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**Non-profit Immigrant Settlement Agencies in New Brunswick:
Answering the Call for Population Growth?**

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ABSTRACT

This research report presents the results of a fact-finding tour of non-profit immigrant settlement agencies in New Brunswick. At a time when this Maritime province needs immigration to prevent population decline, these agencies are partnering with governments to offer services of key importance for the settlement of newcomers, including those in non-urban communities. As much of the research on settlement services in Canada has focussed on the larger metropolitan centres, this study contributes to filling an existing research gap.

Based on semi-structured interviews with 21 key informants working in 18 organizations, we first draw a portrait of the services offered by the agencies and the clients they serve. We then describe the resources available to the settlement agencies and the mechanisms they use for governance and performance of their functions in an accountable and transparent manner.

After paying particular attention to some gender-related issues, we summarize the main challenges as self-reported by the agencies. We also stress that settlement issues tend to be very locally driven and that the non-profit settlement agencies can count on a number of competitive advantages to fulfill their mission. The report briefly discusses some key policy issues before concluding with a focus on the tension observed in the relationship between governments and the non-profit sector in the delivery of settlement services. Relevant policy recommendations are listed at the end of the document.

INTRODUCTION

Provincial governments in the Maritimes have been concerned by the small (or non-existent) population growth in the region since around 2006 (Marquis, 2008). New immigrants currently account for the bulk of population growth in these provinces where the birth rates are low and the population is aging. Thus, Atlantic Canada needs immigration to cope with labour shortages and maintain economic growth. As a country, Canada has a high per capita immigration rate but one concentrated in large metropolitan areas (e.g., Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver) outside the region. Provinces such as New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island therefore want to collaborate with federal authorities to increase immigration in their jurisdiction. To recruit immigrants and encourage them to settle outside of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver (a.k.a. the “big three”) is a potential win-win solution in that it could slow down the well-documented decline in socioeconomic well-being and strengthen the economic, social and demographic situations in regions where it is needed most (Beshiri and He, 2009; Bruce and Lister, 2003; Haan, 2008; Reimer, 2007).

Since the establishment of the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) in Manitoba in 1998, Canadian provinces have been able to play a greater role in selecting immigrants. This initiative (and others) from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has been fairly successful at recruiting immigrants to Atlantic Canada, but for these programs to truly succeed over the long term, it is necessary to keep immigrants in the provinces where they originally land rather than watch them head for a gateway city. To this end, New Brunswick established in 2007 a Population Growth Secretariat that funds non-profit agencies to deliver settlement services to newcomers. These community agencies can help immigrants access language training, find employment, and connect with their new community. Many of these associations also organize sociocultural events that bring together Canadians and newcomers for cultural exchanges and the development of a better mutual understanding. Settlement agencies are directing much of their work to ensure that newcomers can integrate into life in Canada. However, through public

education and the promotion of multiculturalism, these agencies also work to ensure that local communities are ready to accept newcomers. The non-profit immigrant settlement agencies of New Brunswick are the main population explored in this study.

This partnership represents a form of active collaboration between the state and the voluntary sector. The effort and resources invested by governments to develop and support settlement activities are not insignificant, particularly in the present difficult fiscal context. For instance, the current level of annual combined federal and provincial spending on immigrant settlement services in New Brunswick is estimated at between \$7 and \$8 million (Government official, personal communication, December 13, 2011).

Relevance of the Study

Roughly three-quarters of recent immigrants live in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver (Hou 2007), so the overwhelming majority of immigration research in Canada, either explicitly (by selecting only major census metropolitan areas) or implicitly (by conducting a national analysis even though immigrants aren't evenly distributed across the country), focuses on its "big three" census metropolitan areas (CMAs). The same is true of Canadian studies on settlement services, which have also focused on large urban centres (McGrath et al., 2010; Richmond and Shields, 2005; Sadiq, 2004). In this context, an examination of what is happening in this field in smaller jurisdictions is long overdue. A smaller province like New Brunswick, which received only 2,125 immigrants in 2010 (CIC, 2011), presents challenges for settlement that might not be present elsewhere, including attitudinal issues. As will be shown in this report, some local communities in New Brunswick still need to work toward becoming more welcoming (see also Hanson and Barber, 2011: 19).

Research on the efficacy of settlement services has implications not only for immigrants themselves but also for the communities of which they are a part. 2008 was the first year in which more humans worldwide lived in urban areas than in rural regions; in response, the Government of Canada has expressed its concern about the 'over-urbanization' of its population. Canada, along with 85% of other United Nations member states, acknowledges that

it must become more proactive in directing population settlement (UNFPA 2008). Enhancing the potential of settlement services is a critical component of this mandate.

Objectives of the Study

The purposes of this study are to describe the work performed by settlement agencies, review the resources at their disposal, identify the challenges they face, and discuss their practices in relation to the existing policy context in New Brunswick, with some insights also gleaned from PEI's experience. More specifically, based on semi-structured interviews conducted with agency leaders and government officials, and using a qualitative research design, this research aims to

- describe the resources and strengths available to these settlement agencies in accomplishing their mission;
- explore the barriers and challenges encountered in delivering services to immigrants within the existing policy context;
- identify and discuss some of the practices employed by these agencies to use their resources most effectively;
- provide information to stakeholders (agencies, governments, immigrants, employers, academics and the general public) on the opportunities and limitations of using non-profit agencies to offer settlement services to newcomers; and
- recommend areas for improvement in offering settlement services.

Conceptual Framework

Many contemporary Canadian discussions about and analyses of public policies are framed in a public sector versus private sector bipolar discourse debating the relative merits of state intervention and market mechanisms. This perspective overlooks other important social actors,

however, such as families and friends (the informal sector) and the voluntary and non-profit sector situated between state and market (Phillips et al., 2001). However, welfare pluralism is a perspective that takes into account these other social actors or sectors in the delivery of human services (Skelton, 1998). It is an effective approach for analyzing a human service area, whether homecare, childcare or immigrant settlement services. It suggests beginning the investigation by asking key informants relatively basic questions, such as “what services are offered?”, “to whom are these services offered?”, “how are these services funded?”, “how are the services delivered?”, and “how are the services regulated or monitored?” The real potential of this perspective can be seen when the answers to these questions are combined into different possible permutations to illuminate the true picture of what is happening with these types of services (Thériault, 2012).

Methods

This research is based primarily on information reported to us by key informants who shared how they experience and perceive immigration issues. In this context, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 informants representing 18 different organizations (see Table 1). This method ensures that the focus remained on the informant and his or her experience and expertise (McCraken, 1988). Sixteen (16) such interviews were conducted face to face on location and two were administered by phone. The bulk of the information was provided by representatives of non-profit settlement agencies, but two interviews were also conducted with government officials, along with one pre-test interview with a respondent from an ethnocultural association. That particular interview confirmed to us that our focus on services would be best served by limiting our data collection to settlement agencies rather than also including ethnocultural organizations.

Five (5) interviews were conducted in French and 16 in English, each lasting typically between 30 and 90 minutes. Eleven (11) respondents were women and ten (10) were men, and all the interviews were conducted between August and September 2011. Transcription (and in some cases translation) of the interviews was completed at the end of October, and data analysis began in earnest in November 2011.

Table 1: Selected Characteristics of Interviewed Organizations

Type of Organization	# of Interviews # of Interviewees		Province
Settlement Agencies and Umbrella Organizations	14	17	NB & PEI
	1	1	NB
Government Agencies	1	1	NB
	1	1	PEI
Other (Ethnocultural Assoc.)	1	1	NB
TOTAL	18	21	2

The interview schedule used in this study was developed based on a previous study of human service organizations in New Brunswick (Thériault et al., 2008). It covered the following themes: 1) services offered, 2) clients served, 3) assets and resources of the organization providing the services, 4) governance, 5) accountability, 6) local context, 7) gender issues, 8) main challenges, 9) best practices or strengths, 10) policy, and 11) other issues.

Funding for this research was received from the Atlantic Metropolis Centre in June 2011. The project was approved by the Research Ethics Board in May and is on file at the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton) as REB File # 2011-056. All participants were informed verbally and in writing about the nature and purpose of the project and given the option to refuse to answer any question or opt out of the project entirely (see Consent Form in appendix).

In giving written consent for their participation in this study, informants could choose the level of confidentiality they were comfortable with our using in reporting their information (see consent form in Appendix). To our surprise, in only two organizations did the interviewees request the “high” level of confidentiality. Respondents from ten organizations selected the “medium” level, while those from the remaining six (four of which were francophone) chose to waive their right to confidentiality and allow us to associate their comments with their name and organization as we saw fit in this analysis.

Identifying the settlement agencies and umbrella organizations to be approached to participate in the study was relatively easy, as this is public information, and the number of agencies in New Brunswick and PEI is small. We nevertheless crosschecked our list for completeness with our contacts at the New Brunswick Population Growth Division (PGD) of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL).

We enjoyed excellent participation in the study as we were able to secure an interview with all but one organization contacted. In fact, most participants were extremely accommodating and eager to share their experience with us, and they also showed a genuine interest in this research. We would argue, therefore, that the information in this report can be considered representative of nearly all settlement agencies in New Brunswick. The agencies visited are

located all over New Brunswick, including in its three main urban centres (Fredericton, Moncton and Saint John), some smaller municipalities, and small towns serving semi-rural areas, with a concentration of francophone agencies in the northern half of the province. Some agencies, such as MAGMA in Moncton and MACR in Bathurst, offer bilingual services, while in PEI, services are centralized in a single agency, where we conducted an interview (# 08) on September 9, 2011.

