

VITAL CONVERSATIONS



March 2018

FOCUSING ON NEWCOMERS

The South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF) believes in building our future as a community through dialogue and the power of philanthropy. We focus on and explore initiatives that address issues of community significance consistent with our mission, vision, and values — which are aligned with community priorities and the priorities of our donors.

What makes us unique is that we hold and invest the funds that we receive from donors allowing for grants to be made not just once, but year after year. This service creates a sustainable charitable fund to help make our community stronger, more vital and a fairer place to live, work, and play. We listen to the needs of the community and work with generous donors to respond to those needs.

With the guidance of the local Vital Signs Community Advisory Council, we produced our 2016 Vital Signs® report focusing on an overarching theme of 'Belonging' with three sub-themes: Pursuing Reconciliation, Welcoming Newcomers, and Building Economic Inclusion. As part of the national Community Foundations of Canada Vital Signs® week in October 2017, we launched the first of a series of 'Vital Conversations' focused on the topic of Pursuing Reconciliation.

On March 20, 2018, the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF) conducted a Vital Conversation on Engaging Newcomers, in partnership with the Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP).

Each Vital Conversation invites community insight and explores a theme area in greater depth. The input will provide important context for publication of a SSCF Vital Signs® Report in 2018.

The South Saskatchewan Community Foundation is a proud member of Community Foundations of Canada, our national membership organization that includes a network of over 191 community foundations across Canada. Vital Signs® is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada that leverages local knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and supports action towards improving our quality of life.

Engaging Newcomers

On March 20, 2018, the South Saskatchewan Community Foundation (SSCF) conducted a Vital Conversation on “Engaging Newcomers” in partnership with the Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP). Launched in 2014 and funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the RRLIP is a community initiative that brings together stakeholders to examine challenges, gaps and opportunities for newcomer settlement and integration in the Regina community and to develop local solutions. The RRLIP strengthens our community’s ability to successfully welcome, settle and integrate newcomers through connecting stakeholders, informing the community of newcomers strengths and needs and supporting community stakeholders’ efforts to engage and work with newcomers.

The RRLIP recently developed a community action plan which identified the following as priorities for newcomers:



Employment



Child Care



Education



**Every day
living needs**

The theme of the March 20 Vital Conversation was **EMPLOYMENT**.

The guests invited to the Forum were newcomers, employers and those who facilitate newcomer employment, organizations involved in newcomer settlement/support, interested individuals and SSCF Board members/staff.

The Forum facilitators interacted with the participants in two ways.

1. The participants were placed in diverse groups and asked about employment challenges and possible solutions to those challenges.
2. The facilitators distributed a ten-question survey to the Forum participants.

There were 55 Forum participants and 51 surveys were returned.

Of the participants that attended: 37% said they were foreign born and 63% said they were not.

The following summarizes the feedback from the Forum discussion groups

MAJOR CHALLENGES TO EMPLOYMENT	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THOSE CHALLENGES
Lack of language and Canadian experience. Be frank about the importance of language on the job.	Workplace integration programs: work placements, mentorships, internships. Provide a list of translators for employers/agencies.
	Identify the “Canadian culture” so newcomers can be aware of cultural differences.
Fear and intimidation (language, culture, job skills). Perceived discrimination based on the name on job applications.	Provide workshops for employers and the general public on diverse cultures, international credentials, and cultural sensitivities.
Reluctance of employers to hire newcomers and staff acceptance of newcomers.	Educate employers/staff about newcomers and provide information to them.
	Create an inventory of community employers who hire newcomers. Target employers to match newcomers.
	Invite newcomers to networking events.
Newcomers often obtain low-paying jobs and without the recognition of their credentials and previous experience, they stay in those jobs. Lack of mobility of credentials between countries and between provinces.	Specialized training for newcomers in various professions. Facilitate specialized language training for professions.
	Identify industry standards and provide options for newcomers to acquire them.
Lack of affordable child care.	
Newcomers do not know their legal and employment rights (sick time, WCB, hours of work, and others).	



Qualitative data from the community forum was collected by note takers with flipcharts. This data has been organized by question and consolidated into common themes that stood out in each discussion.

FROM THE SURVEY, THE RESPONSES CAN BE SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS

- **MOST HELPFUL RESOURCES TO NEWCOMERS.** Settlement agencies; faith/cultural groups; Regina Public Library; Saskatchewan Polytechnic and the University of Regina; community agencies; volunteers and friends.
- **HOW COULD SUPPORT BE IMPROVED?** Accessibility to programs including longer and specific language training; other settlement programs; advertise supports; provide training for employers; more volunteers, and more cultural awareness training for the general public and others.
- **SUPPORTS THAT DON'T EXIST.** More bridging programs to employment for newcomers and employers; identify process/es to assess foreign credentials; mentorships for employment; and descriptions of Canadian culture. Newcomers and employers need legal and translation services.
- **CHALLENGES TO NEWCOMERS.** Language training and more professional language training in post-secondary institutions; and more individualized settlement services and within employment environments. There are bias/racism concerns. The recognition of credentials and prior work experience within their occupational fields are not widely recognized. How do newcomers learn/identify Canadian practices and learn to adapt?
- **COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND BENEFITS.** Those who said they were not foreign-born tend to participate in recreational, sport, and arts events. The overlap with those who said they were foreign-born is with religious and community activities. Newcomers tend to find support at community, cultural, religious and family events. All participants agreed that activities build relationships and a sense of support.
- **CHILD CARE.** Few of the participants used childcare facilities, but the cost and availability of child care spaces was mentioned as a challenge to newcomers.
- **NEW INFORMATION LEARNED AT THE FORUM.** The participants learned of the barriers to newcomers and of some possible solutions. There was a better understanding of RRLIP and SSCF and the roles each play within the community. There are a breadth of community agencies that represent newcomers. However, they have to work with employers and the general public to integrate newcomers.
- **FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION.** Some coordination of the community employers and the availability of jobs would be useful. Newcomers would like to know what integration strategies professional organizations have in place (language training, mentorships, etc.). What are the options for credential recognition? Update the stakeholders and employers annually on the newcomer statistics (who is coming into the community, education, backgrounds, etc.). How do volunteers sign up to assist newcomers? What opportunities are available in various organizations?