



IPSK COMMUNITY FORUM 2025

OVERVIEW

This report is based on insights from the IPSK Community Forum held in 2025 which was informed by a prior stakeholder survey and an online engagement platform. The forum included a series of live Zoom sessions and a facilitated discussion with representatives from over 70 partner agencies, as well as Newcomers and community members with a vested interest.

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1. Introduction

Immigration Partnership Saskatoon (IPSK) Community Forum 2025 was a public engagement effort designed to update the community on the Local Immigration Partnership's (LIP) achievements to date and to gather input on future activities and initiatives.

IPSK distributed a survey in August/September 2024 to identify five priority areas for exploration, and the intent was to focus the upcoming forum and discussions on these five themes, namely:

1. Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement
2. Leadership
3. Employment
4. Language
5. Indigenous Perspectives

2. Methodology

The process identified for executing the work is as follows:

1. **Develop a video to describe IPSK achievements to date.** IPSK staff produced a power point and did a walkthrough of it voicing the description using Zoom to record the presentation for sharing.
2. **Host that video online on the [itracks](#) platform** – January 13 through 24, 2025. Participants had 24-hour access during that time to ensure they could visit whenever convenient for them.
3. **Host four specific timed hosted sessions via Zoom.** These were held as follows:
 - i. January 23 at 8:00 am
 - ii. January 24 at 12:00 noon
 - iii. January 28 at 4:00 pm
 - iv. January 30 at 7:00 pm

Each session was hosted by IPSK staff and On Purpose Leadership and lasted at least an hour. Some sessions went longer based on Q&A during the session. Contributions from the participants were used as a base for the in-person IPSK Community Forum.

4. Jasmine Calix, Coordinator of Immigration Partnership Saskatoon together with IPSK staff and partners invited all IPSK Tables, community leaders and Newcomers to attend the Community Forum, where IPSK shared its achievements; the results of Zoom discussions sessions; and the Online Platform contributions were summarized and provided.
5. Facilitated discussions were then held during the forum so attendees could visit different conversations. Discussions were focused by each of the five themes noted earlier. These



discussions were facilitated to assist attendees in moving through the dialogue and arriving with the identification of priorities for consideration by IPSK and its partner agencies. Present and Validate Priorities for IPSK focus for the coming 3 years.

6. Once the discussions sessions were completed, the facilitators and support team captured the identified priorities which were loaded on to a voting or priority identification platform using Survey Monkey. The attendees were provided an opportunity, based on each of the five themes, to up vote their top priorities helping IPSK to identify the community's issues of greatest importance.
7. Attendees and other stakeholders were provided an additional week to go online and upvote the top five priorities. These are now represented in this report in the following pages.

3. Key Findings

Challenges Faced by Newcomers

During the conversations online as well as in person, it was clear that Newcomers continue to face challenges to their settlement and full integration and active participation in community. These continue to center around:

- Language barriers
- Employment difficulties
- Access to healthcare and social services
- Housing issues
- Cultural integration and social isolation

Priorities Identified for Newcomers

During the conversations it was clear that Newcomers continue to require services and programs for:

- Language training and education
- Job placement and career support
- Improved access to healthcare
- Affordable housing
- Community support and cultural programs

4. Facilitated Discussion Suggestions

NOTE: To ensure the authenticity and validate the participants contributions, these comments are provided unedited in the participants own words. We capitalized the words "Newcomer" and "Immigrant" throughout the document to emphasize the significance of the participants.

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

Indigenous Education & Awareness for Newcomers

1. Introduce and teach Newcomers about Indigenous people, history, tradition as we are living on Treaty land.
2. Teach Newcomers the history of colonization in Canada and what it did to Indigenous people.
3. Educate Newcomers about the residential schools and all the abuses.
4. Provide more learning opportunities! While students often have chances to hear these stories, Newcomers and adults are often too busy with their daily lives. As a result, many people never get the chance to learn these important stories.
5. Learn about history and the 94 Calls to Action.
6. Understand the impact of colonization, residential schools, day schools, Sixties Scoop, non-fulfillment of treaties.
7. Address racism towards Indigenous people.
8. Develop ownership of Treaties.
9. First, clearly define what is meant by the Indigenous perspective.
10. Offering blanket exercise to all Newcomers.

