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## Best Practices in Multicultural Library Services: Library Settlement Program (LSP) at Toronto Public Library

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In the field of immigration, policies are mainly national, but consequences are dealt with by the cities that attract immigrants as direct and indirect results of globalization...Regardless of their *de jure* minor role, Canada's cities have always been *de facto* major actors in immigration history.

Simich, Laura <u>Towards A Greater Toronto Charter: Implications for Immigrant Settlement</u> Toronto: Maytree Foundation, September, 2000. p 4

# **Executive Summary**

This paper discusses the Library Settlement Program (LSP) currently in place in the Toronto Public Library. In order to establish a context for this discussion the demographics of Toronto are presented with emphasis on understanding Toronto's position as a primary gateway for immigrants in Canada according to the 2006 Census figures. The framework for the LSP model is also referenced as a model based upon the human service system integration whereby potentially related agencies work together to achieve mutually beneficial goals directed at target populations. In this case, the LSP is funded by Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) who selects and funds community agencies to deliver settlement services in libraries to the target population of newcomers. A

discussion of the concept of settlement is offered with the purpose of providing an inclusive and organic definition of newcomer settlement. The relationship to the settlement needs of newcomers and their expectations for library service is examined as a preamble to the presentation of the library's recent newcomer survey and its key findings. Within this informational context, a thorough examination of the model of the LSP is followed by a description of the roles of stakeholders. An analysis of the outcomes of the LSP reveal positive benefits for the newcomers, the agencies and the library locations according to both qualitative and quantitative evidence. The discussion is concluded with statements regarding the future directions for the LSP including a commitment to an expansion of the program and modifications of the existing infrastructure to ensure a dynamic and responsive evolution of the program as it matures.

# **Setting the Context:**

Canada is one of the major immigrant-receiving countries in the world. The most recent census data of 2006 indicate that Canada is a leader amongst the OECD countries in acceptance of immigrants. (Cheadle 1) Currently, immigration is seen as a strategic investment in the country's economic and social viability. Each year, over the past decade, over 200,000 people become landed immigrants in Canada. (Toronto City Planning Division 1) While the population of the country continues to change dramatically, the impact of this flow is unevenly distributed. According to the 2006 Census, almost 70% of immigrants to Canada settle in the Census Metropolitan areas of the country with the city of Toronto receiving the largest share of immigrants of any city in Canada. (Ibid. 3) Statistics recently released from the City of Toronto indicate that while Toronto is home to 8% of Canada's population, it is also home to 30% of all recent immigrants and 20% of all immigrants. As a result, nearly half of the city's population have a mother tongue in a language other than English or French. (Ibid. 3) The diversity of the city's immigrant population is as remarkable as their high proportion, with over 100 countries currently represented in the immigrant population of Toronto. (Simich 7) Against this multi-layered cultural backdrop, the Toronto Public Library, in its most recent Strategic Plan, identifies newcomers and their successful integration as one of the library's four key priorities.

The integration of newcomers in the library setting typically involves meeting the needs of this population through traditional library collections and programs. Newcomers, regardless of their category of admission or place of destination, usually go through an acculturation process where their needs centre on language, employment, housing, schools, and culture. In response to the demand for language materials, the library has built collections in over 40 languages and augmented the myriad of supports in ESL materials and tests. To support the large number of foreign trained professionals settling in Toronto, the library currently maintains an extensive collection of materials dealing with education, accreditation and licensing for the foreign trained skilled trades and professions. These are the traditional, informational initiatives the library has in place to ease the integration of new arrivals.

Recently, Toronto Public Library piloted a more novel and interactive approach towards targeting the information needs of newcomers. The Library Settlement Program (LSP) focuses on direct delivery of information and referral services to newcomers through the placement of settlement workers stationed in strategic libraries throughout the city. This program evolved from a summer program where school based settlement workers were placed in libraries across the city to support newcomer families during school closures over the summer months. Due to the observed demand, the summer program expanded to include year round settlement workers permanently placed in library locations with high immigrant populations. Going beyond the traditional model of providing access to information, the LSP proactively seeks out newcomers in the library setting and provides them with timely information and referrals relating to their settlement needs.