It should be noted that this study centres on the situation in our home province of New Brunswick and is not, strictly speaking, a comparison between the policy and practices in New Brunswick and those in PEI. However, the PEI example does offer in some instances an interesting comparison for our analysis and discussion. We analysed the qualitative data collected in this research using themes pre-established at the time the interview schedule was constructed. As is the case in this type of semi-grounded approach, other themes for analysis (transportation, for instance) emerged during data collection (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), but the overall validity of this study rests ultimately on the richness and the sheer amount of data collected as shown by Becker (1970) in his seminal work on methodology.

Services Offered by Settlement Agencies

The non-profit settlement agencies that took part in this study provide a range of services, with most offering many of the common ones. Other services are offered by only a small number of agencies and have unique nuances geared to their specific client groups and locations. To understand the services offered, it is also important to remember that different organizations were created at different times so are at different stages of maturity in terms of organizational development. Therefore, the capacity to provide services differs from one organization to the other.

Among the most common services is first some form of language training tailored to the needs of adult immigrants. In some agencies, this is a formal, well-established program (such as ESL), while in others, it may be more informal. Depending on the community, the language training tends to be offered only in English (for example, in Florenceville and St. George) or only in French (for example, in Caraquet and Saint-Léonard). In the larger centres, such as Saint John and Moncton, language training is available in both English and French (but not necessarily in the same agency).

The second common type of services relates to employability. Here, services help with resume writing, job search and interview skills, and occasionally some job placement or internship programs, as well as entrepreneurship information. Less common are the programs or activities geared specifically to potential employers, although a number of agencies are trying to cultivate active contacts with local businesses in a variety of ways.

The third type of commonly found services includes standard settlement services, such as providing airport pick-ups, finding appropriate housing and furniture, providing help obtaining documents like driver's licences and Medicare cards, filling out bureaucratic forms, and registering children in school. On the community education side, several agencies make presentations in schools and other venues to educate and sensitize the community on immigration issues.

Most agencies also organize social events, such as a short outing to a local park or to a foreign film, where immigrants can both meet other newcomers and also be introduced to friendly Canadians. A few larger agencies have a wider offering of services, including life skills activities (such as cooking classes), and also host various information sessions offered by other partner agencies (such as the RCMP). Finally, a couple of agencies have started to offer services to seniors and youth, two age groups not usually well served by settlement services.

Obviously, what can be offered is what can be funded; funding, not the imagination of the agencies, is the limiting factor. Therefore, funders (mainly governments) have a considerable influence in defining the mandate of the agencies and what services they can offer.

Most agencies use a traditional social services delivery model: they try to serve the people who walk through their doors the best they can. This is a fairly reactive approach, mainly centred on the newcomers and might not be enough to optimize immigrant retention numbers. More efforts may be needed to engage employers and to persuade them to hire immigrants. Further, more relationships need to be built with local employers to give them the tips and tools (even perhaps government incentives) to hire, manage and retain newcomers. Without successful employment, all other settlement activities may contribute relatively little to the ultimate goal of retaining immigrants in the province.

While some useful tools and templates are made available to settlement agencies by the New Brunswick Multicultural Council (NBMC), the province's umbrella organization for the sector, and some information sessions are offered at the NBMC's annual conference, we were told little about harmonized trainings that would be available to, and used by, these agencies across the province. The impression we were left with after our tour of the province was that most agencies are still learning by trial and error, with a few longer established ones having set firm guidelines for service delivery, partly because receiving immigrants from very diverse cultures is still a fairly new reality in the history of the province.

Clients Served

The immigrant settlement agencies we visited serve many categories of clients. Permanent residents constitute the largest group in most agencies, the major reason being that the federal funding by Citizenship and Immigration Canada is earmarked for permanent residents only. Other categories of clients include temporary foreign workers, who represent a large part of the clientele in a limited number of small agencies. They, like international students, receive services funded by the province.

It is important to stress that the immigrant client composition differs from one town to another. In some locations we find very few temporary foreign workers, while in other places they make up a significant part of the clientele. Even the typical profile of the foreign temporary worker differs from one agency to another. In Woodstock, he/she might be a truck driver, while in the Bathurst area, the worker might be a mining engineer or a skilled healthcare worker.

As for refugees, they are essentially served by larger agencies in the three larger urban centres, with the notable exception of Saint-Léonard, where CIRNO has developed a speciality serving them in a semi-rural milieu. Immigrant settlement agencies also offer services to a limited number of immigrant entrepreneurs sponsored by the province. Some people visiting Canada and doing an exploratory trip before immigrating are also among the clients served occasionally, while others may be in the country under a work permit and require some information. Even Canadians moving in from other provinces receive some services from certain agencies.

As with many other human services, or with casework in social work, the services generally are not limited to the primary client but extend to his or her entire family. Spouses, children and occasionally grandparents are also being served, even if they might be counted as part of one case. Services are also received for various lengths of time, from a punctual once-only contact (to deal with a specific form) to a maximum of three years of service contact – the period

needed to obtain Canadian citizenship. But in most cases, clients receive services for one or two years.

Resources Available

The federal and provincial governments are the main (and in some cases the only) funders of the province's settlement agencies. At the federal level, this funding is provided primarily by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), although other departments, such as Status of Women Canada or Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, may fund certain activities in a few agencies. At the provincial level, funding comes mainly through the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL), particularly through its Population Growth Division (PGD), formerly known as the Population Growth Secretariat. In 2010-11, the PGD's total budget was about \$4.87 million (GNB, 2011: 135). Some of its agency funding is actually money provided by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) for a limited time. Again, some other provincial departments (the Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport, for instance) may also provide some funding for specific projects or activities.

In terms of size, most settlement organizations fit into a three-fold typology based on both annual budget and the number of full-time employees. Most in this typology would be considered small or medium sized, with only a few large organizations. Typically, "small" organizations are those with an annual budget of less than \$300,000 and about three full-time employees: the coordinator or director, who is also a service provider, an employee working full time on settlement services, and an administrative secretary receptionist. Medium-sized agencies are those with annual budgets roughly between \$300,000 and \$500,000 with four to six full-time employees and often one part-time employee. Large agencies are limited to either umbrella or province-wide organizations like NBMC and PEI ANC or some agencies in the main urban centres. Large agencies typically have a budget over \$1,000,000 and between about 7 and 30 full-time employees.¹

Overall, the budgets of most settlement agencies in New Brunswick (characterized above as small or medium sized) are relatively modest given the financial requirements of running a

modern human services organization. With few exceptions, the settlement agencies studied have annual budgets below \$500,000. In fact, Thériault et al. (2008: 218) found that 75% of charitable human service organizations in New Brunswick have budgets below \$500,000, and only 20% have budgets in excess of \$1 million. Non-profit immigrant settlement agencies therefore seem to conform to the size pattern found elsewhere in the province's non-profit sector. Employee compensation levels also can be characterized as modest and in line with the usually low levels of compensation found in Canada's voluntary sector (Thériault, 2004).

From a public administration perspective, another advantage associated with the non-profit delivery of human services (aside from the lower costs of employee compensation) is the capacity of non-profit agencies to recruit the help of unpaid volunteers in the local community and benefit from various forms of in-kind support. The agency leaders we spoke to mention the invaluable help volunteers provide their organization. The volunteer base at their disposal seemed to range from 15 to 150 individuals depending on the location, size and the age of the organization. While difficult to measure precisely, this volunteer component certainly represents an important (but often overlooked) contribution to the settlement of newcomers in the province.

Finally, various community partners also provide in-kind support to the work of the settlement agencies that can, in some cases, be quantified in monetary values and also be quite significant. For instance, some municipalities, as well as local New Brunswick Community Colleges (NBCC), have been cited as major in-kind supporters by providing free office space for some settlement agencies. In the case of CAIENA, in the Acadian peninsula, three local partners play that role, as the interviewee explains:

The community contributes a lot also to our work. We have 3 points of services (here, the *Université de Moncton* - Shippagan Campus and *Enterprise Peninsula*) and we don't pay rent. It is picked up by the New Brunswick Department of Fisheries here, the UMCS at the University and by *Enterprise Peninsula* at their location. So we save rent and this represents about \$30,000 per year! It is an important contribution from the community. [Interview #06]

To summarize, the resources used by the settlement agencies are not limited to the formal funding received by governments and a few other sources but also include the time and support of dedicated individuals and in-kind support of partnering organizations in the community.

Governance

As non-profit organizations, the settlement agencies studied in this report are governed by volunteer boards of directors (hereafter referred to as the boards) of various sizes and composition that were formed at different times (depending on the age of the organization) following different procedures. The executive director of a recently formed agency in northwestern New Brunswick, for instance, explains that “Board members were selected through a very open process that included a call for interest made to the general public in the newspaper.” [Interview #03]

Typically, these boards comprise 9 or 13 individuals (modal values) and, regardless of how and when they were constituted, generally adhere to what is often called a *policy governance model*, which clearly distinguishes between the leadership roles of the board and chief executive officer (called the executive director or the coordinator in these agencies). Here is how Bradshaw, Hayday and Armstrong (2007: 9) summarize the model:

The board’s role is one of stewardship on behalf of its communities. In order to fulfil this role, the board focuses on the vision, mission, values and strategic priorities of the organization, ensures responsiveness to community stakeholders, and empowers staff to carry out the mission within established limitations. The CEO provides operational leadership in managing the organization to fulfil its mission. The board monitors and evaluates the CEO’s performance according to its policies. The board governs the organization by articulating and documenting broad policies [...].

