# The Social & Policy Implications of Meaningful Community Engagement in Racialized Immigrant Communities in Halifax

BY

**Ingrid R.G. Waldron, Ph.D**.
**Assistant Professor**
**School of Nursing**
**Dalhousie University**
**Halifax**

Centre Métropolis Atlantique
Atlantic Metropolis Centre

AMC Working Papers Series / Série de documents de recherche du CMA
Attention: Serperi Sevgur
The Atrium, Suite 213, Saint Mary's University 923 Robie St., Halifax, NS, Canada B3H 3C3
E-mail / courriel: atlantic.metropolis@smu.ca

Website / site Web: http://community.smu.ca/atlantic /

| | |
|---|---|
| **We are pleased to acknowledge the AMC's partner organizations:**<br>**Federal Government Partners:**<br>Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Canada Border Services Agency, Canada Economic Development for the Regions of Quebec, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canadian Heritage, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, FedNor, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Department of Justice Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, The Rural Secretariat, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Statistics Canada<br>**Three Lead Universities**:<br>Saint Mary's University, Dalhousie University, and Université de Moncton.<br>**Community Partners:**<br>Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS), Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia (MANS), New Brunswick Multicultural Council, PEI Association for Newcomers, Multicultural Association for the Greater Moncton Area, Association for New Canadians (ANC) of Newfoundland, Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), YMCA Newcomer Service. | **Le CMA tient à remercier chaleureusement les partenaires suivants pour leur soutien:**<br>**Partenaires fédéraux:**<br>Agence de promotion économique du Canada atlantique, Agence des services frontaliers du Canada, Développement économique du Canada pour les régions du Québec, Société canadienne d'hypothèques et de logement, Patrimoine Canada, Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada, FedNor, Ressources humaines et Développement social Canada, Ministère de la Justice Canada, Agence de la santé publique du Canada, Sécurité Publique Canada, Gendarmerie royale du Canada, Le Secrétariat rural, Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines, Statistique Canada<br>**Les trois universités à la direction**:<br>Saint Mary's University, Dalhousie University et l'Université de Moncton.<br>**Nos partenaires communautaires**:<br>L'Association multiculturelle de Nouvelle-Écosse, Le Conseil multiculturel du Nouveau-Brunswick, L'Association multiculturelle du Grand Moncton, Association métropolitaine pour l'établissement des immigrants, PEI Association for Newcomers, L'association des nouveaux canadiens de Terre-Neuve, Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés, YMCA Newcomer service, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS), |

# Table of Contents

**Project Description**

This research study examines the challenges that immigrant communities in Halifax experience accessing, integrating into and participating in the social, educational, health, employment, and economic sectors of Halifax. A particular focus is on how the intersections of nationality, race, culture, immigrant/citizenship status, religion, language, low-income and poverty, gender, age and other social factors shape these experiences. The research also examines the policy implications of immigrant integration by identifying some of the ways in which immigration policies serve to deter or facilitate immigrants' access to, integration into and participation in these four sectors of society. Frisken and Wallace (2000) argue that it is the government's responsibility to assist in the elimination of structural barriers that impede access to resources and services. Following this, this research examines governmental strategies geared towards the elimination of structural, institutional and everyday barriers facing immigrant communities in Halifax.

The main objective of this research is:

- To examine how access to and participation in the social, educational, health, employment and economic sectors in Halifax are shaped by nationality, race, culture, immigrant/citizenship status, religion, language, low-income and poverty, gender, age and other social factors.

The project's other objectives are:

- To determine if and how access to and participation in these sectors of society enhances social integration in Halifax and
- To identify the implications for policy and practice of immigrant integration in Halifax.

**Context and Background**

In recent academic scholarship, the "racialization of poverty" thesis has been deliberately used to forefront the experiences of socio-economic inequality and disadvantage among non-white groups, racialized immigrants and Aboriginal peoples, often in ways that capture poverty as linked to historical and ongoing processes of colonization, migration, assimilation, racism, and sexism (Galabuzi, 2001). Indeed, compared to white Canadians, individuals from all racialized groups suffer disproportionately from inequality in pay, unemployment and underemployment and under-representation in well-paid jobs (Galabuzi 2006).  In Toronto, **members of racialized immigrant groups are far more likely to have incomes below the poverty line than those of European ancestry (Ornstein, 2001).** Based on Statistics Canada's Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO), in 2006, 8.4 per cent of Nova Scotians were living in low-income situations (Statistics Canada, 2008).  Research suggests that those most vulnerable to poverty in Nova

Scotia include Aboriginal peoples, African Nova Scotians, recent immigrants, people with poor educational attainment, and older individuals (Government of Nova Scotia, 2009). There is increased recognition in Canada of the importance of building partnerships among various stakeholders to eliminate structural and institutional inequalities for immigrant groups, particularly partnerships between settlement agencies and government (Canadian Federation of Municipalities Report, 2009; Wallace & Friskin 2004). The integration of these communities relies on social policy, which has long been a key factor in initiating social change for marginalized groups, particularly since the increasing racialized immigrant population in Canada has implications for creating a more inclusive and equitable society around race, culture and other social factors.

A review of the literature on immigrant communities in Canada and Nova Scotia reveals that immigrants experience particular challenges accessing and participating in the educational system in Canada. For example, Sidhu (2008) conducted research on the barriers immigrants experience accessing Toronto's educational system. Several participants revealed that their children were denied enrollment due to of their immigration status. The majority of participants in the study indicated that documentation of their immigrant status was requested during the enrollment process, and a few families experienced difficulties with the Toronto Catholic School Board because of their religious views. Almost half of these participants were unaware that they had a right to enroll their children in school regardless of their immigrant status. The study also revealed that many school staff members were also unaware of these rights and the proper procedures to follow in this regard.

