Immigration Destinations in Atlantic Region and Ontario, 2002



- **Integration services, Carleton Region**

Located in west New Brunswick, the Carleton Region is a rural community with a population of 27,000. In recent years, the region witnessed a 20% population growth thanks to the arrival of immigrant families from various countries. Most of the immigrants were attracted to the region by three large local employers: McCain Foods Limited, which employs researchers, information technologists, and engineers; Thomas Equipment, which employs engineers; and the trucking industry, which largely employs truck drivers. There are also some immigrants working in farming and medical professions.

In 2001, a Multicultural Association of Carleton County was founded by volunteers to assist the integration of immigrants into this rural region. The organization actively provides various integration services and promotes public education of immigration. In 2005, they received a national award from CIC for its work in helping immigrants integrate into the community. Different programs provided by the Association are presented below.

Women’s Programming

The Women's Programming “From Isolation to Integration” helps immigrant women assess their needs. As a result, the Association develops programs in cooperation with them and provides information regarding resources and opportunities available to them.

Cross-Cultural Communication Workshops

The “Cross-Cultural Communication Workshops” are delivered to community members such as healthcare professionals, educators, and businesses to provide awareness on issues of diversity, multiculturalism, immigration, and racism. Community partnerships have been established through this program.

Multicultural Awareness Program

The Multicultural Awareness Program is designed to raise awareness regarding cultural diversity to Carleton County. Schools, social groups, and organizations receive cross-cultural presentations from volunteers. Each presentation is designed to meet the needs of the audience.¹⁹

¹⁹ <http://integration-net.cic.gc.ca/inet/english/region/atl/2004-06.htm>

6.5 Schenectady, USA

Schenectady, a small city in New York State, has developed an unusually direct approach to **attracting newcomers**. Over the past few years, Schenectady's mayor, Al Jurczynski, has initiated a **personal campaign** to attract Guyanese immigrants from New York City to help revitalize Schenectady's declining population and economy. His efforts have been substantial, including appearing on Guyanese radio shows, and organizing and guiding weekly bus tours chartered specifically for Guyanese residents of Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. During the tours, Jurczynski introduces participants to community leaders, members of the Chamber of Commerce, municipal staff and councilors. He takes them to city hall, local parks, and even to his relatives' for wine-tasting. He actively promotes the city's low housing costs, as well as educational and employment activities. The city has also established a website targeting Guyanese immigrants. The approach appears to be effective. During the first year of the campaign, Schenectady attracted approximately 2,000 Guyanese immigrants.

While the success of Schenectady's campaign is regarded being based on the personal initiative of the city's mayor, it demonstrates the importance of developing **political and institutional support** for inclusion. The highest political official in Schenectady has made it his personal goal to ensure that Guyanese newcomers know that the community welcomes and needs them, and that, with their participation, Schenectady can be a stronger community. This kind of leadership is also critical in helping ease community fears about new immigrants and misperceptions that more immigrants lead to blight and not community building.

7 Recommendations

7.1 Short Term

- **Establish a regional immigration committee**

The committee should consist of a broad range of stakeholders, including local and regional politicians; community leaders from fields of economic development, employment assistance, education, health care, and religion groups; key existing immigrants; researchers. At this stage, the RRFDC's Regional Economic Development Committee (REDC) can be the temporary steering committee to lead and coordinate the project. Their responsibilities should include:

- to launch the immigration campaign;
- to coordinate different stakeholder groups;
- to represent the District to communicate with upper levels of government; and
- to educate the public about immigration.

- **Involve the community to brainstorm**

The committee should involve the community in the initiative. The first step should be to invite the public to a brainstorming session about developing a regional immigration strategy. The session can collect public inputs, as well as inform and educate the community.

- **Start with a pilot project**

Given the limited resources, it is impossible to launch a comprehensive immigration program that brings in a large amount of immigrants right now. It is more feasible to initiate a pilot project, which utilizes the existing resources to target the most potential groups such as European farmers and international students. After the community reflects upon the process and learns the appropriate lessons, it can expand the project scope to recruit a larger number and more diverse types of immigrants. More details about recruiting these two target groups are discussed as follows.

- **Market the District to European Farmers**

Narrow down the target groups

The committee should narrow down the target groups and focus on attracting farmers with the following characteristics.

The wealthiest European immigrant farmers usually choose Alberta or Southern Ontario; those with **less capital** are more likely to go to Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Given the condition of the RRD, it is more appropriate to focus on attracting the second group by providing reasonable incentives.