This model has a number of strengths, such as clarity of roles and responsibilities, a focus on outcomes, connection to external stakeholders and empowering of the executive director. Yet these authors add that a potential drawback lies in its limited capacity to deal with evolution and change because it assumes one vision and perpetuates the status quo through its policy framework.

Interviewees (mostly executive directors/coordinators but also some board chairs/presidents) generally described the working relationship between the board and executive director as

healthy, cordial and productive. The clarity of roles and responsibilities was alluded to by a respondent from northeastern New Brunswick:

I have a daily conversation with the President [Chair], but the board as a whole is a policy management board that approves an action plan and then does not micro-manage the “kitchen’s” issues. I feel we have a good board that has trust in me, and if I need help or information, they are there for me. [Interview #06]

Along the same line, another respondent from the same region stated the following:

We have a very supportive and harmonious board, and I really lean on them in terms of overall policy guidance, and they've been wonderful in allowing us to do our day-to-day activities. [Interview #07]

While the picture drawn here is generally very positive, it does not mean that problems or tensions do not exist in the relationship between the executive director and the board. One respondent insisted on commenting at the end of our interview that the strengths of the policy governance model are not all fully realized in his organization:

I am returning to the challenges of governance... We need to have resources to properly train the members of the board of directors so that they understand what we do and what their role is. This is about the lines between governance and day-to-day administration. There are often conflicts about that in agencies like this one. More trust must be given to the executive directors. [Interview #03]

Conversely, we also found a respondent complaining that his board was not involved enough and was too distant:

I have a hard time getting them together to meet. No really, because I want them to ask questions. I want them to get involved. I want them to ask about policy because they're overly dependent on me, and I don't think it's sustainable for the organization. [Interview #11]

This case actually also illustrates well the potential difficulty a board following the policy governance model can have when faced with major changes; it also suggests where solutions can be found. In the words of our interviewee,

On the governance issue, the organization existed for a long time, for many years, as a loose social organization. In 2005 it came together. It kind of reinvigorated but still had not been incorporated. It was only in 2008 that they incorporated. But up until 2008, it was not in the business of providing services. They were not in the business of signing contracts and reporting [to funders]. So it was a big transformation in terms of organizational development and that had to take place and they weren't ready for it. And I knew when they hired me that I was going to have to engineer some things to get this organization capable of taking on the responsibilities that it had to take on. I wasn't explicit about that with the board though. So they had people who had been on the board for many years and they wanted to do everything in the same way. They were very reluctant to take on new responsibilities. And so one of the things we had to address was bringing new blood into the organization and having other representations that have other strategic benefits as well. So I convinced the board that we had to have a city representative brought onto the board, we had to have a representative of [name of the local school], we had to have a representative of the school districts 16 and 11, and then from the membership at large. [Interview #11]

What this quote indicates is that this organization and several other settlement agencies have adopted, or are leaning towards, what Bradshaw, Hayday and Armstrong (2007: 9-10) called a *Constituent/Representative Board Model*, one not entirely different from the previous one but characterized by a more direct and clear link between the organization's board and its constituents. The constituents (such as schools and post-secondary institutions, municipalities, hospitals, business associations) are represented informally or formally on the governing board and can thus participate in policy development, planning and problem solving. This approach can decentralize input to the decision-making and better connect the organization to the "big picture" issues in the community.

Several interviewees reported that having representatives from the municipal government, the regional school district, and the local community college or university had greatly benefited their organization in terms of networking, flow of communication and coordination of

initiatives. As an example, an agency director who spends a lot of her time interacting with schools, was considering at the time of interview inviting someone from her local school district to serve on her board to help smooth things out.

For agencies covering a large geographic area, part of the representation might be structured to ensure that the different local communities are seated at the table. At least one agency, we were told, reserved a seat on the board for a youth representative.

An important group of stakeholders often represented on the boards of New Brunswick's settlement agencies are the immigrants themselves. In fact, they actually hold 5 of the 10 voting seats on the CAFI board in Moncton. Immigrant board members are often former clients of the organization who want to stay connected but play a different role once they are permanently and successfully settled. They bring the valuable first hand insights of those who have been through the settlement process. Yet a few agencies report having some difficulty attracting continued immigrant representation to their board. The reasons for this absence of immigrants on the board of some agencies should be explored further. As a respondent stated simply,

One thing that I should underline is that while we previously had members from immigrant and various cultural communities, it did not work in the end, and we had to turn to our local [Canadian] community to find members for the board [Interview #14]

To help the board and executive director, various committees and sub-committees are often created to work on particular issues (from social events to finances). Larger organizations tend to have more such committees, which might comprise members of the board and staff, as well as external partners as need be. The boards generally meet monthly except perhaps during summer vacation time, as is common practice in the non-profit sector.

Finally, a few respondents specifically spoke of their organization's "membership," which might include their current and former clients but also other interested individuals gravitating around the organizations, such as Canadian volunteers. As one respondent told us,

We also have a membership because our clients are members, plus we have Canadian members. There is no fee to become a member; as long as you are 10 years old and share the mission and vision of the organization, you can join. There is a little application form to complete and that is all. [Interview #15]

Joining the membership can provide access to an electronic or paper-based newsletter or bulletin, for instance, as well as to invitations to social activities organized by the agency. In some cases, membership might be accompanied by a voting right at the annual general meeting (AGM), which brings us to the topic of accountability.

Accountability, Transparency and Retention

Accountability will be discussed in three steps. First, we will discuss the accountability mechanism organizations have in place for reporting to funders. Second, we will talk about the general efforts organizations make to have transparent operations in terms of letting both clients and the local community know what they are doing. Finally, we will speak briefly about difficulties tracking retention (a key outcome).

Accountability

Government funders closely watch how settlement agencies disburse the public money they receive. If accountability means, in its narrow sense, that we can follow the money where it came from and where it went, we can certainly say that we observed no major accountability deficiencies. This is not surprising, however, because reporting requirements are stipulated by the funding agreements. Different funders, such as CIC or the Province of New Brunswick, have different reporting requirements, so a funder may stipulate slightly different requirements for the various programs or activities it funds.

Generally, interviewees explain that at the federal level, a monthly report is prepared with both financial information and narrative information about activities. In addition, information must be entered into the ICAM system, which one informant described as “archaic”. At the provincial level, reporting is made quarterly (every three months), and requirements are a little easier to meet. Since most executive directors report to their board monthly, information tends to be gathered month-to-month anyway, and can be consolidated into a quarterly or an annual report as needed.

Of course, once the number of grant agreements multiplies so does the reporting because the information in each report has to be tailored to relate what a particular grant is funding. This is time consuming and can be challenging for new organizations, as well as for smaller ones

whose executive director or coordinator is often a “Jack of all trades,” as pointed out by one respondent:

I have a lot of problems with it [reporting] because of what I said earlier and that is that I'm not a full-time administrator. I have to get involved in the delivery of services and activities, and this is a challenge for all the small offices. [Interview #11]

While respondents understand that it may not be possible to harmonize all reporting into one form or report, given that funders support programs with different objectives, some interviewees say they would appreciate the funder's being more specific on what is to be reported. The same respondent expressed frustration in this regard:

Oh, it would be good if each organization [funder] could be very clear — explicit — on what they would like us to report on. The CIC wants us to report on employment services, and they're not even funding employment services... You know, I want to say mind your own business. But they don't give a template, so then it's more difficult for me to solicit the information from my staff members who are preparing their reports, and it's more difficult for me to consolidate it. [Interview #11]

The accountability of settlement agencies to their funders is, in many cases, also ensured and reinforced by occasional site visits by funders. Some organizations describe these visits as common occurrences that happen “at least twice a year.” [Interview #05] Further, many agencies invite their funder(s) to their AGM and their main social events. As part of some visits, funders also may have the opportunity to meet with an agency's clients.

Hence, at least formally, settlement agencies are clearly accountable to their funders, as is generally the case with non-profit organizations partnering with governments to deliver human services. Of course, accountability should not be directed only to the funder but also, at least in some ways, to the clients and community at large. In the former case, accountability can take the form of mechanisms to obtain feedback from clients; in the latter, it can refer to general transparency practices.

Transparency

Clients provide feedback to the settlement agencies in a variety of formal and informal ways. One agency in Saint John [Interview #02] set up a “committee of newcomers” for that purpose. Another from Saint John holds focus groups with clients twice a year to gather their suggestions and discuss their needs [Interview #04]. Many agencies use anonymous evaluation forms to receive feedback on services such as language classes and to improve what they do and the way it fits clients’ needs. Some agencies also use exit interviews as clients approach the end of the time in which they receive services.

The community at large, as well as stakeholders closer to the agencies, are kept abreast of their activities through the Annual General Meeting, the media, and some public events. All settlement agencies hold an AGM, where an annual report and audited financial statements are presented. Some AGMs are open to the general public or at least to a larger number of stakeholders, like client-members, funders and partner organizations.