Sakamoto (2006) found that employment is one of the most significant challenges for early Mainland Chinese immigrants in Toronto. Though they felt that have more opportunities than recent immigrants, the discrimination they experienced at the workplace diminished any sense of job satisfaction. Participants expressed feeling a sense of disgrace and embarrassment around the loss of the social status they held in their home country. Lack of fluency in spoken English was perceived as a significant obstacle in finding employment, accessing social services and networking within the community. Economic stress due to employment challenges and the struggle to find their identity in Toronto has created a great deal of stress. Consequently, this community experiences a high prevalence of mental health issues, such as depression and suicide. In a study conducted by Somerville and Walsworth (2010) participants reported that their employment expectations had been falsely inflated by messages implicit in the federal government point system, which recruits and admits applicants based on their skills and then questions the validity of those skills. Consequently, the recognition of immigrant credentials has become a priority issue in public policy. The authors argue for improved labour market information accessibility among immigrants since the federal points system for admission does not coincide with the employable skills recognized by Canadian employers.

Teixeria, Lo and Truelove (2007) noted that despite Canada's commitment to multiculturalism at all levels of government, visible minority entrepreneurs still confront more barriers setting up businesses than do non-visible-minority entrepreneurs, particularly with respect to accessing financing. Based on the questionnaire survey, the major reasons immigrants start businesses include personal or family aspirations and the lure of opportunity and prospect of success. The main barriers in the initial phase of business development included financing, language and cultural barriers and/or perceived

discrimination, marketing and market penetration, inexperience and lack of business connections in general and in specific Canadian contexts. Koreans, Polish and Portuguese individuals rated language, culture and/or perceived discrimination as the main barriers they experience starting businesses, while Caribbean and Somali immigrants found financing to be the most significant barrier. Sharif (2009) found that many immigrants in Halifax enter Canada under the family or skilled worker category, rather than the business category. The majority of these businesses were in food, import, or retail. Factors hindering the setting up of businesses for these participants include lack of funding, lack of support, and cultural differences. Sharif also found that resilience helped immigrant entrepreneurs overcome these challenges. The author notes that the government can play a significant role in funding immigrant entrepreneurs and helping them find community supports and resources.

In a 2005 report released by the Halifax Regional Municipality entitled "Immigration Action Plan", the need for more accessible municipal programs and services for recently arrived immigrants was stressed. In particular, the need for more accessible services related to recreation, solid waste, library, police, and fire was highlighted. Developing culturally relevant communication tools that share information about the HRM was identified as one short term action that would be undertaken by the HRM to increase accessibility to recently arrived immigrants.

## Conceptual Framework

### Intersectional Analysis

Intersectional Analysis is crucial for examining how race, culture, immigrant status, low-income, poverty and other social factors intertwine and intersect to produce diverse experiences for individuals and communities. It recognizes that individuals hold multiple identities simultaneously and that these identities privilege them in some circumstances and put them at a disadvantage in others. It also demonstrates how various structures and processes within societies stratified by socially constructed markers of difference (race, gender, and class etc.) impact on social relations and human interaction and how individuals and communities are positioned differently within hierarchies of power. Moreover, an Intersectional Analysis seeks to reveal the processes through which inequalities are produced and reproduced within institutional structures, and questions the power, privilege, and dominance that result from unequal relations between people and between people and institutions. Consequently the focus on only one identity (e.g. race or immigrant status or gender, for example) is inadequate for describing the experiences of marginalized communities, including racialized immigrant communities. Rather, understanding the complex experiences of individuals and communities requires attendance to the multiple and overlapping identities these individuals hold simultaneously.

The concepts of *simultaneity* and *salience* are important for understanding Intersectional Analysis. Race, immigrant status, gender, sexual orientation and other social identities cannot be separated since they function interdependently and accompany an individual into every interaction or

experience. The notion of salience posits that although multiple identities are always present for individuals, they are not all salient or relevant in every situation. The importance of any one particular identity in explaining an individual's experiences or circumstances will vary depending on the particular aspect of that individual's life under consideration. According to Gazso and Waldron (2009), challenging monolithic conceptions of communities requires an understanding of how multiple social identities (race, ethnicity, gender, disability, age etc.) operate in and through one another to produce diverse experiences. Such an analysis appreciates the complex relationality of these multiple identities that frame individuals' social, economic and political lives. Moreover, individual/personal factors (e.g., racial/ethnic identity, level of education, age) and institutional/structural factors (e.g., educational and labour market opportunities, availability of health and child care) are assumed to intersect, interact and converge in multidirectional and fluid ever-changing relationships to produce diverse experiences for individuals and communities. In addition, an Intersectional Analysis requires attendance to the historical, material and structural contexts and conditions that produce societal inequality and the meanings assigned to it, as well as an interrogation of white privilege and power, and their accompanying ideological rationales for dominance.

This research uses an Intersectional Analysis to challenge monolithic, stable and uniform conceptualizations of immigrants in Halifax. From this analysis, the objective is to more critically consider and engage in a deeper probing of when, where, and how multiple identities converge to produce specific experiences for specific individuals and communities in different moments and contexts. Consequently, the project offers an alternative to essentialist analyses that tend to homogenize difference or complexity by separating race from socio-economic status, immigrant status and gender as discrete, rather than mutually constitutive concepts. It also challenges research paradigms that present race, immigrant status, gender and other social identities merely as characteristics of individuals rather than as social relations shaped by hierarchies of power and that, consequently, disconnect those social identities from the historical, social and political processes from which they emerge and shape individual and community experiences.

