

Immigration, Integration and Language

University of Calgary Conference on Immigration, Integration and Language: Final Report to the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Industry

Introduction

Immigration, Integration and Language: A Public Policy Conference on Living, Learning and Working in Canada was hosted by the University of Calgary's Faculty of Education in October 2006 and was specifically designed to bring together invited participants and experts from a broad range of sectors in order to identify and prioritize current issues in social, educational and occupational immigrant integration. In addition to discussion, however, the express purpose of this collaboration was to articulate policy-oriented principles and feasible strategies that could improve the integration of immigrants, in particular those who choose to work and live in Alberta. The ultimate goal of the conference was to generate a document containing the conference proceedings, the panellists' papers and presentations as well as an Immigrant Integration Action Plan to inform future decision making and suggest areas where more information is needed to make informed policy decisions.

In support of this initiative, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry committed \$25,000. This final report describes the structure of the conference, the invited participants, the deliverables and their distribution as well as the outcomes achieved by the conference. In addition, four documents are attached to this report as appendices:

- · the list of invited participants
- · the summary of participants' conference evaluations
- · the budget statement
- · the Executive Summary from the conference proceedings document

Conference Structure

The two-day conference began with three panel discussions in the areas of Living (four panellists), Learning (four panellists) and Working (7 panellists). The invited panellists included educators, academics, representatives from private industry, government, regulatory bodies, professional and occupational associations, and immigrant-serving agencies. Each panellist was asked to describe their involvement in the area of immigrant integration and address the following aspects:

- · Key integration issues.
- · Challenges and barriers.
- · Possible solutions or best practices.
- · Suggestions for policy directions to address the identified issues.

From the panellists' discussions, the conference participants were asked to prioritize the identified issues in terms of their importance to each area. On the second day of the conference, participants were organized into three working groups and charged with the following tasks:

- · Reviewing the prioritized issues.
- · Establishing ideal outcomes related to each issue.
- · Identifying factors that might contribute to the ideal outcomes.
- · Generating basic principles to undergird policy decisions in each area.
- · Articulating policy-oriented strategies to inform the creation of an Action Plan to address the identified integration issues.

Subsequent to the conference, a writing team gathered and edited the papers and presentations. In addition, the lists of prioritized issues, principles and strategies were compiled and analyzed, firstly, for a briefing document for the new Minister of AEII in December, 2006 and , secondly, for the conference proceedings document in February, 2007.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Email invitations were sent to over two hundred and twenty-five business and community leaders, academics and educators and representatives of government and immigrant-serving agencies across Canada. On the first day of the conference, there were approximately one hundred participants in attendance and approximately sixty on the second day.

DISTRIBUTION OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND ACTION PLAN

The conference proceedings document will be mailed to those participants who indicated interest in receiving a hard copy. All participants will receive an email containing instructions for accessing an electronic version of the document from the Faculty of Education website. In addition, copies will be sent to a number of governmental departments and ministries, including Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry, Alberta Advanced Education and Alberta Education, as well as the Faculty of Education's EAL (English as an Additional Language) funders and other EAL stakeholders. A media launch, planned for early April in Calgary, will also raise the profile of the report's findings.

CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

The Immigration, Integration & Language Public Policy Conference successfully achieved the projected outcomes, as described in the August 2006 AEII funding application.

As a result of the conference:

- Invited participants, business and community leaders, educators and educational institutions, researchers, representatives from immigrant-serving agencies and language training programs, employers and policy-makers, had an opportunity to hear experts describe immigrant integration issues and also best practices for welcoming, attracting and retaining immigrants to Canada and Alberta.

- Participants provided their input by prioritizing the integration issues raised on the first day of the conference. These prioritized lists provided the foundation for the working groups' discussions as well as the principles and strategies generated by these groups on the second day of the conference.
- A selected group of policy-makers, academics and representatives of NGOs had the opportunity to collaborate and come to consensus on basic principles and policy-oriented strategies to suggest to government regarding social, educational and occupational immigrant integration. These include strategies to enhance:
 - the integration of immigrant youth
 - settlement services to better meet immigrants' needs
 - programs and resources for immigrant families coping with the social stressors of integration
 - the accreditation process for immigrants in professional, technical and trade occupations
 - the attraction and retention of an internationally-trained immigrant workforce
 - the successful educational advancement of multilingual immigrants
 - educational recognition of multilingualism
- The University of Calgary, Faculty of Education's EAL (English as an Additional Language) community-oriented research agenda was clarified in response to the issues, principles and strategies generated at the conference. This agenda will include future research in such areas as pre-service teacher education, English language proficiency, professional integration for engineers, teachers and health science professionals.
- A briefing document summarizing the macro-issues and key principles and strategies generated by conference participants was prepared and sent to Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry in December 2006.
- A conference proceedings document, including an Immigrant Integration Action Plan, is being published and will be distributed to conference participants, municipal, provincial and federal government representatives as well as a number of invited participants who were unable to attend the conference but indicated interest in the conference proceedings and the Immigrant Integration Action Plan.
- The Final Report has been prepared for Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry in order to describe the structure of the conference and the outcomes achieved as well as to provide an accounting for the conference budget.