Traditional and new media are used extensively by agencies to communicate with clients, the public and other parties. Newspaper articles, newsletters and local radio broadcasts are used in tandem with Listserv-type electronic mailing list software applications and Facebook pages, the latter particularly appreciated for their interactive character and effectiveness at reaching younger community members. Websites are also used to varying degrees as some newer agencies visited were still constructing their website at the time of the interview. While some organizations have rich and extensive websites, others have a more limited web presence. Most agencies post information about their board of directors, but relatively few make their annual report and audited financial statements readily available to download. In our view all non-profit organizations delivering human services should post these documents. The website of the Multicultural Association of Fredericton (www.mcaf.nb.ca/index.php/about/overview/) is a good example, where the annual report (including financial statements) is easily accessible.

Face to face interaction at occasional meetings with partner organizations, school presentations, social events and cultural showcases or festivals allows settlement agencies to

both sensitize the community to immigration issues and get information out about the services they provide.

Tracking retention

In general, the settlement agencies in New Brunswick told us that they experience challenges in both identifying their potential clients and tracking what happens to them once they have received services. In identifying potential clients, one interviewee summarized the difficulty as follows:

Look, all centres will tell you that sometimes it is difficult to identify who just arrived. We don't get a list, and the municipality does not get one either. We don't know. So we miss some people. If they don't ask for our services how would we know? [Interview #14]

Similarly, many interviewees admit that the capacity of their organization to track what happens to, and where their clients and former clients are, over time is limited. In the words of another respondent,

That is difficult to do for this clientele; it is a challenge. If they move for family-related matters, we might learn about it, but if they get a job elsewhere in the province or the country, we might have no ideas that they are gone or where. [Interview 06]

Of course, the organizations are well connected in their community so are not completely in the dark about the coming and going of their clients, but the evidence about who stays tends to be anecdotal rather than systematic. The situation is not fundamentally different in PEI, where a government official talked to us about making an educated guess regarding retention:

That's been the big thing with retention is that once they're permanent residents, they can move wherever they would like and so start to tracking people is obviously not easy, you know. But what we're doing now is we're seeing ... We measure how many people come back for language training every year. We can tell how many clients have had repeated access with the [local settlement agency]. We know who approaches

immigration services on a continual basis. We can see kids that are in the system. So we usually have a round number of what our retention rate is, but we're still working on getting one definitive source that we can say this is what ... You know, there's different databases that we considered building and things like that, but basically look at retention from a various number of sources and we try to make an educated guess from that. [Interview #09]

One should not be surprised by this, as it is a common challenge for organizations, both from government and non-profit sectors, to keep in touch with individuals once they are no longer receiving services from the organization. For instance, social assistance departments in Canada often wish to study former welfare recipients who have successfully left the rolls with the hope that something useful could be learned from them that would help others avoid social assistance. Unfortunately, these departments soon realize that this type of “where are they now” study is very complex, difficult, and expensive and always time consuming. As a result, few systematic follow-ups are actually performed.

Generally, settlement agencies are not equipped with either the capacity or the resources to appropriately perform post-services tracking. The accountability metrics they use focus mostly on capturing and accounting for processes and outputs (for example, number both of clients served and training sessions conducted) rather than outcomes (for example, how many clients found and kept employment). There is little or no systematic tracking mechanism in place to follow how many clients served are still in the local area. Hence, it is simply not reasonable to expect non-profit settlement agencies (many of them small) to produce hard figures about immigrant retention. This job is for governments at the provincial and federal levels to figure out, possibly through monitoring health cards and/or income tax filings.

At the New Brunswick Population Growth Division of PETL, this turn has not been taken yet, and mainly outputs, not outcomes, are counted², as reflected in this response by the official interviewed about accountability in his organization:

We provide input to the department's annual report. So each branch ... We just finished that, as a matter of fact, last week. We have to list what we did last year, you know. We

funded X number of projects; we accounted for so many activities, you know. Similarly, on the immigration side, they will say, okay, we processed X number of provincial nominees, so many landed, so many in progress, so we feed into the bigger annual report of the whole department. [Interview #18]

Gender-related Issues

As part of the interview process, we touched on gender issues as they pertain to the delivery of services to newcomers. As with many topics discussed in this study, we found some variation in what was reported but also some commonalities. The dominant comment about gender was that, strictly speaking, the organizations do not offer different services geared to men versus women and that all services are open to both genders. However, all informants who responded along this line did agree (and in some case insisted) that while “the same,” the services nevertheless needed to be delivered differently to men and women.

Employment-related services were the most commonly cited examples of those that might need adapting to the gender of the client, often because of difference in gender roles between the culture in the country of origin and the normative standard generally found in Canada. A female respondent from northern New Brunswick explained it this way:

I would say that there is some adaptation to be done for both men and women. In Canada, we are more liberal on gender roles than in many other countries, so we have to tell men that it is possible that they will have a woman for a boss here... For women, we have to tell them that they have more rights here than what they are used to. So we talk about Canadian culture, which includes the gains made by women. [Interview #03]

Another (male) respondent from northern New Brunswick shared this with us along the same line, stressing the need for the organization to have frontline staff from both genders:

It's really important, I think, in an office that is serving newcomers to have a frontline service involving both genders because certain cultures relate better to one [gender] or the other. We have a client who will not ... he doesn't even talk to [the female worker] when she comes into the office. He just walks right through her office and comes right in to see me (laughter). It pisses her off! In any other office it might be problematic, but he can only relate to the male in the office. The opposite is that [the female worker] learns things from [female] clients... We have a domestic issue with one of the clients. The [female] client will come and talk to her, but she would never share the kind of things that she's telling her with me. So we have to have that mix. [Interview #11]

A third respondent, a male from a large city centre, insisted that immigrants must be made aware of gender-related workplace norms because a lack of awareness might cause them problems in their job search:

Yes, we realized progressively that gender is important. We see it in so many different ways. The work culture in certain countries is that women should be very discrete and subservient by not looking you in the eyes, for instance. Well, in some jobs in Canada it might be a problem if you hire a woman who will not look men in the eyes... The other way around can also be an issue if a man ignores the women who work with him, especially if one of them is his boss... Many immigrants are not aware of this happening, and it is something that must be pointed out to them. [Interview #15]

So what can be taken from this is? On the one hand, the need to have both genders on staff and the importance of sensitivity to gender issues when delivering services, particularly job-related services) and, on the other hand, the importance of educating newcomers about workplace norms and Canadian culture in general where expectations probably lean toward gender equality.

Most respondents also recognized gender differences in the help-seeking behaviour of clients, their patterns of service utilization and the challenges they face. Among newcomer families, it is usually the mother who assumes the main parenting and homemaking responsibilities, so women are more involved with child and youth issues, (lack of) daycare and school-related issues, and cooking classes, among others. To use the words of one informant, “[...] the female client is more family oriented” [Interview #18]. This focus on family and homemaking can leave some immigrant women feeling social isolated from the community at large, especially in small rural milieus with no access to public transit or daycare centres. Our informants commented as follows:

[...] then sometimes there can be a sense of alienation of staying at home with just the kids. Sure you're doing that, but your whole family structure is not there anymore. [Interview #16]

One big issue is that we have no daycare services for very young children. This is a problem because if you came from Africa, that was dealt with by your family network,

and if you came from Europe, you are expecting free daycare services to be available like it is in France and you find nothing. So immigrant women must often stay home to care for pre-school-aged children. It makes the employment search for these clients very difficult. It is a mystery for me to see a country like Canada based on immigration and where feminism is relatively advanced and see that the daycare issue has not been structured and solved. [Interview #15]

While the situation for immigrant women with pre-school children might be difficult, perhaps especially in rural areas, potentially the worst situation can be among the wives of temporary foreign workers who bring their family over. The other family members are not allowed to work in the community, and thus many (employment-related) services offered by settlement agencies do not apply to them. We were told that some wives of foreign temporary workers who are truck drivers (and, hence, regularly away from home for extended periods) have a very difficult time. They are prohibited from having work permits, are isolated, may lack a means of transportation, and may have no husband around for many days at a time, but yet must care for their children and “hold down the fort.” That is an example of a segment of the newcomer population that falls through the gap in services.

The male client was typically described to us as having higher self esteem. We were told that men seem more knowledgeable about the immigration process, more independent and “more in control of their documents” [Interview #14]. As one respondent said: “[...] men come in and sign forms” [Interview #15]. Men are also perceived by some of our interviewees as less restricted by family obligation and thus more available to participate in a recreational activity organized by a settlement agency, for instance.

Gender differences are not insignificant and must be taken into account by both agencies and funders to ensure some equal opportunity in the settlement experience. Minimally, there needs to be an awareness of the situation by agency workers and to offer services in gender-sensitive ways.

Only a few agencies have gone a step beyond that however, and offer some gender-specific programming, such as in the field of employment. For example, a larger organization from Saint John, where numbers might justify it, was considering offering women an opportunity to practice their English together, separate from men.

In Charlottetown, the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada (PEIANC) has set up an immigrant women's support group that brings them together with established Islanders and organizes various social activities to create linkages, build bridges and combat social isolation. Also available in PEI is Girls Inc., a program designed to help with the settlement of newcomer girls that also works to increase their self esteem. We were told that a parallel service for boys (who may have different interests than girls) was in the planning phase.