**Methodology**

This research utilized qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis because they allow for a complex articulation of the intricacies of the human experience and validate knowledge that emerges from subjective, personal, emotional, experiential, and intuitive frames of reference. Interviews were the only data collection method used in this research. The qualitative approach that was used in this project was naturalistic inquiry. The fundamental principle of all naturalistic designs is that phenomena occur or are embedded in a context, natural setting or field. Fieldwork, including interviews and focus groups, is also an aspect of naturalistic inquiry. It involves the researcher entering an identified setting to experience and understand the setting without artificially altering or manipulating the conditions, which was the case with this research. Naturalistic inquiry also focuses on observing and understanding so that theory may be described, explained and generated.

**Sample**

   Fifty-two participants were recruited for this study, including 40 adult members of the immigrant community in Halifax, 10 executive directors or project coordinators at community agencies in Halifax and two policymakers responsible for developing and implementing immigration policies in Canada and Halifax. The names and identities of all participants (community members, community agencies and policymakers) have been kept anonymous in this study.

   Community member participants included women and men who spanned a wide age range, including individuals in their 20s, 30s, 40s and 50s. They included recently arrived immigrants who had been in Canada between one to six years, as well as long-term immigrants who had been in Canada from between six years and over 30 years. These participants were representative of diverse countries, nationalities, cultures, ethnicities and races. Below, I provide a list of countries represented by these participants:

- Trinidad
- Guyana
- Cuba
- Jamaica
- Brazil
- Peru
- El Salvador
- Venezuela
- Mexico
- Egypt
- Tunisia
- Sierra Leone
- South Africa
- Nigeria
- Zimbabwe
- India
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka
- Bangladesh
- Japan
- China
- Taiwan
- South Korea
- Vietnam
- Thailand
- Indonesia
- Philippines

- Afghanistan
- Palestine
- Iran
- Jordan
- Bhutan
- Lebanon
- Tajikistan
- Uzbekistan
- United States
- Russia

**Recruitment**

Sampling and recruitment were conducted in two phases. An initial phase of purposive sampling was used to recruit community agencies, policymakers and community members from the immigrant community in Halifax. Purposive sampling starts with a purpose in mind and the sample is thus selected to include people of interest and exclude those who do not suit the purpose. In other words, it is used to access a particular subset of individuals, in this case long term or recently arrived immigrants. In the second sampling and recruitment phase, snowball sampling was used, which is where existing participants recruit future participants from among their acquaintances. Thus, the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball.

**Data Collection & Analysis**

Interviews were used to collect data from participants. Interviews and preliminary analysis occurred simultaneously in order to allow for continual adjustments to interview guides and the recruitment of participants. The interviews were designed to collect data on the following issues:

- Experiences engaging in the employment, education, social life (leisure, recreation, volunteerism) and healthcare sectors;
- Challenges and barriers experienced accessing and participating in these sectors due to nationality, immigrant/citizenship status, race, culture, gender, religion, and other social factors;
- Suggestions on how community agencies could increase immigrants' access to and participation in these activities; and
- Policy implications for increasing immigrants' access to and participation in these activities.

Data analysis was conducted using NVivo qualitative software. The following steps were followed to analyze the data using NVivo:

1/Interview transcripts were reviewed to get a general sense of main themes:
- Main themes of each participant's responses were noted;
- Emerging themes were coded according to broad categories;
- Initial free nodes were identified around the main social issues, including culture and ethnicity, income and finances, education and literacy, children and youth, community, health etc.;
- Initial coded passages were used to create more free nodes based on the project description;
- Transcripts were re-read to populate new nodes;
- A set of tree nodes were created based on initial reading;
- The new tree nodes were sorted according to themes;
- Child nodes were added to the richest and most relevant nodes (barriers to engagement; community; meaning of and from involvement; strategies for outreach); and
- Overlapping nodes were condensed.

2/Transcripts were reviewed and coded again according to new coding structure:
- New child nodes were created again when necessary.

3/Coded passages were reviewed several times and transferred into more appropriate categories, and the nodes were then revised.

4/Coding and nodes were refined further (iterative process) and transcripts were reviewed several times.

5/Participants' attributes were classified according to several dimensions (age; gender; race; culture; children; marital status; and other statistical information) in order to allow for some analysis by assigned attribute.

## Findings

The research findings presented here articulate how various social factors (race, culture, immigrant status, gender, age, etc.) intertwine and intersect to shape the experiences of immigrants in Halifax.

## Social Factors that Impact Immigrant Experiences in Halifax

### Race, Culture, Ethnicity, Nationality, Language & Immigrant Status

Race, culture and language are perhaps the most significant issues shaping immigrants' experiences integrating into Halifax and participating in various sectors of society. One black female who

immigrated to Halifax over 30 years ago discussed how race, culture, immigrant status *and* gender have shaped her experiences in Halifax:

> Throughout my entire career, I tried not to go into the whole issue of race, because you want to put it into the specific context and maintain perspective, but it is difficult to say what else it could have been. I have done extremely well, but I didn't have the skills, the expertise and the self-confidence that I have that comes from my parents raising me to know that I could become anything I wanted to be. I would never have made it in the institutions in which I have worked in Nova Scotia. It is the most challenging, difficult, subtle, discriminatory environment that is not friendly to people that are different either visibly or audibly. One of the things we don't do very well here in Nova Scotia is that we don't talk about racism, so it's a very challenging place to work and to live. I am often alone as a Black woman in my field. When I started working in Nova Scotia, there was the perception that I had to be either working in the kitchen or in the laundry. For me the most important aspect of helping someone feel part of the community is around social inclusion - having someone to talk with, mentor or guide you. Halifax is not a welcoming community and the sophisticated racism and discrimination affects people's ability to be part of many things. Therefore, programs that focus on self-confidence, self-esteem, assertive training, coping and managing stress are integral components.