In terms of countries, **Western European farmers** will be more adaptable to the District due to their original countries' culture, languages, climate and other elements that are similar to Canada. According to some interviewees, some countries are particularly suitable for this District, including **Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands**. France is also a major source country, but it should be second to the above group, because compared to other European countries, France has relatively more land resources and lower land price, and Quebec is always their first choice.

Another possible target group is **skilled workers in the agricultural industry**. Some farmers have the skills and strong motivation to work on farms, but they temporarily don't have the financial ability to buy a farm in Canada. The immigration committee should contact District farm owners to find out employment opportunities for such skilled workers, as well as explore the possibility of applying Ontario's new-coming PNP to facilitate recruiting this group.

Create a database of farms for sale

The committee should work with District agriculture organizations (e.g. Rainy River Federation of Agriculture) to create a database of farms for sale. This information should be widely distributed, especially through the internet.

Utilize the existing network

Given the target groups mentioned above, the most effective way to market the District to them is to tap into the network of existing immigrant farmers in the area. Some immigrant farmers have shown their support for the immigration project in the interviews. Some of them have also been informally promoting the District to their original countries. Building upon this, the committee should formally approach them and deliver a positive image to the target groups through their support.

Cooperate with farm realtors

The District should contact farm realtors specializing in marketing Canadian farms to European farmers and establish a working relationship with them. A number of realtors are actively working in this field in Manitoba and Southern, Eastern Ontario. Their target market is mostly European farmers. They will take the farms for sale information to related trade shows or fairs in Europe every year. To interested investors, they provide a series of services, including helping them apply for a visa to visit Canada, organizing a tour to different farms across the country, completing the immigration application for the clients, and arranging temporary accommodation.

Currently, these realtors pay little attention to or have negative impression of the District. The committee needs to cooperate with them and directly approach the target market with the help of their experience and extensive network.

- **Explore the international students market**

The committee should collaborate with the District's education authorities to explore the possibility of recruiting international students to local high schools. A key issue is to find out how to arrange the accommodation for potential students. The next step for local education organizations is to actively market the education resources through working with international education agencies, attending education trade shows, and sending mission boards oversea.

- **Actively participate in related government immigration programs**

The District should clearly express its interest and determination to pursue an immigration project to upper levels of governments. Meanwhile, the District should strongly lobby for special incentives or support for immigration to Northwestern Ontario. Some immediate actions include to participate in related government immigration initiatives such as the Canada – Ontario Agreement public consultation; to market the District on important online immigration forums such as <http://www.settlement.org/discuss/>, <http://atwork.settlement.org/connect/>, and so on.

- **Ensure the delivery of positive message about the District**

The committee should avoid negative messages about District or a lack of consistent and deliberate messaging abroad. They need to create targeted, professional and consistent messages and clearly brand the District's advantages to potential new comers. In addition, the committee should ensure that government organizations deliver positive messages about the District abroad and avoid unfriendly competition for immigrants among different regions.

7.2 Long Term

- **Ally with other Northern Ontario communities**

The District should ally with other Northern Ontario communities to establish a broad immigration strategy for the region. Some communities, such as Sudbury, Timmis, and Greenstone, have shown their strong interest in attracting immigrants. Based on the mutual interest and similar situation, a Northern Ontario ally can increase the bargaining power when lobbying for a special immigration package for smaller or rural communities in this region. However, a program tailored to Northwestern Ontario will be more preferable.

- **Lobby provincial and federal governments for incentives for immigration to Northwestern Ontario**

The committee should urge the provincial and federal governments to allow incentives for immigration to Northwestern Ontario, such as lowering entry requirements for provincial nominees to Northwestern Ontario, and shortening the application processing time. Currently, the District should take the opportunity of the Canada – Ontario Immigration Agreement to inform upper levels of governments of specific local needs and lobby for appropriate incentive programs.

- **Collaborate with local employers and business owners to identify specific labor needs and business opportunities**

The committee should work with local employment and economic organizations, presumably NCDS and RRFDC, to identify the District's employment gaps and business opportunities, and build a related database. Based on this information, the committee can use the PNP or propose incentives to introduce desired skilled workers or business investors.