Thus, in some cases, some services are geared specifically to one gender or offered to both genders separately, but that is relatively rare. Age-specific services are probably more common, as the understanding that children and youth have different needs than adults is well understood. One interviewee added to this that immigrant seniors (who came to join their adult children) are still under-served and that there is the potential to develop services for this segment of the immigrant population [Interview #16].

We should also mention the case of PRUDE Inc. in Saint John, an organization, incorporated in 1981, specifically focused on offering services to women and their children and providing activities for newcomer women to prepare them for life in Canada. While providing services to only one gender is not the policy option we would recommend for the province as a whole, PRUDE must be commended for its efforts in the settlement of women and children. Other settlement agencies could learn from some practices developed by PRUDE when it comes to serving newcomer women. PRUDE is currently negotiating a merger with another settlement agency based in Saint John, and we hope PRUDE's sensitivity to women's settlement issues will both endure and be transferred to the new merged organization.

Finally, settlement agencies may also encounter occasional cases of abused immigrant women in their work. Ensuring that the agency's staff comprises both genders and includes former

immigrants is a good diversity policy yet might not be enough to properly recognize domestic violence issues and address them through effective referrals. If Canadians are ready to admit that settlement services are not only about finding jobs for immigrants, then there may be a need to widen and improve the training of settlement workers regarding domestic abuse (Miedema, 1999). The Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research (MMFC) at UNB has developed expertise in offering training on intimate partner violence to various professional groups in New Brunswick. In fact, the NBMC might want to explore partnering with the MMFC to offer information sessions on this issue to those working at immigrant settlement agencies.

Main Challenges

A key line of questioning during the interviews explored the main challenges faced by the settlement agencies as perceived by their leaders. Some are primarily those of the organizations (like start-up issues); others are those of the newcomers themselves (like limited language proficiency), and yet others are more societal (like the need to be educated on immigration issues or the lack of public transit). In the end, however, it matters little where to locate these challenges because all have to be addressed to make the settlement experience succeed. That said, to make these challenges more tractable, when relevant to the discussion below we discuss how the various issues affect organizations, the newcomers they serve, and the societies of which they are both a part.

A large number of challenges were identified by our informants, but ten surfaced repeatedly and will therefore be discussed. Establishing a firm priority order among these challenges would be unwise, but clearly finding gainful employment for a new immigrant is the greatest enticement to get him or her to settle permanently. This is such a given that it was not the centre of our discussions with the informants, who preferred to speak of other key factors that are less obvious.

In alphabetical order, the ten recurring challenges pertaining to immigrant settlement can be grouped under the following headings: advertising or marketing, childcare, community education, credential recognition, funding, healthcare, language, school integration, start-up issues, and transportation.

Advertising or marketing services

Getting the services offered by the agency to be known and recognized in the community so immigrants can use them was a challenge mentioned by recently created agencies.

It is to get our services better known and that they be recognized as useful for most of the immigration population. They need to be able to find our services, and we need to know

that they are looking for these services. For a new organization, that is a big challenge. We know that some people come in our region and we never have contacts with them... So, the first challenge is to prove yourself and to attract the clients to your doors. [Interview #03]

Further, immigrants themselves were at times reported to be struggling to find out where appropriate services were located. In this regard, the PEI practice of routing all newcomers through the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada better helped newcomers because it served as a central referral agency. This works because immigrants in PEI are clustered in Charlottetown and, to a lesser extent, Summerside. In New Brunswick, however, such centralization of service delivery would be more difficult to achieve.

Childcare services

Although it may be difficult for agencies to provide services to newcomers unable to secure childcare, for immigrants themselves, the lack of affordable childcare in many areas (including rural ones) is a major limiting factor in the settlement process. This is particularly true for female newcomers, for whom it makes the job search or learning a new language very difficult. As one informant explained,

One of the issues in learning the language, is childcare, so if you have ... Mostly the immigrant population newcomers are between ... I think they're sort of like between 20, 25 and 45, so they're really in the middle of their lives, and they have families and they often have kids, and so there's language school to attend, but they've got a nine-month-old baby or a year-and-a-half-old or two or three. How would a newcomer be able to afford daycare for one or two or three children...? But if there was a provision for childcare as part of that language piece, that would really help them to accelerate learning the language. [Interview #08]

Community education

Under this theme, informants discussed how the social context of their community had improved in terms of becoming welcoming to newcomers but yet how some old prejudices and assumptions persist. Thus, further work on educating the community about immigration issues is a challenge the agencies face. Here is an example given by an informant from a rural area of northwestern New Brunswick:

There is still some education about immigration to be made in this region that is 100% white and Catholic. We still have work to do even if it is much better now. We organize sensitivity activities like our "*Salon Multiculturel*" that is a travelling showcase of foods, dance and music in the region. It is well received. But I know that I will not convert everyone to the cause of immigration. That is OK. But we still see people talking about immigrants stealing jobs... Well they have the right to be here just as much as anybody else! This discourse is still present around here. You have to tell people that immigrants are looking for a better life and that they often take jobs that nobody seems to be willing to take here anyway. So we try to educate people. [Interview #14]

A provincial government official here in New Brunswick identified the same issue:

It is a challenge to make the community realize that there's benefit from immigration. You know, this mind shift of, you know, immigrants are coming here to take our jobs... So when we went around the province trying to ... There's a whole demographic issue, you know. It's just in some communities they don't see it; they don't realize it; they say, well, my son and daughter are leaving 'cause they can't find a job here and you're talking about bringing more immigrants. I think we need to really work a lot on that. So if the community is not embracing this idea, how am I going to be able to put a community centre or settlement agency there? [Interview #18]

Still, an agency director working in a high unemployment area of northeastern New Brunswick remains optimistic:

We have to face the facts of the job market in the region where the unemployment rate is near 18% or 20 % currently. It is hard to attract immigrants, and it is hard for people from here to think of immigration as a solution. It is starting, but it is a slow process. [Interview #06]

Community education is an issue both immigrants and service providers will have to face together.

Credential recognition and Canadian experience

The difficulties connected to the recognition of foreign credentials were among the most frequently mentioned barriers to newcomer settlement, with at least five interviewees pointing to this issue. Governments, but also professional associations, need to do more to speed up the resolution of this problem. As a respondent from northern New Brunswick stated,

The non-recognition of foreign diplomas and credentials by professional associations in NB does not help the integration of immigrants, and it is hard to tell someone who is 40 years old to go back to school. If we could see some more openings on behalf of professional organizations on this issue, it would be a big plus in New Brunswick. [Interview #06]

Without credential recognition, it is difficult for a newcomer to acquire the Canadian work experience employers often demand. Some progress has been made by offering apprenticeships to a certain category of newcomers, but many remain trapped in a vicious circle where the absence of recognized credentials prevents them from acquiring Canadian work experience and, thus, finding permanent employment, even if their skills are in demand, as another interviewee reminded us:

We have, in this region, wonderful training facilities and so on. If we could give some of those immigrants just a little bit more support and make it less onerous to get those certification requirements because we have vacancies that are just crying to be filled, and we have very competent immigrant people, but they need to get that little bit of Canadian experience and that piece of paper. [Interview #07]

Funding instability

As Katherine Scott (2003) noted in an important study nearly a decade ago, “funding matters” for non-profit and voluntary organizations. Governments have for decades now used the non-profit and voluntary sector to download the delivery of some human services through a targeted approach, in which tightly regulated contracts constrain and influence all aspects of an organization’s activities, structure and decision-making. Many strings are attached, the funding time frames are short (e.g., a one-year basis), and the reporting requirements are cumbersome.

So the funding problem is not simply that centres don’t have enough money to do what they think they believe they need to. The relatively low funding is one aspect. In addition, however, the lack of stability in this funding is of great concern and brings with it an uncertainty that makes strategic planning (even medium term), as well as human resources recruitment and training, very problematic.

This whole contract, one-year contract business... You're trying to build. Okay. And this place has grown very quickly, but you have nothing. There are no building blocks; there's no security; there's no incentive, oh but we want passionate, qualified, brilliant people who are willing to work for one year and then hope to get another contract. [Interview #16]

Some organizations have begun to look at diversifying their funding sources, but all remain largely dependent on governments when cuts at all levels are the order of the day to tackle budget deficits. Other organizations are considering mergers and economies of scale as potential solutions.

A challenge, of course, is that the survival of our organization will depend on the availability of a stable funding base coming from a variety of funding sponsors, not just one. In the future it is not certain that each region will be able to keep its small local office and staff to serve about 100 clients per year. We may need to have administrative mergers and to find more efficient ways to deliver the services. But at the same time, you have to maintain the knowledge of the local community, and this can’t be all managed from Fredericton. [Interview #11]

Multi-year funding agreements would be considered a major improvement by those who run these organizations; such agreements are not without precedent as governments have implemented them for other types of services in other jurisdictions (Voluntary Sector Initiative, 2002: 7). If they cannot be implemented, then organizations should at least receive more advance notice about funding renewal toward the end of the fiscal year. At the moment, some organizations report learning about their funding only a few weeks before March 31. Further, in at least in one case, the organization systematically issues lay-off notices to every employee each year before rehiring its personnel once it has received confirmation of its funding. One can understand how such a practice (while administratively justified) may have a chilling effect on personnel recruitment and retention. Numerous informants told us that precarious funding made them feel as though their jobs were constantly in jeopardy.