One community agency professional discussed the role that race and culture play in creating various challenges and obstacles for immigrants:

> We have been told that there's racial discrimination here and that our clients have experienced it.We know as well from the struggles of Black Nova Scotians that racial discrimination is a factor already preceding recent immigration. So, race seems to be an added challenge on top of the other challenges for newcomers. Racialized groups just seem to have a harder time but I think that it's the particular combination of several characteristics that probably we need to consider for each individual, that it's never race alone, it's never religion alone, it's never culture alone. So sometimes being experienced in one area or having particular characteristics in one area can outweigh other areas, positively or negatively. Nova Scotians are not as likely to be able to distinguish someone's nationality as they would be able to determine their ethnic background because it is immediately visible. This affects how people integrate because we all have stereotypes and I think that they're at play all the time. I think that stereotypes work both ways because newcomers also have stereotypes about Canadians. Nobody's immune. Visible minority immigrants are at a disadvantage because they're a minority and the stereotypes are often negative for different ethnic groups.

According to one community agency professional, his agency does acknowledge the significance of nationality, race and culture for immigrant clients:

Nationality is colour-coded in some ways, which is definitely a barrier. If you're from Sweden you know you probably will not go through a lot of the same experiences as if you're from a country in Africa or a country in the Middle East. We acknowledge issue like race, nationality and culture by talking about it and we bring speakers in. We take students to the court system, we have human rights people coming in, we have material developed on human rights, we present them with role-playing activities, different kinds of lesson plans all to sensitize them to it. All we can do here, I mean unless somebody brings a direct problem to me or one of the teachers, is create an awareness that these issues exist.

According to one community agency professional, the intersection of language and age poses a significant barrier to integration for immigrants in Halifax:

Language is a huge barrier, especially when it comes to individual legal representation because of the length of time and the cost of translation. Age could be a factor in determining the level of integration of an immigrant. If the immigrant is a little bit older they may feel, and legitimately so, that they can't learn English and end up isolating themselves to a certain degree, from the rest of society. I think there are huge barriers for immigrants to overcome when they come to a place like Nova Scotia. And the other thing is that they might not have a large community to draw on, that's a real support system for them is sort of that community.

A policy maker discussed the lack of government funding for programming that would deal with issues of racism faced by immigrants:

We don't provide funding for anti-racism programming but we do provide funding for cultural competency training which allows certain agencies to help employers become knowledgeable about other cultures. We work with the federal government, Citizenship and Immigration Canada through their multiculturalism wing which deals with anti-racism issues as well. But I think that unfortunately racism is alive and well in Nova Scotia.

**Religion & Immigrant Status**

Religion, closely affiliated with nationality and culture, also poses significant barriers for some immigrants in Halifax. Like race, Islam can be a visible marker of difference, resulting in overt forms of discrimination for Muslim immigrants in Halifax. For example, one Muslim woman discussed the challenges that Muslims face, including Muslim women who are marked as different because of dress:

People have a negative way of looking at Muslim women, but I am just a regular person, with arms and legs and a body. I am not body-less but that is what people seem to think. In addition, they don't want Muslim teachers in the system because they want to keep teaching a democratic education, which is not democratic at all. I think that the reason they don't want me teaching is that they don't know me, but they do know that there are a lot of negative feelings out there about Muslims perpetuated by the media who vilify Muslims over other religions. The government that we pay taxes to is not doing anything to represent Muslims in a proper light.

Similarly, one community agency professional discussed the challenges that Muslim women experience:

Religion does play into a person's ability to integrate for people who are visibly different, whose religion impacts their appearance. We know that women who wear a hijab have a harder time, although I think that's improving, I think in the time I've worked here that there has been more awareness in the city probably because there's a larger number of Muslims here for example and that's probably the only visible minority religious group we have.

The failure to address religion as a significant barrier to integration in immigration policy was highlighted by one policy maker:

No, our policies do not acknowledge the role that religion may play in an immigrants' ability to integrate into life in Halifax. We don't ask the religion question federally or provincially. We don't want people to think that they are accepted or rejected based on their religion. We also don't provide funding for religious education. If someone wants to have a conference about religion we would direct them to Canadian Culture and Heritage. They provide funding for programs like that.

**Gender and Immigrant Status**

The intersection of gender and age shapes the experiences of immigrant women, men and families in specific ways. For example, while, in the past, male members of the family tended to immigrate first, bringing the rest of the family afterwards, parents are now sending their children to Canada before they themselves immigrate. Since finding work in Canada has become increasingly difficult, many male parents decide to commute back and forth from their home country to Canada.

There are some logistical barriers for young mothers with children who may not be able to access education and training if they don't have child care. A female community member expressed how challenging it is being a recently arrived immigrant mother with children:

> It is difficult to be a mother because you have a lot of responsibilities. For some women it isn't as hard, but for me it is. I have to take them to the doctor, to school, help them wit homework. I know that every family is different, but in our family I do most of the work because my husband is sick. I have decided to go back to the community college so that I can get a real job in case anything happens to my husband.

According to one community agency professional, efforts have been made by her agency to address the specific challenges that immigrant women face:

> We aim to offer services to all who need them, but more and more lately, women are in need of female-specific programming. This is, in part, due to the fact that there are gender inequalities experienced by people accessing our existing services. We have seen more female-oriented specific programming being developed in order to allow mothers who are at home, to do activities that allows them to bring the children, that incorporates children within the services. Settlement services see gender-specific and age-specific services as their priority at the moment.