- **Launch multiple marketing initiatives**

The RRD should progressively market the District to potential immigrants. Given that upper levels of governments agree to help promote immigration opportunities in Northern Ontario through the Canada – Ontario Immigration Agreement, the District should make use of it to lobby for concrete financial or policy support for key marketing initiatives such as:

- To develop an immigration website for the District. A possible way is to add an immigration section to the RRFDC's website (www.rrfdc.on.ca), similar as the agricultural section. The website should at least include the following information for immigrants: detailed community profile; information about housing, education, health care, employment, financial and legal services; local contact persons and organization for new comers; step-by-step immigration procedures; existing immigrants' experience in the District.
- To create a special section for Northwestern Ontario on government immigration websites. A good example is the "Ontario North" section on the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade website (<http://www.2ontario.com/north/home.asp>). Some other key websites or online forums include:
 - <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/>
 - <http://ontarioimmigration.ca>
 - <http://www.settlement.org/discuss/default.asp>
- To sponsor prospective immigrants, especially business investors, to visit the District. If possible, the District should cooperate with other Northwestern Ontario communities to arrange such exploratory visits. The District should seek for government funding to conduct this action.
- To hire an experienced immigration consultant to represent the District to attend immigration information sessions or trade shows in Canada or in targeted countries. The role of the representative is like the trade advisor hired for the Northwest-Midwest Alliance (<http://www.nmatrade.com/>).
- To tap into local immigrants' networks with the areas they came from and facilitate information flows to their friends and relatives to increase the District's visibility overseas.

- **Establish a visible and consistent service centre**

The committee should establish a one-stop immigration service centre. Rather than to actually provide all the services itself, it is more practical for the centre to only provide a platform for information sharing and to coordinate actual service providers of employment, legal, education, health, housing and other key immigration related fields. The centre can be a sub-organization under an existing community institution, such as the employment assistance centre, the volunteer bureau, or a church, depending on the institution's interest and capacity, and the size of projected immigration arrivals.

- **Educate and involve the public**

The committee should prepare the public in advance through public consultation and education which helps minimize misunderstandings. It is important to convey clear information about immigration processes to the public (for example, that these are undertaken for the vitality of the community, that immigrants have been invited and welcomed by the community for a specific purpose), as well as to combat the unfortunate criticisms (such as "immigrants take our jobs", "immigrants abuse the welfare system", "immigrants drive up housing prices", and so on).

8 Challenges

Immigrant dispersal has received broad public attention and has been incorporated into national policy discussion. The emergence of new immigration destinations provides useful lessons for the RRD, but more issues need further consideration in order to develop a successful district immigration strategy.

- 1) Limited job opportunities remain a main concern for the District to launch a large scale immigration campaign.
- 2) It takes time to build up public awareness. In the District, it is particularly sensitive because of the limited job openings. Therefore, while it is necessary to educate the public that immigration can produce long-term benefits to the District, at this stage, it is necessary to focus on self-sustained immigrants.
- 3) Providing appropriate accommodation for international students may require significant infrastructure investment, which is challenging at the starting stage.
- 4) Last but not least, negotiation with upper levels of governments for a special immigration package for the District or non-traditional immigration destinations like Northwestern Ontario can also be an uphill battle. Ontario is the predominant immigration recipient province in Canada, so it seems less urgent for the federal government to give special incentives to this region than to direct the influx to other provinces, such as the Atlantic regions.

9 Conclusion

The challenges of population loss and economic stagnancy provide the possibility and necessity of introducing immigrants to the RRD. The federal and provincial governments have paid more and more attention on immigrant dispersal and launched various initiatives, which creates an inductive policy environment for the District's development of an immigration strategy.

The survey with existing immigrants in the District shows that the area has not attracted many immigrants in the last few years. Based on this, the interviews reveal that while an immigration initiative is supported by existing immigrants, appropriate job opportunities for an influx of new comers remain a concern.

Four types of possible target groups have been discussed, and focus has been put on European farmers and international students. Given the available resources in the community, it is possible to start a pilot project targeting these two groups as the beginning stage of the District immigration initiative.

A series of case studies are presented, and they are hoped to provide some lessons for the RRD to establish its own immigration strategy.

Main References

Akbari, Ather H. "Comings and Goings of Immigrants in Atlantic Canada." *The Workplace Review*, April 2005.

Beshiri, Roland, Alfred, Emily. "Immigrants in Rural Canada." *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2002.

Beshiri, Roland. "Immigrants in Rural Canada: 2001 update." *Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 4, June 2004.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). "Towards a More Balanced Geographic Distribution of Immigrants."

De Voretz, Don J. "How Much is Too Much?" Speech to Atlantic Metropolis Atlantique. November 6, 2005.