Healthcare services

Some healthcare system problems newcomers face are similar to those experienced by the general population in the Maritimes, such as many not having a family doctor and waiting for months for that referral to a specialist in a hospital. But newcomers' problems are compounded by issues specific to them. If they don't yet speak English or French, for instance, and must go to the hospital, it is extremely difficult to be provided with the service of an interpreter to translate the discussion between patient and doctor or other health providers. Refugees, for their part, have often suffered major psychological trauma, and delayed access to mental health resources can be particularly taxing for them, as one interviewee pointed out:

The access to some specialized services to respond to the needs of our clients is also an issue. This is particularly true with refugees. If someone is in a crisis situation, they don't need to wait 3 weeks to see a social worker or a psychologist; they need to get help now. That is sometimes difficult. [Interview #14]

However, since this issue affects not only newcomers but the general population in the Maritimes, it is unlikely that settlement service providers will be able to do much to rectify the problem for their clients.

Language Issues

Obviously, insufficient language proficiency is generally a barrier to employment and, thus, to successful settlement. As mentioned previously, many settlement agencies are investing considerable effort into this issue. Language training for newcomers can be expensive because it is often delivered to very small groups of adults (especially outside the larger urban centres) who need a curriculum focusing on work and everyday situations.

Language is another big issue, and we do what we can to help people get to the point where they are employable. That's the challenge, too, that we can take them only so far. If they can get into a work situation, then their learning process accelerates, and we've got a lot of employers out there who want to hire people, but sometimes they think language is a barrier. [Interview #13]

The context of New Brunswick as a bilingual province also presents specific challenges. For instance, some newcomers, when they arrive, understand bilingualism to mean that they can choose to work in one or the other official language. The reality is different in many areas of the province where, in fact, they will need to speak both English and French to compete in the job market. If they spoke neither language on arrival, the prospect of learning two new languages on top of whatever else is needed to settle can be overwhelming. A respondent working in Moncton said this:

This is a bilingual city with more francophones here than elsewhere in the province. So language is our main specificity. Many francophone immigrants come here because they understood that it is bilingual and for them it is important. Some people leave because they feel they were lied to regarding bilingualism. For many Europeans and North Africans, "bilingual" means that you can work in one of the two languages... It does not mean that you must work in both languages! They think that there are French jobs and

English jobs but that does not exist here; you'd better be bilingual: speaking both languages. [Interview #15]

Facilitating language integration and meaningful communication between immigrants and their host societies will only be resolved with the collaboration and co-operation of immigrants, their service providers, and the societies they join.

School integration services

The integration of newcomer children into the school system can be difficult and even more so depending on the child's age, the previous school experience (or lack thereof) in the country of origin, and the proficiency in the language of instruction. Some school districts are said to be making more efforts than others by allocating human resources to facilitating this transition. Francophone School District 1 (that covers notably the greater Moncton area) has been cited by respondents as one aware of the needs of immigrant children and trying to offer a response. Interviewees from other regions were less impressed with their interaction with the local school district. A respondent from northwestern New Brunswick said she felt some resistance when contacting District 3, where officials told her that they have no money for this. She added,

It does not seem to be a priority. I asked for a meeting a month ago and still have no news. [Interview #14]

To be fair, all stakeholders must recognize that school districts in New Brunswick are under enormous financial pressure and that numerous demands and expectations are placed on the school system. Thus, it might be more difficult for districts covering mostly rural and semi-rural areas to allocate their already scarce resources to facilitating the integration of what is

currently a still relatively small number of immigrant children in their schools. A comment akin to this was also made in one of our interviews in Charlottetown:

But, for instance, we don't have the manpower to have multicultural education officers doing presentations in every school on the Island, right? So it's a question of where do you have the most need, and you service the area with the most need and, you know, everything is kind of acute here. [Interview #08]

It remains that school integration services for newcomer children is an important contributing factor for their integration into the community and, indirectly, for the settlement of their parents. Settlement agencies are usually ready to play their part by offering cultural diversity training or immigration sensitization sessions to the school community, but getting access to the schools is not always easy.

School integration issues are probably most pressing for refugee children, who may not have received much formal education before arriving in Canada. The provincial government could take the role of providing special assistance in these cases because it is unrealistic to be left to the school districts alone. A respondent working with children of refugees commented as follows:

Integration into the school can also be difficult with this population because the kid might be 14 or 15 and has never been to school and does not know French. They legally must go to school, but what can the school do with them? They can't be placed in grade one at 14 years old... So we ask for special resources, and we are told that they can be provided only if they are needed in the region as a whole. But the region is very diverse. [Interview #14]

Partnerships and other start-up issues

We have already touched briefly on the start-up issues of advertising and marketing facing more recently established agencies. A few other such issues were raised by informants, of which we will only mention one here. A settlement agency cannot function effectively by itself;

rather, it needs to establish partnerships and perform an exhaustive (albeit often informal) environmental scan of the resources available in the community so the agency can better provide the information to newcomers and make appropriate referrals. This necessary accumulation of local knowledge is a key asset in serving clients. This information-gathering activity is an intangible, and the costs and time to produce and maintain it are largely ignored and not captured by the matrix of the funders. In the words of one interviewee,

Because we are just starting, there have been start-up challenges regarding good practices, etc. Offering language classes, knowing the needs of the clients and how to meet them... You have to go throughout the community and build a bank of key information. Gathering all these tiny pieces of information is a lot of work. [Interview #12]

One possible way to approach this would be to develop a best practices manual, which, we are told, the New Brunswick Multicultural Council is preparing.

Transportation services

Transportation is a theme not originally on our “radar screen” as investigators but that clearly emerged from our discussions during the interview process. Its profile actually grew to be more important than that of the housing issue, for instance, which was a surprise to us. While transportation issues (mostly the lack or inadequacy of public transit) was mentioned more readily outside the larger urban centres, it also found resonance in the cities. As an example, an interviewee based in Fredericton said this:

Transportation is an issue because public transportation is sparse and loose, like no buses on Sundays. [Interview #01]

In smaller centres and rural area, the situation is much worse, especially in winter when walking or riding a bicycle is not a viable option. This is often surprising to immigrants, who expect to

find affordable public transit in a rich country like Canada, given that they are used to it in their country of origin. As a respondent based in Edmundston summarized,

We don't have the transportation and housing infrastructure to accommodate a much larger number of incoming immigrants. [...] In poor countries there is a lot of public transit passing around every 10 minutes! Many immigrants come here with a small budget to establish themselves, and generally the item of purchasing a car upon arrival is not part of that budget! Often, they actually need to do that... I mean we forget here, unless you have travelled a lot, how well structured and well organized public transit is in many very poor countries. Even in Africa there is such transit for all at low cost. Here there is no public transit at all in Edmundston: no buses, and taxis are expensive. [Interview #03]

So one must ask oneself a basic question. Does it make any sense to try to settle immigrants in a province like New Brunswick (which is half rural, with low population density and little public transit) without allowing settlement agencies to spend some money on transportation? The clear and logical answer is no, yet that is exactly the current situation. Through independent fundraising, one agency in northwestern New Brunswick has purchased a mini-van to offer some transportation, but it remains an exception. The director of the centre explains:

We can even give someone a ride to the hospital if they are not feeling well and they have no other means of transportation. We have a small mini-van that we use for transportation. It is not all centres that have that, and in a region like ours it is very important, sometimes just to get the clients to the grocery store when they first get here. [...] We can't use the funders' money for transporting clients to the hospital or the grocery store. I have another specific arrangement with the province for transportation so we manage this differently, but it can't be paid from the regular sources. This is a problem in a vast region like this one. [Interview #14]

It would seem appropriate to, under certain conditions, allow agencies to spend some money on transportation services, especially during the first year of settlement. Currently, many agencies actually ask volunteers to use their own private cars for occasional transportation services with no reimbursement of any kind.

The Importance of the Local Context for Newcomers Settlement

The local context clearly matters when settlement agencies are trying to anchor newcomers in a particular community. Even if New Brunswick is a small province, it is not a monolith, and the local conditions for settlement vary from one place to another. Some local communities have a transit service; others do not. Some communities are mainly Anglophone, while others are francophone in majority or extensively bilingual. Some communities are experiencing a higher local employment rate than neighbouring communities. Also, specialized services in healthcare or education are more readily accessible in some places than in others. Some towns are intimately connected to a particular industry and even to a unique large employer, while others have a more diversified economy. Some communities have more extensive experience receiving newcomers from visible minorities than other locales, and the level of receptivity of the local communities towards immigration also varies.

This receptivity is expressed in attitudes but is also visible in terms of the level of “institutional completeness” that an immigrant from an ethnic minority background finds in the receiving community. The term “institutional completeness” was coined by Canadian sociologist Raymond Breton (1964) and refers to the number, variety and nature of institutions in communities (such as places of worship and community centres) that serve as important communal reference points and provide opportunities for individuals to meet and interact. In many areas of New Brunswick, ethnic institutional completeness is low. As an example, to our knowledge, only three mosques (Fredericton, Rothesay and Moncton) and one Hindu temple (Fredericton) exist in the province at present.