According to one policymaker, many agencies are beginning to acknowledge the ways in which gender impacts the lives of female immigrants:

> There are some programs that are in place at both ISIS and the YMCA that acknowledge the role that gender plays for women in integration. There are even some pools that now have a swimming time for women who are veiled. Because the men are generally the main applicant on the immigration documents, they attach their credentials and begin the process of getting recognized right away. Women may not have attached their credentials, so transitioning into their professional career can take longer.

**Age and Immigrant Status**

The intersection of age and immigrant status shapes the experiences of immigrants over the life course. For example, several participants discussed the role that age plays in facilitating integration for children, youth and adults. A community member participant stated the following: "It is more difficult for me to make friends because my husband and I are not at the same stage of life as some of the younger international students".

Another community agency professional responded in the following way: "What we've noticed currently is that the younger people integrate more quickly in the community. When you come here younger, it's easier for you to integrate more easily to change. But when you're a little older, it's a little harder to face change".

One policy maker also addressed the role that age plays in government policies that target and attract immigrants:

> We like to attract the older people who have employment experience and will have an easier, usually an easier time integrating. Kids tend to learn language very easily. We target people who have graduated from a Canadian University because they have an easier time integrating. Also, they are very mobile because they are single. They can move anywhere.

Another policy maker addressed how immigration policies serve to reinforce the barriers that older immigrants face:

> Age is a criteria for the nominee program. The older you are the less points you get. If you are 55 and over, you get no points. The federal skilled worker program is 50 and under. Some people may say that the age limit is discriminatory, but all programs have criteria. We also consider specific cases and we might sponsor someone who is over 55 if they demonstrate special circumstances.

## Immigrant Integration & Access to Services and Programs

The research findings presented here articulate the various challenges and barriers that immigrants experience integrating into the social, employment, educational and healthcare sectors in Halifax.

### Informal Networks & Social Life

Several community members discussed the various ways in which they have sought to integrate into social life in Halifax, including volunteerism and participating in community events and agency programs.

According to one community member, committee involvement has helped her integrate into social life in Halifax:

> I've always been eager to get involved in things that will make immigrant issues better, things that will alleviate some challenges. I joined the committee with ISIS that provides micro-loans to immigrants who can demonstrate need because I like giving back to immigrants even if I'm not

doing something for the whole society. I think for the immigrant society if there is a way I can help and make things easy and help them navigate the society better, I always love to do that.

Another community member stated that teaching a course in the community greatly facilitated her integration:

> When you are new to a community, when you don't have any ties, you have to make work, you have to make yourself part of the community. I had taught a tai-chi course before for people with arthritis, so when I moved to a new community, I found the local community centre and was allowed to put the course on there. This has been a great experience because I have met the people in my neighbourhood. I do it now for the sense of belonging it has created.

Participating in the annual Lebanese Festival has contributed to the sense of community that one community member experiences in Halifax:

> Before becoming involved with the Lebanese Festival, I only knew my daughter's friends. Now that I participate by making Lebanese food and selling it at the Lebanese Festival, I have met more Lebanese people and more Canadians. Selling food is the biggest contributor to me feeling like I am part of the Halifax community.

According to another community member, an event organized by Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) has been particularly helpful in helping her integrate:

> SupperNova is an event where people from all different backgrounds, religious, ethnic and otherwise to share different food and cultural traditions. It helps me to feel a part of the community.I also like the family resource centre because it welcomes everyone to come and hang out, regardless of language level.

One agency professional discussed the importance that religious institutions play in helping some immigrants integrate into Halifax:

> Now if you are a Christian and you belong to an ethnic church. That would mean you have a support community and you have people who can inform you from your own context and frame of reference and help you integrate which is a plus. It can also have limitations if you don't go beyond that community because you could limit your social network to the church. On the other hand, if you're a Christian and not from an ethnic denomination I think it can help in the wider integration because you can connect with others through a church or even just by feeling comfortable, by feeling that you shared something with these people and vice versa which can give you more confidence and helps you to be more relaxed.

17

Another community member stressed the important role that social networks and religious institutions play in integration:

> I think if you move to a new place and you have no social network it's essential to become involved in communities so that you can establish that network for yourself and that is important in terms of developing a sense of belonging in a community. I think it's important, to not just to have one community because it fills different needs and can provide you with an opportunity to interact with a greater number of people and in turn creates a more expansive view of life in Canada. I think probably my church-based community has been the most important and the community center that I'm involved with now is new in my new area where I live as well but I have chosen not to change my church because it is a constant and because of the contacts and the network that I've developed there. When you are new to a community, when you don't have any ties, you have to make work, you have to make yourself part of the community.

**Finding and Accessing Employment**

The most challenging issue that immigrants face, particularly recently arrived immigrants, is finding employment. Several Canadian studies show that, despite high level credentials, long-held negative stereotypes and perceptions about the qualifications of immigrants prevail. For example, according to one community agency professional, immigrants whose qualifications are not recognized often have to jump through hoops in order to work in their field:"Those who are educated have an easier time, but the bigger issue surrounds people who have professions yet their qualifications are not recognized. They then must spend years doing equivalency testing in order to qualify for a position in their field".

A policy maker argued that the real motivation behind the push to increase immigration in Canada and

Halifax has less to do with jobs than with consumerism:

> The push to increase the immigration population by 10,000 each year is motivated by a desire to increase consumerism – to see immigrants purchase properties and automobiles. But, there aren't jobs for these 10,000 people, which means they will be attracted to the country for a short period of time.

**Integrating into Educational Institutions**

Lack of familiarity with educational systems outside of Canada, interrupted schooling in the home

country and lack of recognition of educational credentials pose significant challenges for immigrants

who try to access higher education, according to one community agency professional:

If someone's educated in Canada, it's easier for them to integrate because an employer understands universities in Canada, Acadia University or Dalhousie. They might not understand Tahran University and what that means. We also support a federal Canadian experience class which also includes people who have been employed or educated in Canada. People who have come from a refugee camp likely haven't had any or very little classroom education. They definitely have a more difficult time either because they have to start all over again or because they are likely to be destined to low-wage jobs for the duration of their lives. Although someone might be very highly educated, their credentials may not be recognized and so they end up working at subsistence jobs just to keep their family afloat.