"Farm Population: Bucking the Trend in a Country Shaped by Immigrants." 2001 Census of Agriculture.
www.statcan.ca/english/agcensus2001/first/socio/immigration.htm#1

Krahn, Harvey, Derwing, Tracey M., and Abu-Laban, Baha. "The Retention of Newcomers in Second- and Third-Tier Cities in Canada." Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Integration and Immigration and the University of Alberta, Working Paper No. WP01-03, May 2003.

Savage, Christine. "The National Report on International Students in Canada 2001/02." The Canadian Bureau for International Education, ISBN: 1-894129-58-X

Silvius, Ray. "Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Parkland." Rural Development Institute (RDI), Brandon University, Working Paper #2005 – 5, April 2005.

Silvius, Ray. "Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies – Portage la Prairie." RDI, Brandon University, Working Paper #2005 – 6, April 2005.

Silvius, Ray. "Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Steinbach." RDI, Brandon University, Working Paper #2005 – 7, April 2005.

Silvius, Ray. "Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Winkler." RDI, Brandon University, Working Paper #2005 – 8, April 2005.

Silvius, Ray, Annis, Robert. "Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies – Issues in Rural Immigration: Lessons, Challenges and Responses." RDI, Brandon University, Working Paper #2005 – 9, April 2005.

Silvius, Ray. "Manitoba Rural Immigration Community Case Studies - Parkland." RDI, Brandon University, Working Paper #2005 – 5, April 2005.

Silvius, Ray. "Immigration and Rural Canada: Research and Practice – Final Report." Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation and RDI National Rural Think Tank 2005, June 2005.

"Smart Settlement: Current Dispersion Policies and A Community Engagement Model for Sustainable Immigrant Settlement in Ontario's Smaller Communities." Policy Roundtable Mobilizing Professions and Trades, Discussion Paper, March 2005.

Southcott, Chris. "Mobility and Migration in Northern Ontario." 2001 Census Research Paper Series: Report #4. Prepared for the Training Boards of Northern Ontario.

"Trends, Opportunities and Priorities Report." Northwest Training and Adjustment Board, September 2004.

"Trends, Opportunities and Priorities Update Report." Northwest Training and Adjustment Board, June 2005.

"Trends, Opportunities and Priorities Report." Northwest Training and Adjustment Board, January 2006.

http://atwork.settlement.org/sys/atwork_library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004060

<http://integration-net.cic.gc.ca/inet/english/region/atl/2004-06.htm>

http://services.milk.org/services/producer/quota_exchange-more.html

http://www.atlantic.metropolis.net/index_e.html.

<http://www.dairyinfo.gc.ca/cdicmimilkq.htm>

http://www.embassymag.ca/html/index.php?display=story&full_path=/2005/september/28/edu2

http://www.fcpp.org/main/publication_detail.php?PubID=816

<http://www.how2immigrate.net/canada>

<http://www.mndaily.com/articles/2005/10/20/65707>

<http://www.promptinfo.ca/Library/Docs/Smart%20Settlement%20-%20Final%20Copy.pdf>

Appendix 1

Interview List

Field	Name	Position
Municipality	Dan Onichuk	Mayor, Ft. Frances
	Russ Fortier	Reeve, Emo
	William Clink	Reeve, Chapple
Education	Michael Cameronr	Interim Campus Manager, Confederation College
	Mary	Vice Principal, Ft. Frances High School
	Jack McMaster	Director of Education, Rainy River District School Board
Health	Wayne Woods	President & CEO, Riverside Health Care Facilities Inc.
Employment	Jennifer	President, Northern Community Development Services Corporation
	Janet	Cloverleaf Grocery store
Agriculture	Trish Neilson	President, Rainy River Federation of Agriculture
	Kim Jo Bliss	Emo Agriculture Research Centre
	Gary Silworsky	Ontarion Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
	Kim Cornell	Cornell Farm
	Amos Brielmann	German Immigrant, Local farmer
	John Gerber	Swiss Immigrant, Local farmer
	Petra Gerber	Swiss Immigrant, Local farmer
	Mark Husser	French Immigrant, Local farmer
	Alfred Burner, Ms. Burner	Austrian Immigrant, Local farmer
	Jan Vanzwol	Dutch Immigrant, Local farmer
	Werner /Toni Reimumd	German Immigrant, Local farmer
Mark Nussbaumer	Swiss Immigrant, Local farmer	

Appendix 2

Survey Questionnaire

Survey on International Immigrants in Rainy River District

Consent Form

This interview is part of a project designed to study immigration issues in the Rainy River District. The interviewer is responsible for explaining to you the nature of the project and questions. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting with this research.