The Library Settlement Program is loosely constructed upon the public sector model of *Human Service Systems Integration*. A conceptual framework of human service system integration can be defined as an array of potentially related agencies working together to achieve mutually beneficial goals to narrowly defined target populations. (Corbett 2) The opposite of this model is the service silo based approach to organizing and delivering human services where each silo operates in a relatively separate manner with some, but limited, cross referrals. (Ibid. 1) Recent successes in providing health care services and social services to marginalized populations have increased the adoption of an integrated service model in other public sectors. (Rosencheck et al.) For the library, this unique approach was implemented to deliver library and settlement information to newcomers (the target population) through a partnership with local settlement agencies, funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). The three-way partnership between CIC, the local settlement agencies and the library represent the integration of three separate institutions in our community, all of whom are committed to the delivery of timely settlement information to recently arrived newcomers.

### What is Settlement?

Settlement is recognized as an organic process that continues throughout the life cycle of an immigrant. Under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, Canada has identified the successful integration of new immigrants into Canada as one of its mandates. The responsibility for immigration policy and funding lies with the federal government while the responsibility for settlement services lies with local institutions. Settlement services to assist immigrants in their integration process include general orientation, language training, information and referral services, and employment services. Citizenship and Immigration (CIC) provides funding to local settlement services through the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Language Instruction for Newcomer (LINC), and the HOST Program. In Toronto, the Settlement Education Partnership in Toronto (SEPT) is a specialized program that supports immigrant families with school age children by offering settlement information, school mediation and referrals. A number of agencies are involved in administering settlement services, including mainstream service providers, multi-ethnic agencies, ethno-specific agencies,

gender-specific service agencies, provincial and municipal departments, and specialized employment agencies.

Originally CIC defined settlement as the process by which a newcomer, during his/her first few years in Canada, acquires basic information knowledge, information and skills to become self-sufficient. Many arguments have been made towards a less rigid definition of settlement. OCASI, an agency representing over 130 immigrant serving agencies defines settlement as a long term, dynamic process through which immigrants become fully participating members of society. (ISPR Consortium 50) The Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR) also acknowledges that settlement is a two-way, multidimensional process that requires newcomers to adapt socially, culturally and economically to their new country but also requires that their host society accept and welcome their presence. (Ibid. 50) This approach is now recognized by CIC, who acknowledges that the two-way aspect of integration requires newcomers to adapt but also requires Canadians to welcome and absorb new people and cultures. (Ibid. 50)

Overall, many of the stakeholders agree that the settlement process can extend over a lifetime and sometimes spill over into the next generation. Regardless of the timeframe, settlement has been observed to include at least the acquisition of the following basics: language skills, meaningful employment, housing, schooling, and medical services. Beyond these basics that account for independent living in a host country, much attention has recently been given to the role of inclusion as a prime factor in the settlement process. (Caidi 2) Social inclusion is defined as civic participation and social connectivity within the surrounding community. (Ibid. 1) Thus, a fuller definition of settlement submits that newcomers are settled to the extent that they are able to acquire the basic skills to meet their comfort needs and participate fully in community life.

## **Needs of Newcomers:**

As part of the consultation process associated with the Canada-Ontario Immigration agreement, newcomers defined their needs as the following: Better information and guidance, Employment, Language and education, Initial orientation, Financial stability, Cultural integration, Social and emotional support, Health and housing. Libraries occupy a cornerstone of municipal service where newcomers can receive support in several key areas of their identified needs. As mentioned previously, collections and services have already responded to the demand for both multilingual and ESL materials to support language acquisition, as well as targeted collections for internationally trained professionals. Long before the establishment of the library settlement partnership, library staff informally observed that libraries were a draw for local immigrants. The mandate of free service available to all members of the community has inherent appeal to newcomers, some of whom make the library their first point of community contact after their arrival.

While the library has responded to the information needs of newcomers as they arise in each community, there is little library research that documents the information needs of newcomers. (Sheffield 3) For this reason, in 2007, Toronto Public Library

developed and conducted a survey of newcomers in partnership with the local settlement agencies. The survey was delivered in a number of languages and examined three areas: the demographic profile of newcomers using library services and programs; their library usage and use patterns; and the short and long-term information needs of newcomers.