All these situations indicate that centralization of settlement services is unlikely to work in New Brunswick and that it might be necessary to live with some apparent inefficiency of scale in providing those services. That is not to say that some agencies should not volunteer to merger in regions with more than one, nor does it mean that all current practices should be maintained as they are. Yet it must be recognized, for instance, that in small agencies covering large geographic areas, servicing clients will remain more expensive per unit than in larger urban

centres. On the other hand, one should not underestimate the hidden value that knowledge of the local context provides to the settlement process, and this “place based” ability is a unique skill characterizing local settlement agencies (Burstein, 2010).

A final important element of the local context in New Brunswick that we must mention is the francophone community’s desire to attract to, and retain French-speaking newcomers in, the province. Its hope is to maintain the demographic weight of francophones at about one-third of the population. This desire has been accepted and recognized by both provincial and federal governments and has contributed to the recent establishment of new settlement agencies in the north of the province. At this time, some new agencies are still processing relatively few clients, and one could question, from a purely public administration standpoint, whether the existence of some of these agencies is justified. However, that would be a mistake in the sociopolitical context of New Brunswick, where fewer than 11% of immigrants had a knowledge of French in 2010 (CIC, 2011: 34). If we want immigration embraced by both linguistic communities and to avoid turning it into a bone of contention along linguistic lines, then establishing new settlement agencies in predominantly francophone areas is a wise decision in terms of both politics and policy.

Strengths of the Organizations

All organizations, regardless of the local context in which they work, experience challenges, as we have seen. However, they also have clear strengths on which they can count, which Meyer Burstein (2010) has referred to as the comparative advantages of settlement agencies. When asked what their *forte* was, respondents listed a number that often represent the key strengths of organizations from the non-profit and voluntary sector: a human touch in the approach to delivering quality services, a passion for making a difference in people's lives, and a capacity to listen to and assess clients to better respond to their individual and family needs. In sum, they spoke of the soft stuff that great human service delivery is made of. In their words,

We offer a human approach to our clients. [...] here we give the same quality and rigorous settlement services to each new family we see. [Interview #03]

Our strength is in offering a very welcoming atmosphere to our clients so that they feel good in coming here. We have a family-friendly, humane side that is different from a big public administration. We take care and we try to have a personalized follow-up. So it is the quality of the service. I mean some people are not happy because they have too high expectations, but even when we disappoint them we try to do it while being very nice!

For the organization in general, the most important is to maintain the quality of the service because this is human services. We don't do an agency that is perhaps very efficient but not human. It is like your house; it is very nice to have everything in its place, but you need a bit of personality and mess if you want this to be a home! [Interview #15]

This human side means that leading a non-profit settlement agency is a multi-tasking job that requires more than the traditional administrative skills taught to MBA students. One interviewee explained it this way:

As director [of an agency], you will do some director work, but you will also move furniture, care for children, take people to the hospital and wait there for hours, and you will have to do overtime at night to complete your paperwork. It is like raising a family. You must be ready for anything and learn to be patient. The immigration process is long and slow. [Interview #14]

The flexibility the non-profit sector is known for helps settlement agencies better serve their clients, one example being language training services. An interviewee explained that traditionally structured language courses, like those offered by the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) system, are usually relatively inflexible and have defined start and end dates, whereas the language training offered by his agency is delivered with a continuous admission or entry in mind:

So if you come [to NBCC] in October, you have to wait and there's a waiting list and stuff like that. With us, the day that you come, you can come in the language class the next day and that's that adaptability. [Interview #13]

New Brunswick immigrant settlement agencies, like other non-profit organizations, also believe in their great capacity to built partnerships and networks with other stakeholders in the community. This is not only part of the ethos of the sector; it is also how agencies are able to assemble a bundle of services to serve clients' needs. Partnering also helps in finding clients:

We are investing a lot of energy with partners in the community to create partnerships to integrate new immigrants in various activities. That is one of our strengths. It contributes to us finding the new immigrants and them finding us. [Interview #06]

Perhaps surprisingly, one of these organizations' most frequently mentioned strengths was not about providing services to newcomer families but rather in educating the Canadian public about and sensitizing it to immigration issues and in promoting multiculturalism. It is working on the development of the openness of the local community to immigrants, on the "opening of their world view", as one respondent said [Interview #02]. Settlement agencies see this outreach as one of their most important roles and something they are very good at -- part of their "place-based" ability, to use the expression of Burstein (2010). Increasing these organizations' visibility in the media, partnering with schools, making sociocultural presentations, and including the Canadian born in cultural activities organized for newcomers are all means used to reach this end.

The strengths respondents identified no doubt point clearly to what non-profit immigrant settlement agencies can bring to the table. But it is also somewhat telling that no agency was at the point where it would self-identify as a primary force its capacity to find jobs for newcomers in the local community. Of course agencies do extensive work in that regard, but to be fair, the success of these efforts often depends largely on a series of extraneous factors beyond the control of any particular organization.

Policy Issues

Many issues mentioned in this report call for a policy resolution. Some, like credential recognition, are macro-issues involving multiple stakeholders. Yet others are more limited in scope and directly related to the relationships linking the immigrant settlement agencies and their government funders. There is hope that solutions can be found for these problems, as most respondents report a good relationship with their government funders and maintain open channels of communication. The provincial authorities are perhaps seen as a little more accessible, however, as some interviewees perceive CIC as a large, somewhat distant bureaucracy that at times is a little overwhelmed by its mission.

The most fundamental and immediate policy reform to be implemented, from the perspective of both the authors and informants, is to replace the year-to-year funding agreements with more stable multi-year funding, an enabling measure that would provide more capacity to the agencies for strategic planning, building their organization, retaining their staff, and even signing multi-year leases to secure their office space.

Status of Women Canada is cited by some respondents as a federal agency that has offered multi-year funding agreements that have proven very beneficial. CIC and the province could both learn from this. Minimally, all government funders should increase their level of coordination with non-profit immigrant settlement agencies. If multi-year funding is not a realistic option, then at least confirmation of funding for the following fiscal year should reach agencies by late January, much earlier than it does currently, to enable them to secure or retain staff.

Given the high demand for language training, resources for this specific service may need to be augmented when possible. Moreover, language instruction should be made available to all status categories of immigrant. Flexibility should be afforded to the local agency in determining how many clients must be enrolled in a class for it to be offered. On the other hand, province-wide standards should exist and be enforced by funders regarding how much a language

instructor with a given level of competency and experience should be paid by the agencies. There are now serious discrepancies in this area.

During the first year of settlement services, local agencies should also be given more flexibility to spend on service items that are currently not eligible, such as daycare for language training students and occasional transportation services, especially for agencies located outside the larger urban centres.

A number of immigrant client groups have been identified in this study as needing particular attention, including immigrant women, who we have discussed at some length, as well as refugees, youth and immigrant seniors, who we alluded to briefly. Two other groups must be mentioned again in relation to work permits. First, international students who want to acquire Canadian work experience at the end of their degree, certificate or diploma program should have easier access to a work permit, which would be in line with the stated desire to retain international students as immigrants (Kenney, 2011; Gates-Gasse, 2012). We were told that a work permit seems harder to access in New Brunswick than in Quebec, for instance, and it need not be. Second, it should be recognized that international temporary workers often come to Canada with their family. Spouses of some of these workers then find themselves in a difficult and socially isolating position if they cannot work while in Canada. Hence, work permits for these spouses should be made available more readily.

Finally, several respondents have stressed the need for further research on immigration issues in the Maritimes. The impression we were given is of a genuine thirst for data and analyses but that respondents are much too busy running their agencies to search even for what already exists and is published. Like in other fields, immigration could benefit from networking and dissemination initiatives such as the New Brunswick Social Policy Research Network (<http://rrps-nb-sprn.ca>) recently started by Andy Scott at the University of New Brunswick. New funding for local research on immigration issues would also stimulate the production of new knowledge and also inform policy-making in this area.

CONCLUSION

Settlement services have been said to be of key importance for the success of immigration in non-urban communities (Hanson and Barber, 2011: 20). Finding appropriate settlement services is a major obstacle immigrants encounter when considering locating outside Canada's large urban centres. These services are critical to ensuring longer-term retention, and – through positive experiences conveyed to other would-be migrants – future recruitment, which explains why we undertook this examination of the resources, challenges, practices and experiences of New Brunswick non-profit agencies providing settlement services to newcomers in the region.

It must be recognized that a substantial progress has been made in New Brunswick with regard to immigrant settlement services compared to the situation just five years ago. Settlement services are now accessible province wide and offered on a bilingual basis in the main urban centres. The collaboration of government funders and non-profit immigrant settlement agencies has rapidly developed into a working reality but is still fragile and evolving.

What has been developed here is akin to what has been found elsewhere in Canada, that is, a model of government-funded settlement services provided through community-based, non-profit organizations. The relative merit of using non-profit and voluntary sector agencies to deliver settlement services is at the core of a crucial public policy debate. While this model is often celebrated for its flexibility and adaptability and said to be in tune with local realities, it has also been criticized strongly for providing uneven geographies of service provision (spatial mismatch) and for having robbed local community agencies of their capacity to innovate and advocate autonomously because of a deepening state penetration into their everyday operations (Sadiq, 2004; Richmond and Shields, 2005).