Cultural Exchange & Engagement

11. More engagement between ethnocultural communities and the Indigenous community.
12. Organize free tours to Indigenous festivals. Free tours/trips to the Reserves. This will help new Immigrants better understand Indigenous culture.
13. Indigenous stories that are available at libraries—promoted and made easily accessible for Newcomers who may not know of their existence.
14. Organize cultural events for both Indigenous people and Newcomers to learn each other's culture and history through interactive activities.
15. Sharing spaces & sharing stories. Breaking down misconceptions.
16. Building Bridges—Newcomers and Indigenous people in this land have both experienced colonialisms.
17. Seek opportunities to encourage Indigenous people to visit other countries and promote Indigenous cultures.
18. Newcomers do not experience Indigenous cultures in the same way we do.
19. Building bridges (opportunities to share & learn & see commonalities).

Language & Traditional Knowledge

20. Learn Indigenous language.
21. Medicine wheel journeys.
22. Visual learning education, cultural awareness community, relationship building.
23. More support needed for Indigenous children's education, including improved facilities and better accommodations for teachers to help them share the information with Immigrants.



24. Add Indigenous culture into all public study. In school teaching, textbook information, newspapers, or social media, need to let Newcomers understand and respect their culture properly.

Indigenous Perspectives & Values

25. We need to understand the perspectives of Indigenous people and communities on various aspects of life. This awareness can help new immigrants develop a similar mindset.
26. We would like to learn more about the significance of mother nature in the lives of Indigenous people and how it has made them so resilient. Can this help to make a Newcomer be resilient too?
27. Values, teachings, respect, love-self, share kindness, humility, truth, honesty.
28. Guiding values (love, courage, respect, humility, wisdom, honesty, kindness).
29. Respect is not only viewed as a nice word. Canadians and Indigenous people should recognize and share in the losses, pains, and sorrows experienced by other regions of the world. I come from Colombia and Indigenous heritage is neglected there.

Reconciliation & Institutional Involvement

30. Need Indigenous representation on LIP.
31. Initiatives for all LIP council members to commit to Reconciliation.
32. IAT to work on Indigenous initiatives.

Combating Racism, Discrimination & Stereotypes

33. Engaging in conversations about colonization.
34. Combating racism, discrimination & stereotypes (get to know me, see Indigenous success).

Personal & Social Support for Newcomers

35. Being kind to one another and fitting in as Immigrants.
36. Guide and support them in developing self-love and self-acceptance.
37. Help Newcomers to understand that people around them aren't their enemies.

Social & Policy Initiatives

38. Need for policymakers to focus on addiction reduction by establishing safe places for counselling and other forms of help.
39. This categorization ensures clarity in understanding the core themes of each statement and helps in strategizing actions effectively.

LEADERSHIP

Employer Education & Fair Hiring Practices

1. Educate employers on Newcomers' capabilities and education.
2. Consider offering awards to employers who hire individuals from visible minority groups and diverse racial and cultural backgrounds.
3. Encourage employers to consider diversity when hiring new staff and create programs that minimize employment biases.
4. Stop asking Immigrants to change their non-Canadian names to a Canadian name to be hired.



5. Encouraging employers not to ask about applicants' immigration status and race when posting job ads.
6. Many Newcomers, especially temporary foreign workers, face discrimination, abuse, or unfair labor practices (e.g., wage theft) in their first jobs in Canada due to a lack of awareness about their rights and employment standards. Employers, often other Newcomers who have been in Canada longer, take advantage of this. There should be consequences for employers who violate these rules.

Workplace Inclusion & Support for Newcomers

7. Include Newcomers in all work activities.
8. Encourage Newcomers to accept any available employment to support their families, helping them avoid reliance on social assistance.
9. Create an employer leadership network to connect Newcomers and industry professionals.