According to one community agency professional, international students experience considerable isolation on university campuses in Halifax:"International student may feel included on campus throughtheir program, but beyond this it is very easy for a university student to isolate him or herself".

**Barriers Accessing Health Care**

Immigrant status also determines access to health care in Nova Scotia. For example, one community agency professional identified lack of medical coverage as a significant issue for immigrants:

Schools are open to taking kids into day care even if they have no status as an immigrant but there is no MSI for these families, no medical coverage and that is a big issue. A couple of our clients are currently in that situation and we are trying to find ways for them to make applications".

According to one policy maker, refugees and asylum seekers experience specific challenges around health care:

If someone comes who has no status and is what they would call a refugee claimant, someone who has jumped off a ship and is asking for asylum, they don't receive any services. They can get a work permit to support themselves but they cannot get legal aid or health care or access programs and services. So there is a difference, in terms of services available and immigration status.

Similarly, a community agency professional highlighted the specific barriers experienced by refugees and temporary and permanent immigrant residents:

Someone who comes with no status (what one would refer to as a refugee claimant) and who is asking for asylum will not receive any service. While they can get a work permit to work and support themselves, they can't receive legal aid, health care, or access to programs at ISIS (there is, however, the refugee clinic across from Maxwell's Plum). So, it is very difficult for people with no status. A temporary worker who has been nominated and is awaiting permanent residency has access to some services. International students are limited to what is offered on campus. So there is a difference between temporary and permanent residents in terms of the services they have access to.

**Implications for Policy & Practice**

The research findings have implications for policy and practice, particularly with respect to how immigration policies and community programs and services respond to the specific issues facing immigrants in Halifax.

### Agency Programs & Services

Immigrants who arrive in Canada under different immigrant classes/categories have unique experiences around settlement and integration. For example, immigrants who arrive in Canada and Halifax as skilled workers and entrepreneurs integrate much more easily than immigrants who arrive without these advantages. Although the Halifax Refugee Clinic provides some services for immigrants without status (refugees), there are many services thatrefugee claimants are not eligible for. Although they can apply for a work permit to work, they cannot receive legal aid or access health care and various programs and services. Immigrants who are in the country temporarily as temporary workers or international students are also unable to access programs.

The type of services that immigrants require will depend on the type of immigrant. For example, while immigrants who arrive with low levels of education may have challenges around language, many immigrants who arrive in Canada have an excellent command of the English language. Consequently, perceptiond that they require English language instruction because they have an accent is derogatory and demeaning. Integration is often more difficult for immigrants who have greater needs around language training and support services such as child care.

### Immigration Policies

Several community agency professionals argued that various levels of government in Nova Scotia do not regard multiculturalism or immigration as important issues. Rather, they are considered to be back burner issues. Consequently, the Nova Scotian government's funding of festivals like Celtic Colors and

the Nova Scotia Tattoo is often perceived to b a tokenistic gesture that fails to address some of the more pervasive systemic issues that create barriers for immigrants in the province.

Immigration policies create particular challenges for female immigrants who are highly educated professionals. For example, in cases where both the husband and wife are professionals, the wife may have a more difficult time getting her credentials recognized. While the husband often launches straight into a career and into practice during settlement, his wife may have a more difficult time finding employment, resulting in the loss of skills. Consequently, many professional women experience difficulties passing Canadian equivalency tests. Unfortunately, it is difficult to engage employers in discussions about policy, unless there is a systemic issue with employment that is being addressed from an employer's perspective, such as difficulties finding people to fill jobs.

The Nova Scotia Office of Immigration does not have a system of measurement for evaluating settlement programs. While there is qualitative information and feedback from immigrant partners providing programs that the funding they receive has helped them to reach more immigrants, it is difficult to provide statistics on how many immigrants have been reached. One of the many challenges the Office faces is in educating the public about the need to have job opportunities available to immigrants as a way to increase the number of immigrants in Nova Scotia. In addition to jobs, initiatives that seek to welcome and foster the inclusion of immigrants representing diverse cultures also play a significant role in attracting immigrants to the province.

The Office perceives the young, thirty something international graduate as the "ideal immigrant". Consequently, immigration policies have been implemented to target international graduates who graduated from a university or community college in Canada. This immigration category was put in place because employers are more likely to recognize the credentials of immigrants who have been educated in the province or in Canada and who are young, mobile, single and, consequently, more willing to relocate.

**Recommendations**

Using the research findings presented earlier, the following sections identify recommendations for addressing structural, systemic, institutional and everyday barriers in community programs and policies that deal with immigrant integration in Halifax.

**Community Agencies Serving Immigrants**

*Language*

- Provide women who attend English classes with free childcare.
- Provide translation services for clients who are not comfortable speaking English.
- Offer practical hands-on programs in the immigrants' first language.

*Education*

- Expose students to Canadian cultural and touristic opportunities in the Atlantic region and beyond.
- Offer customized programs to high school students from other countries.
- Develop school programs that expose children to different cultural and ethnic practices.