We would argue that it is not the use *per se* of the non-profit and voluntary sector that is mostly problematic but the attitude of funders who do not genuinely consider these agencies as true partners. To simply consider them as delivery agents for contracting out services is to

fail, in the end, to truly benefit from many of the sector's unique strengths and overall potential. The settlement agencies perform an intricate work that governments cannot do well because public services tend to be structured and captured into silos, while settlement services need to take the shape of transversal casework, tinkering and assembling a bundle of services from various sources as needed, given their assessment of the client's need. Yet, paradoxically, this unique capacity of non-profit settlement agencies can be stifled if funders maintain too short a leash over their operation. In particular, the reliance on a year-to-year funding model based on restrictive contracts for community-based settlement service delivery places enormous stress on the system and those involved in it. Add to this some onerous and burdensome accountability requirements, and this leaves very little space for the much needed innovation and planning needed to tackle future immigration challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our conclusions about the key role played by non-profit immigration settlement agencies, we propose the following recommendations.

1. Immigrant settlement agencies should make a greater effort to engage and network with local employers as an integral part of their work to further help newcomers' work integration.
2. Government funders and other relevant parties should help settlement agencies formally recognize the unpaid work provided by their volunteers.
3. All funders should work to clarify and specify what settlement agencies are expected to report and what precise types of information they need to collect on an on-going basis.
4. To promote transparency, settlement agencies should consider posting their annual report (including the financial statements) on their website.
5. Under government leadership, all parties should work to improve the capacity to track what happens to settlement clients for a defined period of time after they are no longer receiving settlement services. Ultimately, this task may be better suited for governments to assume. Retention research is also sorely needed in the Maritimes.
6. Criteria used to evaluate the agencies' work should move progressively to include more "outcome" measures, instead of focusing essentially on processes and outputs. Provincial government departments (especially the Population Growth Division in New Brunswick and the Population Secretariat in Prince Edward Island) may need to assist with measuring outcomes.
7. More financial resources should be made available to settlement agencies to spend on child care to help newcomer women who have pre-school children to receive language instruction or other settlement services. Possibly reimbursing newcomers or paying for some of their child care expenses could be limited to their first year in Canada.

- 8.** Spouses of foreign temporary workers should be given a work permit to afford them the opportunity to integrate into the local community where they reside.
- 9.** Attention should be given to, and funding made available for, the development of services to segments of the newcomer population that may be underserved, such as women, children, youth and seniors.
- 10.** Training should be made available to settlement agency workers to focus on recognizing the signs of domestic abuse and to empower them to make appropriate referrals. In particular, the NBMC might want to explore this in partnership with the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research at UNB.
- 11.** Governments should work more closely with professional associations and the education system in both provinces to facilitate credential recognition for immigrants.
- 12.** Funding for settlement agencies should move away from its current annual funding model toward a multi-year model (three years). As an immediate interim measure, confirmation of funding should reach agencies by the end of January to allow them to plan for their next fiscal year.
- 13.** The two regional health authorities (a.k.a. networks) in New Brunswick should ensure that they can rapidly identify and contact language interpreters who can be brought in on short notice to translate for a newcomer who requires in-hospital services, including in the emergency room, but speaks neither English nor French
- 14.** Government funders should finance the development or updating of a standard language instruction curriculum in both French and English. At the moment, several agencies across the province are independently developing language courses, curriculum and teaching tools. This duplication is wasteful. While decentralization of language instruction for newcomers in small groups is justified, it is not efficient to have small agencies spend their tight resources on building language curriculum and instruction tools.

- 15.** School districts in New Brunswick should ensure that they have at least one “roving” professional resource to offer support and services for integrating immigrant children into their schools. The task of these “integrators” would include liaising between the schools and the local immigrant settlement agencies, as needed.
- 16.** More financial resources should be made available to allow settlement agencies to spend some on transportation so newcomers can receive language instruction or other settlement services. Some emergency-related transportations costs should also be eligible for reimbursement or payment under certain circumstances. Possibly reimbursing or paying newcomers for some transportation expenses could be limited to certain circumstances, which could be limited to their first year in Canada.
- 17.** Settlement agencies in towns or regions where more than one such agency exists should be encouraged to discuss merging certain activities and services to avoid duplication and achieve economy of scale.
- 18.** Immigration research is still in its infancy in New Brunswick; thus, the New Brunswick Innovation Foundation (NBIF) should consider, potentially with other funding partners, launching a special research competition focusing on immigration issues in the province.
- 19.** For the long-term success of immigration efforts, government funders should cease considering immigration only in economic terms and instead adopt a more holistic, long view that considers the individual immigrant worker as part of a family unit. Similarly, settlement services to be provided ought to be done using a client-centred approach, instead of being made available depending on status categories dictated by funding programs’ eligibility rules.

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APPENDICES

A. Interview Consent Form (was printed on UNB letterhead)

Dear Potential Research Participant:

We are Professors Luc Thériault and Michael Haan from the Department of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. We are inviting you to participate in a research project entitled *An exploration of the Resources, Challenges and Practices of Immigrant Settlement Agencies in NB and PEI*. This project aims at better understanding the work done by settlement agencies in the Maritimes. To do that we need to speak with a few knowledgeable informants, like yourself.

This interview will be lasting for about one hour and will be audio-recorded. All information collected will be used for research purposes with the view of publishing a research report that will offer some recommendations on the best practices employed by the agencies in using their resources most effectively, and on how governments could better support the agencies in their tasks. This report will be made available to you free of charge by the fall of 2012.

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions you don't like, and will be free to discontinue your participation at any time, without penalty

Given the nature of this project we would like to ask you how you want us to use your quotes from this interview and how we should attribute the comments you made in the preparation of our research report. To this end, please select one of the three options regarding the level of confidentiality to be used:

- A) [] **High Confidentiality:** A pseudonym is to be used for you or we will refer to you simply by saying "one of the interviewees explained that..."
- B) [] **Medium Confidentiality:** Your comments will be attributed with regards to your position and region (for example: "an Executive Director from a settlement agency from southern New Brunswick noted that...").

C) [] **No confidentiality:** Your name can be used and the comments made during the interview about the Co-op can be attributed to you (for example: “[Name], who lead agency “X” based in Fredericton, observed that...”).

Please note that the audio-tapes from the interview and the transcript of the interview will be accessible only to the project leaders and staff. After the completion of this research, this material will be kept in a locked cabinet at UNB (Fredericton campus) for a period of 3 years. After that period, all documents and materials will be destroyed and properly disposed of.

Thank you for considering participation in this research. This project is on file at the University of New Brunswick as UNBF REB #2011-056. Related ethical concerns should be directed to Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark at 506 451-6941. Please feel free to discuss any of your concerns with one of us prior to signing the enclosed statement of consent. If you would like further information or would like to be informed about the results of the study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Luc Thériault, at luct@unb.ca or 506 458-7785.

Sincerely,

Dr. Luc Thériault
Professor of Sociology

Dr. Michael Haan
Associate Professor of Sociology

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understand the above paragraphs, and agree to participate in this interview.

Participant name (please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____ Date: _____

B. Interview Schedule (Questionnaire)

THEMES:

1. Please describe the services or activities offered by your organization.
 - a. Do you provide assistance with employment?
 - b. Do you help people find housing?
 - c. Are you also responsible for providing assistance to their families?
2. What population or type of clients do you typically serve?
 - a. Do you only deal with immigrants?
 - b. If yes, how long have your clients been in the country? New Brunswick?
3. Please describe the assets and resources (including funding and personnel) you have to perform these activities or offer these services.
 - a. Do you receive most or all of your funding from a federal department? Provincial? Municipal?
 - b. Do you receive support from your community?
4. How is the governance of your organization organized?
 - a. Are you run by a Board of Directors?
 - b. If yes, can you tell us a bit about how this proceeds?
5. What sorts of accountability mechanisms are in place in your organization to report to your funders and to receive feedback from your clients?
 - a. Do you complete periodic (annual, monthly) statements?
 - b. Do funders get an opportunity to meet with clients? (this will only be relevant for local funders).
6. In your local community, is there any special issue or context we should be aware when trying to understand and appreciate what you are doing? For instance a linguistic or rural context that might be particular to your community?

7. Do you offer services to male and female immigrants?
 - a. If yes, do you see any differences in offering services to female immigrants versus male immigrants?
8. What are the 2 or 3 biggest challenges your organization is facing while trying to deliver services?
 - a. Do you feel as though your community provides you with the support you need to deliver services?
 - b. If not, what would you like to see from it?
 - c. What about your funders? What could they do to further help?
9. What would you say your organization is doing best or very well? What are you most proud of in what you are doing?
 - a. If you could provide advice to other funding agencies who are just getting started, what advice would you give them?
 - b. Do you think your success stories could also occur elsewhere?
10. Some government policies can be helpful for your work, while others might need to change. What works well in your relationships with governments and what might need to change and be improved, both from your end and theirs?
11. Is there anything else we have not covered that you would like to discuss with us to help us understand the work you do, why it is important and how it could be improved?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

NOTES

¹ While NBMC does have a budget of approximately \$1,000,000, it should be noted that over \$550,000 of that budget is funding dispersed to the organizations offering the New Brunswick Employment Language Training (NBELT), which include MCAF, MAGMA, MACC and SJ-YM-YWCA Settlement Services.

² It should be noted, however, that at the time of writing, the Population Growth Division was in discussions with Statistics Canada about methods to improve monitoring.