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SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Participants in the study in Vancouver offered many ideas on how to improve integration of recent immigrants, though it was unclear how many had been tried and proven yet.

- Develop leaders who are more intentional about involving recent immigrants, particularly in leadership roles. This involves finding and asking immigrants – What are the gifts and skills that you are bringing? Acknowledge these gifts, empower the people, and let them use them.
- Address felt needs: Offer ESL classes, cooking classes, informational classes about Canada, financial support, and training in how to be involved in church life in Canada.
- Visit recent immigrants and establish personal relationships.
- Bring in different styles of worship.
- Bring food: hospitality is a critical part of spending time together.
- Honour and respect skill sets recent immigrants bring with them, whether they were a doctor or a teacher in their own country, and help them get credentials in Canada, or develop a new career path.
- Hire immigrants for pastoral staff. One participant commented that “A lot of immigrants that come are already experienced and they can begin using their gifts immediately. They don’t need to necessarily go to 4 years of Bible school. Everyone can be involved in church life.”
- Recognize that there are different approaches to reaching immigrants: helping people before they even arrive in Canada, helping after a person has arrived, getting involved at an advocacy level on immigration policies, human trafficking or other issues.



BEYOND *the*
WELCOME:

Churches Responding to the Immigrant Reality in Canada

**VANCOUVER
CITY REPORT**



Beyond the Welcome: Churches Responding to the Immigrant Reality in Canada

is a research project that involved over 300 church leaders in cities across Canada. At the heart of the study was a desire to know how new immigrants experience church in Canada and what churches can do to be more welcoming and inclusive. New immigrants to Canada face the limitations of poverty to a disproportionate degree. We believe that Churches can be community leaders in addressing this inequality.

Answers to questions of how new immigrants can become integrated into Canadian churches are urgently needed, given that within the space of a single generation, the cultural face of Canadian society has been transformed by the arrival of new immigrants, especially in Canada's urban centres. While every journey to Canada is unique, they all have much in common: navigating in a new society is challenging and often exhausting. Immediate basic needs, such as housing, employment and language learning, must be met. The church can play an active role in this process by intentionally engaging new immigrants' needs and creating places for them in our church communities.



Newcomers tend to think more in terms of building bridges to the community and culture, said one participant, while people already entrenched in Canada could have the mentality – “I don't need to do anything because I'm already here.”

Participants in this study noted that many Canadian churches are welcoming of people from other cultures, especially during Sunday morning services. But getting beyond a Sunday-morning welcome has been proven more difficult. Participants reported positive things happening in churches, but often these were too few and far between. Those from established majority culture churches admit it's a struggle.

Churches with visionary leaders who highlight immigration needs and model relationship-building are the most likely to successfully integrate new immigrants. Demonstrating intentionality in planning how to be more inclusive was reported to be essential. This may include hosting cross-cultural events with opportunities for social interaction; recruiting multi-lingual church staff, providing translation of worship materials and partnering with other churches and organizations to meet larger scale challenges. As churches get better at integrating recent immigrants into the life of the church, they are also likely to go out into their neighbourhoods to run community programs that respond to the needs of new immigrants.



Beyond the Welcome in Vancouver

DEMOGRAPHICS:

- According to the 2006 Census, there were 831,300 foreign-born people in the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area, up by about 92,700 from 2001.
- Foreign-born people accounted for 40% of the Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area's total population (*Statistics Canada, 2007*).
- From 2001 to 2006, Vancouver attracted nearly 14% of immigrants to Canada, down from 17.6% in the previous census.
- In 2006, 19% percent of the population identified themselves as Catholic, 23% Protestant, 1% Orthodox, and 5% other Christian denominations (*Statistics Canada, 2010*).



VANCOUVER SPOTLIGHT:

Journey Home Community, New Hope Community Services Society, Umoja Operation Compassion Society

Vancouver boasts a number of excellent ministries with a immigrant and refugee focused mandate including some in partnership with World Vision: Journey Home Community, a Christian ministry that seeks to share Jesus' love by serving refugee claimant families in Metro Vancouver. New Hope assists refugee claimants and new Canadian immigrants to become

Research participant responses

CHALLENGES:

That level of change has brought many challenges for integration of recent immigrants into Vancouver churches:

- Language issues can range from dealing with different levels of proficiency in English, or causing people from similar cultures to cluster together for comfort reasons, to people not getting involved because they worry they will make a mistake and end up offending if they speak incorrectly.
- Newcomers tend to think more in terms of building bridges to the community and culture, said one participant, while people already entrenched in Canada could have the mentality – “I don't need to do anything because I'm already here.”
- The tension between the second generation of westernized kids and their immigrant parents is reflected in such things as “how do we honour family, but also have the freedom to make our own choices and decisions?” It's a struggle that is seen at both a family and church level.
- Understanding multiple cultures, including recognizing the huge differences between the cultures of source countries, eg: Hong Kong China and Mainland China... Philippines, Jamaica, etc. “We don't understand all cultures just because we've had dialogue with one group,” said one participant. “There can be division within people from what may be perceived as the same culture simply on the basis of race.”

interdependent and productive members of Canadian society by providing transitional housing and connections with spiritual, social, personal, educational, residential and vocational support. Umoja supports low income immigrants living in the Vancouver lower mainland. Initially focused upon new African immigrants, they have expanded their programs to support other ethnic groups as they integrate into Canadian society.

www.journeyhomecommunity.ca

www.newhopecs.org

www.umojaoperationcompassion.org