

SUPPORT NETWORK FOR RURAL NEWCOMERS

MEETING #3

APRIL 2023



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

AAISA acknowledges Treaty 7 territory—the traditional and ancestral territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani and Siksika as well as the Tsuu T’ina Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on or are visiting.

INTRODUCTION

The third session hosted for the *Support Network for Rural Newcomers Meetings* was held on April 20, 2023. This meeting introduced the up-coming resources developed by the AAISA team in accordance with the insights identified in the previous two *Support Network Meetings*. These resources are free for all *Support Network* participants to engage with and are designed to increase the capacity of rural municipalities to better meet the needs of newcomers settling in their areas.

KEY THEMES

NEWCOMER CHALLENGES

Community engagement and welcoming

A continual theme that is pervasive across many rural communities throughout the *Support Network Meetings* has been the limitations to public transportation. Some organizations have made efforts to personally introduce newcomers to their neighbors and potential employers to increase community inclusion. This effort however is not possible or sustainable to implement for every isolated newcomer family across Alberta.

Pre-arrival services

Pre-arrival services are essential to promoting inclusion and building retention for newcomers to remote and rural areas. It is essential to prepare newcomers on the reality of the region they are settling in, from understanding the transportation constraints, the existing infrastructure, housing situation, and employment opportunities. Some communities involved in the Rural Renewal Stream have mandated pre-arrival services to be provided by approved employers. This encapsulates the employer answering essential questions such as “How will you get the newcomer from a larger urban centre towards the municipality located 2.5 hours away?”. It is the employers responsibility to have transportation arranged for their newcomer employee, as well as partnering with existing settlement and integration service providers in the region to have an in-person Needs Assessment completed. Employers are also responsible for finding newcomer employees affordable housing, transportation to work (particularly in the winter months). Without sufficient evidence of being able to provide these pre-arrival services to newcomers, municipalities can reject employers from participating in the Rural Renewal Stream.

Collaborative Efforts: Local Immigration Partnerships

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) are created to convene partners across key sectors in a region to improve the settlement and integration outcomes of newcomers to their communities. Select members of the *Support Network* has expressed an interest in forming a LIP, formalizing existing partnerships between rural communities to collaborate, share resources, and expand capacity to serve newcomers.

First 40 Days Subcommittee

This subcommittee was created in collaboration with a separate grant agreement and project, designed to reach out to service groups and volunteers, promoting interaction over a “cup of coffee”, and challenging the community to include diverse voices. Participants of this committee are seeking to build relationships with newcomers to their community to promote engagement and retention. Existing members of the *Support Network* are involved with this committee, focused on promoting community events, diversity awareness, and potentially creating welcome packages for newcomers.

RESOURCES FROM THE SECTOR

Drumheller’s Housing Strategy

The town of Drumheller has developed and published a [housing strategy](#) that outlines population growth, the need for alternative housing forms, tenures, and affordability levels to better meet the diverse and changing needs of current and future residents. This strategy can be utilized by other rural communities who may face similar demographic compositions, population growth trajectories, and demands for alternative housing.

UPCOMING AAISA RESOURCES

Immigration Processes and Mechanics Course

This complimentary course is designed for the participants based on the findings of the first two *Support Network* meetings. This course is aimed to introduce the Canadian immigration system, its history, and policies. It will review current issues related to immigration, ways to address these challenges, as well as an overview of immigration streams and ways to support applicants.

The dates and times for these courses and webinars are to be finalized. Please contact pd@aaisa.ca to register.

Courses	Modality/Format
Strengthening Rural Capacity to Support Newcomers	Course
Immigration - processes and mechanics	Course
Outreach and Community Connections	Course
Exploring Funding Opportunities for Rural and Smaller Centres	Webinar
Understanding the Settlement Sector and Services	Webinar

Newcomer Welcome Package Template

AAISA is developing a Newcomer Welcome Package Template for *Support Network* participants to utilize. This tool will be free to download and is customizable for FCSS offices, economic development officers, local libraries, and any community members seeking to provide settlement services for newcomers. It will be designed to be easily modified to suit the unique needs and assets of rural municipalities, allowing for effective and catered supports for newcomers.

This template is designed for any person seeking to assist newcomers settling in their region to be oriented on essential services and opportunities in the area. This template will be robust, providing information about immigration streams, basic needs for the first 14 days of arrival, housing information, newcomer services, community services, healthcare services, employment opportunities and more.

Research Report

This report is based on the surveys and interviews of Support Network Participants. The report summarizes the nuanced networks that exist within rural Albertan municipalities of populations <10,000 with high immigration levels. It highlights the rural practitioners in these spaces, the coordination and collaboration needed to establish newcomer supports, as well as recommendations outlining opportunities for existing rural practitioners to leverage their existent networks.

To read the full report, click [here](#).

NEXT STEPS

The Newcomer Welcome Package Template will be published to assist municipalities in orienting newcomers to the community. Following this tool will be the virtually facilitated Immigration: Processes and Mechanics course, with dates to be announced and registration sent directly to *Support Network* participants.

The next meeting will be hosted on June 15, 2023.