The key findings of this survey both confirm existing assumptions about the information needs of newcomers and also provide direction in future areas for newcomers' service development. As a group, newcomers display a keen interest in their local libraries and are enthusiastic supports of our services, with an overwhelming 88% of those interviewed declaring themselves as frequent library users. In terms of the broad demographic profile, 62% of those newcomers interviewed were between the ages of 30-40 and were part of a family grouping, with almost 80% of those interviewed possessing post secondary education. A majority (63%) of the respondents were female, which is a reflection of the presence of immigrant females over males in the library setting. Collections are a key reason for newcomers' library visits, accounting for 70-75% of resources used, with a strong preference for children, adult, and adult ESL collections. ESL collections outpaced multilingual collections by 10%, indicating that newcomers' priorities centred on language acquisition.<sup>2</sup> Another key area of library usage for newcomers was programming, accounting for 50-65% of their visits. Settlement services were enthusiastically received by newcomers, with more than half (52%) of those newcomers interviewed indicating that, once they discovered the service, they made use of the service on a weekly or monthly basis. Overall, newcomers were eager to indicate their satisfaction for library services and programs and also responded with suggestions for improvement. One overwhelming suggestion concerned establishing more opportunities for language conversation classes at different times of the day for different age groupings. There was also notable interest in finding volunteer opportunities, followed by programs on resumé preparation, job search skills, and part time work.<sup>3</sup> An observation generated from the demographics of the survey also indicates that, among the newcomer population visiting libraries, there are a number of professionally educated women who are presently delaying entry into the workforce due to family obligations.<sup>4</sup> Establishing a niche collection targeting this group may also be an effective way to respond to the needs of this specialized (and often marginalized) group. In total, this survey, while modest, assisted in spotlighting some of the key patterns of our local immigrant populations. It identified existing collections and programs that are successful in meeting the information needs of newcomers while indicating opportunities for continued support and enhancement in the areas of language acquisition, economic integration and social inclusion.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> A frequent library user, defined by the 2006 *Toronto Public Library Telephone Survey* is an individual who visits the library more than 20 times per month.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> This finding is congruent with studies of second language learners that identify immersion in rich language resources of the second language as a critical success factor in language acquisition and settlement. See Kohnert, Kathryn.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Integrating volunteering into the adult immigration population provides strong support of language acquisition and is associated with positive outcomes for social inclusion. This is supported by recent Canadian and US studies. See Dudley

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This observation is supported by Salaff, Janet, et al in her study of Chinese women immigrating to Canada. See Salaff, p. 65

# **Model of Service for Newcomers at the Library:**

The Library Settlement Program (LSP) is designed as a one-stop service point for newcomers with direct access to settlement resources at the library and referrals to full range of services in the wider community. In addition to providing culturally sensitive, individualized information and referral, the program is also set up to deliver workshops aimed at providing timely information to groups of newcomers. The current year-round pilot program is offered in 7 locations in partnership with 6 community based settlement agencies. It consists of the placement of a settlement worker at a visible location within each library. The settlement worker delivers settlement information to newcomers and facilitates referrals to the most appropriate community services. The worker receives clients through referral from library staff, who may recognize a library patron as being a newcomer, and also through his/her own outreach efforts. In return, when appropriate, the settlement worker refers newcomers to the library for membership or information and programming services. A communication protocol ensures that the library contact, settlement agency and administration are aware of common goals and strategies. The overall funding and impetus for the program is provided by CIC. Using the human service system integration model mentioned earlier, the LSP model integrates three separate institutions to deliver a common program (settlement services) to a target population (newcomers). The result is a blended service that seeks to provide recent immigrants with essential settlement information while at the same time encourages new arrivals and their families to become active library members.

# Roles and Responsibilities<sup>5</sup>

#### **Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)**

As the overseeing funding partner of this project, CIC identifies partner agencies with reference to language needs and service hour preferences identified by individual library locations. For identified settlement agencies, CIC provides access to the Online Tracking Information System (OTIS) form system for use by all partner agencies for statistics collection and program evaluation. In addition, CIC co-ordinates training with participating libraries and agencies and facilitates linkages to settlement professional development opportunities. In their over-arching role, CIC provides representation at Steering Committee Meetings and takes a lead in the ongoing evaluation and sustainability of the program.

#### **Partner Agency Responsibilities**

The partnering agency provides staff resources to match the language needs and service hours preferences appropriate to library locations. They are required to provide the partner library branch with detailed work schedules along with any notification of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The roles and responsibilities for each participant in the LSP has been paraphrased from the Operational Guidelines for year-round Settlement services at Toronto Public Library, a document co-written by CIC, partnering agencies and Toronto Public Library in May 2006

disruption of services. In order to ensure continuity of service, the agencies provide back-up settlement workers who can fill in when regular library workers are unavailable for any length of time. The community based settlement agencies have the overall responsibility of hiring, supervising and training library based settlement workers in collaboration with library management. In addition, their deliverables include reports to CIC as well as library management. As part of their communication protocol, they are required to obtain feedback from the partner branch for staff evaluation purposes and to meet regularly with their library contact to discuss issues and suggestions to improve service the shared client group.