Your responses will be kept confidential unless you give us permission to quote you directly. You may request that any part of the interview can remain confidential even if you agree to be quoted directly. Participation in this interview is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand the purpose of the interview and I agree to participate. I know that I may ask, now and in the future, any questions that I may have about this project. I understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any time. I have been assured that the notes or conversation relating to me will be kept confidential and that no information will be released or printed that will disclose my personal identity unless I specify otherwise.

I agree to be quoted by name and affiliation in the related reports.

Yes No

I agree to be quoted by job or institutional affiliation in the related reports but not by name.

Yes No

Name (please print) _____ Date _____

Signature _____

SURVEY ON INTERNATIONAL IMMIGRANTS IN RAINY RIVER DISTRICT

- **Basic Information** (please type your choice number under each question)
-

1. Gender **A.** Female **B.** Male
2. Age
A. Less than 20 **B.** 20-29 **C.** 30-39
D. 40-49 **E.** 50-59 **F.** 60 plus
3. Martial status **A.** Married **B.** Single
4. Highest level of education
A. No formal schooling
B. Elementary/Primary
C. Secondary/High school
D. Post-secondary/Vocational
E. Undergraduate
F. Graduate
5. Other training/skills _____
6. Individual income level
A. below 20,000 **B.** 20,000 – 29,999 **C.** 30,000 – 39,999
D. 40,000 – 49,999 **E.** 50,000 – 59,999 **F.** 60,000 – 69,999
G. 70,000 – 79,999 **H.** 80,000 – 89,999 **I.** Over 90,000
7. Which language(s) can you speak and understand?
A. English **B.** French **C.** Other _____
8. Current place of residence in Rainy River District
A. Chapple **B.** Emo **C.** Fort Frances
D. La Vallee **E.** Rainy River **F.** Other _____
9. Country of birth? _____
10. Area where you spent most of your life prior to moving to Rainy River District? _____
11. Prior to moving to Rainy River District, did you spend most of your life in mainly urban or rural environment?
A. Urban **B.** Rural

• *Settlement Information*

12. Year of move to Canada _____

13. Year of move to Rainy River District _____

14. Did you move to Rainy River District alone? **A. Yes** **B. No**

14a. If no, how many persons accompanied you? _____

15. Did any other friend, relative or member of your community follow you to Rainy River District after you had arrived?

A. Yes **B. No**

15a. If yes, how many persons followed you to Rainy River District after you arrived? _____

16. What type of immigrant were you when you applied for immigration to Canada?

A. Refugee **B. Skilled worker** **C. Business immigrant**
D. Family immigrant **E. Other** _____

17. Occupation before you came to Rainy River District _____

18. Current occupation in Rainy River District

Industry

A. Industry **B. Agriculture** **C. Retail**
D. Government **E. Professional services** _____
F. Other _____

Employment position

A. Employee (business name) _____
B. Business owner (business name) _____

19. How did you find out Rainy River District?

A. Family **B. Friend** **C. Employer**
D. Government **E. Other** _____

• *Attracting new immigrants*

23. Do you think Rainy River District should attract more immigrants for its social and economic sustainability?

- A. Yes B. No

If yes, how? If no, why? *Please explain your choice in the following space.*

24. What would you consider to be the Rainy River District's main advantages to attract new immigrants?

Please explain your opinions in the following space.

25. What would you consider to be the main obstacle(s) or problem(s) to attracting other immigrants to Rainy River District? *(multiple choice)*

- A. Too small, isolated and remote community
- B. Lack of employment opportunities for newcomers
- C. Lower salaries and wages than the rest of Canada
- D. Newcomers are not welcome
- E. Lack of cultural diversity in the population
- F. Lack of satisfactory settlement assistance to immigrants
- G. Limited choice in goods and services or more expensive than elsewhere in Canada
- H. Few, expensive and inconvenient transportation (public transit, flights etc.)
- I. Quality of education is not up to standard
- J. Quality of health care is not up to standard
- K. Dull and uninteresting place
- L. Harsh and challenging weather

If you have any other opinions, please write it down in the following space

26. What community support services and resources do you think are lacking in the Rainy River District to help immigrants adapt to and integrate into the community?

If you have any other opinions, please write it down in the following space

27. Are you planning to leave Rainy River District? **A. Yes** **B. No**

27a. If yes, why are you planning to leave Rainy River District?

Please explain in the following space.

28. Is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your participation!