

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING IMMIGRATION ACTION AND POLICY IN SASKATCHEWAN

The *Centre canadien de recherche sur les francophonies en milieu minoritaire* (CRFM), the centre for research on minority Francophone communities of the Institut français at the University of Regina, organized two events in 2013-2014 as part of its contribution to the **“Pathways to Prosperity” immigration partnership (2012-2019), funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in collaboration with the Réseau en immigration francophone de la Saskatchewan (RIF-SK), the Saskatchewan network on Francophone immigration.**

This document is intended to present the findings and recommendations that emerged from the roundtables that followed lectures by Chedly Belkhodja, Ph.D.¹, on November 7, 2013 and by Amal Madibbo, Ph.D.², on February 13, 2014. These two researchers are also members of the CRFM and have received grants in the past through our annual research grant competition.

◇ Reflection on Francophone Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities in Canada, November 7, 2013, in the Rotonde of the Institut français

This event was organized as part of the programming associated with **national Francophone immigration week (November 3-9, 2013)**, as well as being part of the **Rendez-vous francosaskois 2013**, the theme of which was **“Integrating and rooting young adults and newcomers within the community.”**

Following the lecture by Chedly Belkhodja, Ph.D., which dealt with, among other things, the issues of the preference given by the government to economic immigration, the instrumentalization of immigration and diversity, discussions about identity and the “diversification of diversity,” the subsequent roundtable made up of Chedly Belkhodja, Ph.D., Françoise Sigur-Cloutier (RIF-SK representative and president of the Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise), Alpha Sow, community development expert, Charles-Henri Warren, representative of the Government of Saskatchewan, and two University of Regina students who are newcomers to the province, and facilitated by Laurie Carlson Berg, Ph.D., produced the following findings and recommendations:

a) Findings

- Problem concerning recognition of skills and degrees;
- Francophone immigrants have the challenge of being “double minorities”;
- Strong Anglophone attraction (the “American Dream”) – the Francophone immigrant’s goal is not necessarily to be part of a Francophone community;

¹ Chedly Belkhodja, Ph.D., is a professor and director of the School of Community and Public Affairs. He was involved in the creation of the Atlantic Métropolis centre as research director and, from 2006 to 2012, as director of the centre.

² Amal Madibbo, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the sociology department at the University of Calgary. Her research focuses on themes of immigration and integration, the Francophonie, race and ethnicity in Canada.

- Immigrants often arrive in family groups, which is not sufficiently taken into account (lack of services – e.g., daycare);
- Many immigrants arrive outside of recruitment campaigns (e.g., Destination Canada) and many arrive from countries where there are no recruitment campaigns, e.g., sub-Saharan Africa;
- Absence of quotas and “targets” with respect to Francophone immigration to Saskatchewan.

b) Recommendations

- Make the concept of immigrants’ “well-being” a priority;
- Discuss the relevance of setting a “target” with respect to Francophone immigration to Saskatchewan;
- Have the government provide support for efforts with respect to recognition of skills and degrees;
- Equip the community by means of intercultural training sessions, and adapt this support work to newcomers;
- Increase the number of places and events to pursue dialogue between newcomers and the host community, to allow sharing of minority Francophones’ stories and challenges;
- Emphasize individual efforts in building an inclusive community;
- Pursue dialogue between newcomers and the host community through the *Réseau des communautés d’accueil* (RCA), the network of host communities;
- Increase the role of towns and cities – take the example of Ottawa, which organized activities centered around diversity on a monthly basis, and which committed itself to a local immigration partnership (LIP)³;
- Pair new arrivals with a host community;
- Evaluate the relevance of student recruitment as part of other recruitment campaigns abroad;
- Make use of engaging activities (e.g., sports) as a stepping stone to welcome new arrivals;
- Conduct a follow-up with respect to the work carried out by the 2006 Commission on Inclusion to assess how this concept of inclusion is perceived both by newcomers and by the host community.

◇ Francophone Immigration from the Perspective of Black History Month, February 13, 2014 in the Carrefour Horizons Auditorium

This event was organized as part of the programming marking Black History Month, in partnership with **Vues d’Afrique**, the Saskatchewan Network on Francophone Immigration (RIF-SK), the Community of Francophone Africans of Saskatchewan (CAFS) and the Regina Public Library (RPL) Film Theatre.

Amal Madibbo, Ph.D. shared the results of research that she undertook in Alberta, the results of which are applicable to Saskatchewan as well. Her research showed that the step of settling Francophone immigrants of African origin was a success, but that the steps of adaptation and integration were not. Assessing and recognizing immigrants’ skills is a national problem which is made worse in the case of immigrants from developing countries. Furthermore, the skills of Anglophone immigrants are much better recognized than those of Francophone immigrants. Francophone immigrants of African origin are often underemployed and feel that they are losing their expertise. In reality, socio-economic integration has not been a success; neither has it been accompanied by political integration.

³ See: <http://voiesversprosperite.ca/lip/>

A discussion and roundtable followed this lecture, on the theme of the employability of Francophone immigrants, which was organized on the initiative of the CAFS. The roundtable, which was moderated by the director of the CRFM and the Institut français, Sheila Petty, Ph.D., and made up of Sovi Lambert Ahouansou (CAFS), Laurie Carlson Berg, Ph.D., and Ronald Labrecque (a representative of RIF-SK and director of community services at the Assemblée communautaire fransaskoise), produced the following findings and recommendations:

a) Findings

- Advanced educational levels among Francophone immigrants of African origin, but significant, and above-average, levels of unemployment and under-employment. These imbalances could be the breeding ground for a social explosion, as has been the case elsewhere in the world, particularly in Europe. These findings are also reported among other categories of immigrants and among First Nations;
- Cultural differences today are factors of exclusion, which are felt in particular during job applications and interviews;
- A lack of data and research on the subject: statistics and research on Canadian labour market norms and standards;
- Francophones who arrive in Saskatchewan to settle and work here these days come, in the vast majority of cases, from Africa (91% in 2011 according to ACF statistics – based on the individuals they welcomed);
- The presence of, and the role played by, the African community in the Fransaskois community are therefore very important and are steadily increasing, whether in our various organizations and institutions or in our schools.

b) Recommendations

- Do not look at immigrants solely from the viewpoint of human capital; consider them as social development players as well;
- Evaluate the results and effectiveness of the labour equity law; strengthen laws on discriminatory practices;
- Promote statistical research on the employability of Francophone immigrants, the results of which will help put increased pressure on political decision-makers;
- Improve employability and upgrading programs for Francophone immigrants;
- Emphasize knowledge of our own history, our own workings and our dominant narratives to better integrate newcomers. Allow the co-creation of a living history and promote the principle of equality for the creation of a united Nation;
- Increase the importance of preparation before departure in order to reassure and equip newcomers, as well as employers;
- Establish recruitment strategies appropriate to the targeted results;
- Continue the efforts currently underway to carry out recruitment campaigns in sub-Saharan Africa;
- Provide tools to the host community and employers to evaluate skills and to make the most of newcomers' expertise.
- Pursue and emphasize efforts made in schools to teach world history and geography.