Leadership Development & Representation

10. Engage people in leadership positions to guide the way for Newcomers' success in Saskatchewan.
11. Have leadership show up, hold space with Newcomers and support them.
12. Educate leadership and have them hold a sense of accountability when supporting Newcomers.
13. Create a Newcomer's guide to becoming a leader with ideas for networking, entrepreneurship, volunteer, board advisory committee, etc. Focus on meaningful ways to get involved.
14. Newcomer leadership development program.
15. Mentorship and networking program with local leaders.
16. Newcomer advisory councils.

Community Engagement & Vision for the Future

17. Bring people (Newcomers & city residents) to a common vision of the city's community future.
18. Leaders engage with ethnocultural communities to identify what is missing and how to voice Newcomer concerns.

Safe Learning & Networking Spaces

19. Creating safe learning spaces.
20. Promoting diverse cultural communication strengthens leadership within their own communities. However, diverse cultural behaviors may sometimes confuse other Newcomers, making it harder for them to learn and settle in. Create networking connections in small groups. It can be training, fun, discussion, classes, food, and diverse cultures. The smaller the better.

EMPLOYMENT

Credential Recognition & Regulatory Streamlining

1. Partnerships between post-secondary institutions and regulatory bodies to streamline "Gap" in equivalency.



2. Implement fast-tracked credential recognition, paid internships, mentorship programs, employer engagement and awareness initiatives, as well as sector-specific training and skill development.
3. Introduce legislation that allows non-regulated professionals to pay exam fees at colleges and universities and defend their qualifications, rather than requiring them to spend years retaking courses.
4. Local credential assessment service to provide support with subsidized in-demand occupations.
5. Saskatchewan credential assessment with more job placements in different areas.
6. Elimination of red tape. Streamline the International Education Accreditation to an easier process that is less expensive.
7. Reviewing the credentials to teach in Canada is time-consuming and expensive to complete. Accept degrees from the USA, etc. Eliminate discrimination to obtain work in one's field.

Job Search Support & Employment Matching for Newcomers

8. A center where Newcomers can receive help with job searching and referrals to the right employers.
9. Job posting sites specifically designed for Newcomers and newcomer business owners.
10. There is a need to implement a dedicated job portal or job link for Newcomers, where we can post and offer job openings that match their pace and needs.
11. IPSK can build a hiring channel between small businesses and employment. Those small businesses don't use saskjobs.ca for hiring. We may find a way to connect Newcomers to their small business.
12. A human resource department dedicated to helping Newcomers integrate into local job opportunities.

Employer Engagement & Incentives

13. Educating employers regarding tax benefits for those contributing to the cost of skills and language training.
14. Provide grants to employers for "targeted training" to address specific gaps in their workforce. For example, a concrete company could offer safety training with an ESL instructor to help employees better understand the content.
15. Higher employment can keep the population in Saskatchewan increasing. However, it requires more employers and bigger businesses to provide job positions.
16. Employment in rural Saskatchewan is crucial for small businesses in these areas. However, inconsistent staff commitment makes it difficult for employers to maintain their businesses there.

Workforce Integration & Professional Development

17. All healthcare professionals should receive proper training in their field before starting work.
18. More training facilities where Immigrants can adopt knowledge and skills for the local employment market.
19. More opportunities to connect with mentors, managers, and real decision-makers.

20. The mentor program hosted by the settlement organization is a successful one for Newcomers to adapt to the Canadian employment workshop.
21. Assist with ways to get good references when applying for jobs.
22. Offer more volunteer and job shadowing opportunities for Newcomers to help them explore and find a field where they can thrive.
23. We need more opportunities to connect newcomer youth aged 17-21 with businesses in the Saskatoon community, such as job shadowing and work permits. Additionally, there should be more support from local businesses.
24. Sensitivity training is especially important for those who have no experience working with the opposite gender.

Addressing Discrimination & Bias in Employment

25. Investigating why minimum wage jobs are often filled by a single ethnic group and addressing this issue through a quota system in organizations, could help reduce the growing animosity toward that group.
26. Employment is a top concern for every newcomer. The issue of entry-level jobs for those who have held managerial positions in their home countries should be given strong consideration, as it can be very discouraging for them.
27. Create more diversity within employment agencies.