*Settlement*

- Work closely with embassies in other countries in order to more effectively prepare immigrants for life in Canada.
- Determine specific needs that immigrants have and design a settlement plan that outlines what the client wants to achieve over the next few years in Nova Scotia.
- Assist immigrants in obtaining necessary documents such as insurance cards and health cards.
- Offer volunteer mentorship programs that support immigrants around parenting skills and/or career.
- Provide more programs for immigrant seniors.
- Offer community education and workshops that help support recent immigrants.
- Encourage immigrants to volunteer with local organizations as a way to become more familiar with the region.
- Offer more information sessions and orientation sessions on topics which encompass Canadian law, rights, taxes, and health services.
- Provide workshops on Canadian taxes, Canadian law, driving in the winter, and how to parent teenagers in Canada.
- Offer more activities and cultural events like the Multicultural Festival that provide opportunities for ethnic and cultural communities to meet each other, share their culture and discuss their experiences.
- Offer more programming tailored to the needs of highly educated immigrants who have excellent English language abilities and are seeking to achieve integration at a faster pace.
- Encourage the majority communities and employers to be more accepting of immigrants.
- Participate in ongoing evaluation of immigrant programs to ensure that they are relevant and useful.
- Hire immigrant staff equipped to assist clients in understanding cultural differences and in learning how to understand and work with these cultural differences, particularly in employment settings.

*Employment*

- Offer workshops for women who are looking to make a career change, or who are unemployed and need to find work.
- Develop pre-employment workshops that offer experiential learning opportunities such as role plays where immigrant clients can mimic a potential real life situation in the community and practice job interviews with professionals.
- Prepare immigrant clients for employment through pre-employment workshops, employment counselling, mentoring, and work placements.
- Offer more bridging programs for highly skilled immigrants.
- Assist immigrants in finding job shadowing or volunteer opportunities.
- Provide more support to immigrants who are starting their own business.

**Immigration Policy**

*Communication*

- Continue to share information with the public about immigration policies through public forums and the dissemination of information packages.

  This includes educating the public about the distinct roles of the provincial and federal government in implementing policy and how both levels of government work in partnership to enhance immigrant integration and inclusion.

*Discrimination*

- Develop initiatives that focus on changing the stereotypical and negative perceptions that the majority community has of immigrants.
- Implement policies that address barriers to social inclusion for immigrants due to race and culture.

  This includes ensuring that policies acknowledge the role that race and culture play in immigrant settlement, access to employment and other factors.

- Ensure that antiracism programming (not simply cultural competency) is developed through the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration.

*Employment*

- Develop more effective policies that increase access to specialized jobs by temporary workers.

  Currently, immigrating to Canada is a long process for temporary workers because an employer has to apply to HRDSC to obtain a labour market opinion. The labour market opinion protects Canadians by ensuring that unemployed Canadians who are available to perform a particular job are hired instead of temporary workers.

  In many cases, some of these jobs require specialized skills that many Canadians don't have. Consequently, it would benefit the Canadian economy if the labour market opinion were waived to allow temporary workers to gain entry into Canada quickly to work in these jobs.

- Engage in more outreach initiatives that target employers and that connect them to immigrants requiring mentorship around employment.

*Program Evaluation*

- Conduct more ongoing evaluations of settlement programs in order to measure outcomes and assess if programs are meeting their objectives.

*Research*

- Conduct more policy-relevant research on immigrant integration in the province.
- Communicate research results to policy makers, who are often unaware of many of the other issues facing immigrants beyond immigrant integration.
- Use research findings to mobilize the government and the community around the reduction and elimination of various systemic and institutional barriers facing immigrants.

# References

Canadian Federation of Municipalities (2009). Immigration & Diversity in Canadian Cities and Communities. Retrieved Sept 2009 from: http://www.fcm.ca//CMFiles/2009-03-11%20QOLRS%20Immigration%20Backgrounder1JWJ-3192009-441.pdf

Frisken, F. & Wallace, M. (2000). City-Suburban Differences in Government Responses to Immigration in the Greater Toronto Area. Toronto: Centre for Urban and Community Studies.

Galabuzi, G.E. (2001). *Canada's creeping economic apartheid: The economic segregation and social marginalization of racialized groups*. Toronto: Centre for Social Justice Foundation.

Galabuzi, G.E. (2006). *Canada's economic apartheid: The social exclusion of racialized groups in the new century*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Gazso, A. & Waldron, I. (2009, October). "**Fleshing out the racial undertones of poverty for Canadian women and their families: Re-envisioning a critical integrative framework**", *Atlantis:A Women's Studies Journal*, **34 (1), 132-141.**

Government of Nova Scotia (2009). *Preventing poverty, promoting prosperity: Nova Scotia's poverty reduction strategy* http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/specials/poverty/documents/poverty_report_2009.pdf

Ornstein, M. (2001). For the access and equity unit, strategic and corporate policy division, Chief Administrator's Office, City of Toronto. *Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis of the 1996 Census*. Toronto.

Sakamoto, I. (2006). Employment challenges, access to services, and resiliency: Experiences of "earlier" Mainland Chinese skilled immigrants in Toronto. *CERIS- The Ontario Metropolis Center*, 1-6.

Sharif, N. (2009). *Immigrant entrepreneurs in Nova Scotia: Factors that contribute to and hinder success* (Atlantic Metropolis Centre Working Paper 20). Retrieved November 28, 2010, from http://www.atlantic.metropolis.net/WorkingPapers/Sharif_WP20.pdf

Sidhu, N. (2008). The right to learn: Access to public education for non-status Immigrants. *Community Social planning Council of Toronto*. 1-38. Retrieved November 28, 2010 from socialplanningtoronto.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/right_to_learn.pdf

Somerville, K., and Walsworth, S., 2010. Admission and Employment Criteria Discrepancies: Experiences of Skilled Immigrants in Toronto, *Journal of International Migration & Integration*, *11*(3), 341-352

Statistics Canada (2008) *Earnings and incomes of Canadians over the past quarter century, 2006 Census*."
Ottawa: Statistics Canada. [Electronic Version] Retrieved May 8, 2008, from,
http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/income/pdf/97-563-XIE2006001.pdf

Teixeria, C., Lo, L. & Truelove, M. (2007). Immigrant entrepreneurship, institutional      discrimination,
and implications for public policy: A case study in Toronto. *Environment and Planning C: Government
and Policy, 25,* 176-193.