#### **Library Settlement Worker**

The library settlement worker provides individual service to newcomer clients, arranges group workshops, and acts as the primary contact with library staff. Individual services include provision of information and referrals into the community, along with referrals to the library. Group workshops involve using resource people from community services to deliver timely and relevant information to groups of newcomers. These workshops are usually pre-arranged with library staff and make use of library facilities. Settlement workers are expected to work with library staff on newcomer initiatives. These may include outreach to newcomer clients in the communities with a view to promoting the library as a key resource for new arrivals. These initiatives may also include strategic relationship building with other settlement service providers in the community. Altogether, the settlement worker is a vital link in establishing contact and feedback from the newcomers surrounding the library community.

#### **Partner Library Responsibilities**

The partner library provides the workspace necessary to accommodate the settlement worker from the agency. This includes, space in a visible location or signage directing newcomers to the workspace, office equipment for each settlement worker and space for the delivery of group workshops to newcomers. The library provides the partner agency with a recommended settlement worker schedule requirements, according to peak user times. As a primary facilitator of this service, the partner library contact assists with integrating the settlement worker into the library culture and ensures that the settlement worker receives adequate training and orientation. In addition, the responsibility of promoting the settlement service and liaison with agency staff also fall under the responsibility of the individual library contacts.

#### **Toronto Public Library Responsibilities**

The library planning department has the administrative and planning functions of the LSP. This includes, selecting participating locations, facilitating communication between the separate organizations, and provision of a central contact person to coordinate and support the program. The central contact person has the responsibility of overseeing the LSP with a view to providing appropriate supports to ensure the program's success. Support for the program includes maintaining relationships between

library contacts, administration, and community agencies, developing training and orientation opportunities for settlement workers, maintaining statistics, and communicating the goals of the program to the library and community at large through outreach initiatives. The contact person also initiates program evaluations and from these evaluations develops strategies for program enhancement.

#### **Pilot Steering Committee Responsibilities**

This committee is comprised of representation from CIC, the settlement agencies and Toronto Public Library. It is charged with the responsibility of coordinating, evaluating and planning changes to the pilot. As a committee, it meets four times a year to discuss and review activities of the pilot.

#### **Outcomes**

Public libraries have an important and vital role to play in integrating newcomers into the community. Based upon their historic role as unbiased welcoming public spaces, dedicated to learning and self-exploration, libraries are in the forefront of the effort to make their cities stronger by welcoming and integrating new residents. (Ashton 5) Traditional provision of collections that offer rich language opportunities for children and adults as well as collections and programs that build English capacity represent past and current innovations in library service targeted at newcomers. The establishment of an active settlement service through the LSP represents a new strategy for library service to immigrants and introduces an innovative conceptual framework for lateral partnerships.

The direct benefits of the LSP extend towards first and foremost, the immigrant community, with collateral benefits felt by the settlement agencies and the library. The newcomers receive free, unimpeded access to information and referrals to community services, regardless of their immigration status. Under normal circumstances, agencies located in the community are obliged to follow CIC's criteria for eligibility of service which can exclude certain immigrant groups from receiving service. Since the library service mandate involves providing service to every member of the community, regardless of status, more immigrants in the community have access to these valuable services, regardless of their eligibility criteria. If newcomers are already library members and receiving benefits, then the LSP represents a value added service. If newcomers are unaware of library services, then they are instructed on the advantages of library membership for themselves and their family. On a larger social scale, the interaction with the settlement worker is associated with a means to build a network of community trust for the newcomer. It is the pre-condition to creating the social capital that an immigrant can draw upon to solve problems in their new environment. Social capital is associated with social and civic engagement and is recognized as a benchmark of growth and well being in a society. (Franke) Increasing the newcomer's social engagement through the provision of settlement services represents a significant step towards welcoming new arrivals into our community.