Wallace, M. & Frisken F. (2004). Meeting the Challenges of Immigrant Settlement: Is your Municipality
Ready? *Our Diverse Cities*, 1: 148-52.

# AMC Working Papers Series - Guidelines

**• What are the AMC Working Papers?**

The AMC's Working Papers Series is related to the broad mandate of the Metropolis Project. The Working Papers produced by the Atlantic Metropolis Centre are designed to: (1) speed up the dissemination of research results relevant to the interests and concerns of Metropolis researchers, policy-makers, NGOs; (2) allow for an avenue where Metropolis researchers in the Atlantic region can disseminate research and information specific to immigration, migration, integration and diversity in Atlantic Canada.

**• Will these be considered "official" publications?**

The inclusion of a manuscript in the Working Papers Series does not preclude, nor is it a substitute for its subsequent publication in a peer reviewed journal. In fact, we would encourage authors to submit such manuscripts for publication in professional journals (or edited books) as well.

**• What subject content is acceptable?**

The Working Paper Series welcomes research reports and theoretical discussions relevant to the mandate of the Metropolis Project, providing insight into the policy concerns not only of immigration and integration, but also ethnocultural diversity.

Examples of areas of research include: economic, political, cultural, and educational integration of immigrants, migrants and refugees; language; transnationalism; gender and/or immigrant women; ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity; multiculturalism; social and family networks; social discourses, attitudes and values; youth; identity; citizenship; temporary migration; justice and security; settlement programs and policy; health and well-being; and human rights.

**• Who may submit papers?**

Metropolis researchers, policy-makers and service providers may submit paper submissions derived from AMC research grant (pilot or strategic grant) projects, unpublished articles, and conference papers. Submissions from non-affiliates will be examined on a case-by-case basis.

**• Copyright**

Copyright for papers accepted as AMC Working Papers remain with the author(s) who are free to publish their papers at any time. It is the responsibility of the authors to inform the AMC's Working Paper series Editors of any change in publication status.

**• Official Languages**

AMC researchers reserve the right to publish working papers in the language of their choice.

## Centre Métropolis Atlantique - Série de documents de recherche

## Protocoles de sélection et de présentation

**• En quoi consiste la *Série de documents de recherche* du Centre Métropolis Atlantique?**

La publication de la *Série de documents de recherche* répond en fait aux objectifs généraux du Centre Métropolis Atlantique, en ce qu'elle favorise (1) la dissémination rapide de la recherche pertinente aux intérêts et aux besoins des intervenants académiques, gouvernementaux et communautaires affiliés au Centre, (2) et la création d'un espace de diffusion où les chercheurs rattachés au projet en Atlantique peuvent faire connaître leurs travaux et tout autre information pertinente à l'immigration et à la diversité culturelle en Atlantique.

**• Ces textes peuvent-ils considérés comme une publication finale et officielle?**

L'inclusion d'un manuscrit dans la *Série de documents de recherche* ne remplace, ni n'exclue la publication d'une version finale de ce même manuscrit dans une revue à comité de lecture. D'ailleurs, la direction du Centre encourage tous les auteurs à soumettre les résultats de leurs recherches à des revues scientifiques, ou bien à les publier sous forme de monographie.

**• Quels sont les problématiques et les types de recherche correspondant au profil de cette série?**

La soumission de manuscrits pour la *Série de documents de recherche* s'adresse à tous les chercheurs dont les rapports de recherche et les réflexions théoriques portent sur les questions d'immigration, d'intégration et de diversité culturelle, conformément aux objectifs généraux du Projet Métropolis.

Parmi les domaines de recherche, soulignons entre autres: l'intégration économique, politique, culturelle et formative (éducation) des immigrants; les diverses problématiques migrantes; la question des réfugiés; celle de la langue et du transnationalisme; les problématiques touchant les genres et plus particulièrement les questions concernant la condition des femmes immigrantes; la diversité ethnique, culturelle, religieuse, le multiculturalisme; les réseaux sociaux et familiaux; les discours, les valeurs et les attitudes à l'égard des immigrants; les rapports entre la jeunesse, l'identité, la citoyenneté, la justice et l'immigration; les politiques et les programmes affectant l'intégration des immigrants, leur santé, leur bien-être, ainsi que leurs droits fondamentaux.

**• Qui peut soumettre un manuscrit?**

Les collaborateurs académiques, communautaires ou gouvernementaux rattachés au Projet Métropolis sont invités à soumettre un texte issu d'un projet subventionné par Métropolis, (qu'il s'agisse d'une subvention de départ ou d'une subvention stratégique); un article n'ayant pas encore fait l'objet d'une publication ou bien un texte de communication. Les textes soumis par des chercheurs ou des intervenants non-affiliés seront examinés sur une base individuelle, au cas par cas.

**• Droits d'auteur**

En ce qui a trait aux droits portant sur les textes soumis et acceptés, ils demeurent la propriété des auteurs qui sont donc libres de publier sous toute autre forme et selon leur discrétion les manuscrits qui auront fait l'objet d'une première publication dans cette série. Il revient cependant aux auteurs d'avertir le Centre Métropolis Atlantique de tout changement ayant trait au statut de publication de ces textes.

**• Langues officielles**

Le Centre Métropolis Atlantique se réserve le choix de publier les textes soumis dans l'une ou l'autre des langues officielles.