Settlement agencies benefit from the LSP as they are able to fulfill their mandate of serving immigrants in the community. The usual restrictions for service eligibility that may apply to clients served in the agencies' home office do not apply in the library. In this way, the settlement agencies are free to help those in the community based upon their needs. Geographically, settlement agencies are located in areas that are often difficult for newcomers to access, requiring lengthy bus rides or walks, thus limiting certain groups of newcomers from receiving information. Accessibility of newcomer services has been listed as one of the barriers that newcomers face when trying to seek information or services. (ISPR Consortium 76) Libraries, due to their strategic location within the city offer an opportunity to extend the reach and visibility of settlement agencies within their target community. In addition, the selection of agencies, based on their ability to serve the community allows smaller, ethno-centric, community based agencies an opportunity to expand their services through the LSP. For these smaller agencies, which do not have the economic supports of larger service providers, the extension of their services into public venues can provide a boost to their sustainability. (ISPR Consortium 72) Altogether, the approach of the LSP is one that is immigrant-centred, which fosters a more holistic, community-based and inter-connected support system. The equitable participation of settlement agencies and libraries reinforces relationships among institutions while focusing on immigrant needs.

For libraries, there is a flow of benefits associated with the LSP. Through this program, the library is able to enhance and enrich is programs and services to newcomer clients in the community. Settlement workers often have relevant language skills that augment the skill set of library staff. Their presence facilitates increased cultural sensitivity to our surrounding communities and fosters another personal connection with the newcomers who visit our libraries. The additional funds generated through the program through CIC have been used to create enhance library collections and electronic services of benefit to newcomers. In terms of our social capital, the program has given TPL a network of contacts within the settlement sector at the federal, provincial, municipal and local level, resulting in an enhanced presence amongst our community stakeholders. An additional collateral benefit has resulted in TPL obtaining access to planning data on newcomer settlement patterns and needs of the immigrant population, allowing for the strategic planning of collections and services in key locations. Using traditional benchmarks for performance, the program has demonstrated a steady increase in usage. During the first year of the pilot project, the LSP served 5,387 individual clients and 2,552 clients through group workshops. The LSP was also responsible for referrals for 854 new library memberships. <sup>6</sup> The human system service integration approach used in this model provides the opportunity to develop innovative methods for delivering information to the newcomers in the library. As the program progresses, the impact on our role in community development and on our performance measures indicates that there is a myriad of positive outcomes associated with the LSP.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> From OTIS statistics provided by CIC

## **Future Directions**

The current pilot project for LSP is located at seven Branches in the Toronto Public Library. <sup>7</sup>. In 2008, there are plans underway to expand the partnership to nineteen Branches. <sup>8</sup> This is a reflection of the current success of the program as well as the articulated need for libraries to engage in the adaptation of newcomers within our community. In the many discussions regarding immigrant settlement, the need for local government, and by extension its local institutions, to assume a more deliberate role in facilitating immigrant settlement is viewed as a reasonable civic responsibility. (Simich 9) Given the current demographics of Toronto and the demand for integrated services at the local level, a continued symbiotic relationship between CIC and the settlement agencies is a realistic future direction for the library.

In the effort to improve upon the pilot for the benefit of continued growth of the LSP, the library is committed to addressing identified challenges of the program. In 2007, an independent review of the LSP recommended a number of changes in policy and administration. As a result of this review, modifications to the program are ongoing and include a revision of the steering committee role and membership, terms of reference for the steering committee and operational guidelines for the program. In this respect, the library aspires to maintain a dynamic and responsive model that is sensitive to the needs of our partners. The results of the newcomer survey conducted in August 2007 also led to a number of considerations for future development. Among the key considerations are plans to increase the number of opportunities for conversation circles amongst newcomers of all ages, strategies to increase the profile and usage of the LSP amongst library staff and the community at large, and overall considerations for the enhancement of the collections to reflect the demographics of our newcomer populations. The growing pains associated with a new project include the necessity to understand and blend different corporate cultures. Some of our most important lessons learned revolve around the administration of a program involving a number of stakeholders. Thus the library is aware of making efforts to improve communication between our stakeholders regarding expectations for service delivery, programming and absence coverage. Overall, the accomplishments of the program in its pilot stage have had a significant impact on the library's priority goal of contributing to the successful adaptation of newcomers to Toronto. As the program matures and the library embarks upon a new planning cycle, the effect of this program will continue to evolve with new locations and partners.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Toronto Reference Library, Agincourt, Albion, Flemingdon, Thorncliffe, Parkdale and York Woods <sup>8</sup> Albert Campbell, Bloor/Gladstone, Bridlewood, Centennial, Eatonville, Gerrard/Ashdale, Lillian H. Smith, Mimico, Morningside, Parliament, Richview, Riverdale

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