Alternative & Flexible Employment Opportunities

28. Make home-based employment opportunities accessible for Newcomers and eliminate any existing barriers.

Encouraging Self-Sufficiency & Workforce Participation

29. Any immigrant with a profession should be proficient in English and should not rely on the welfare system. They must start working to support their families.

Awareness & Access to Programs

30. Create more awareness and accessibility for the existing programs and education for people in low-skilled categories/jobs.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement & Networking

1. Engage with Community Associations to find ways to engage with Newcomers.
2. Host conferences in Saskatoon with all settlement agencies and staff for learning, collaboration, and networking.
3. Create connection events with locals who are retired or willing to engage with Newcomers to discuss work and hobbies that they have in common.
4. Host/showcase events in community spaces to engage Newcomers and locals (sports, meals, community cooking events, arts).

5. Host networking events at various times to make them accessible.

Information Sharing & Awareness

6. Create one portal or share the contact information of all Community Associations in the City and other similar organizations and websites.
7. The city of Saskatoon should be advertising on their website about ethnocultural groups and their respective associations.
8. Awareness advertising regarding community programs and services provided for Newcomers.
9. Multilingual social media campaigns with plain language about political and civic topics.
10. Communicate updates on work IPSK has done.

Cultural Inclusion & Representation

11. Diversity in “Saskatchewan ambassadors” to show Newcomers how to engage in the community.
12. Develop a union for all different cultural communities to organize.
13. Environmental scan on partners or groups: “Who is not at the table?”
14. Programs that encourage storytelling and sharing of people’s perspectives.
15. Advocate to mainstream organizations to make services more inclusive (not only for English tech-savvy people).

Accountability & Policy Development

16. Establish accountability measures/universal standards for support organizations, ensuring outcomes are met on the activities they are being funded for.
17. Conduct research to understand barriers and how to shape inclusive policies.

Volunteerism & Social Integration

18. Provide Newcomers with access to leaders who can guide them in making connections for volunteering opportunities and educate them on the importance and benefits of volunteering.
19. Create programs that lead Newcomers to engage in social activities and a social lifestyle.
20. Create programs for Newcomers to develop skills, and relationships to gain references that lead to applying for work.
21. Create an IPSK community space for Newcomers experiencing isolation.

LANGUAGE

Access to Language Learning & Training

1. Language is key to living in Canada. Provinces should continue to fund classes/education for Immigrants.
2. Access to English language classes regardless of immigration status. Language classes are now government-funded and have long wait times with specific immigration status requirements.
3. Free community-based language training that is accessible to all, whether it is government-funded or partially government-funded.
4. Allow private language instructors to advertise their services in public libraries.



5. Create affordable rental facilities for laid-off language instructors to rent and teach higher-level classes removed due to language funding cuts.
6. Online resources, ongoing conversations (speaking every day) so that they resonate with individuals.
7. Offer high-quality programs online to learn and practice English.
8. Partner with schools and organizations to provide language resources for Immigrants.
9. IPSK should create a diversity linguistic program so that people who don't understand English or French can be catered to and made to feel at home.

Employment & Language Training for Work

10. Language training for specific purposes such as retail, construction, hospitality, senior care, and early childhood care.
11. Having tools in place for learning languages so that it doesn't function as a barrier for employment.
12. Education/employment-based language learning.
13. Greater transparency regarding English level expectations.
14. Language training specifically designed for professionals like accountants, lawyers, doctors, etc.
15. Employment guides in different languages.

Language & Cultural Inclusion

16. Let people know it's okay to keep their heritage language, but they also need to learn English.
17. Language is essential for inclusiveness. Language justice is necessary to allow everyone to use their own language and express themselves freely.
18. Showcase multiculturalism as a skillset.
19. Develop a voluntary-based program that provides free translation services for Newcomers.
20. Using cooking classes to teach English.
21. Implement programs aimed at teaching language history in school. This will help everyone learn about different languages.
22. Change the attitude about perfect English and instead encourage inclusivity.

Community Engagement & Social Learning

23. Develop conversation partner clubs where first-language (English) speakers can converse with Newcomers.
24. Language classes in the community to bridge cultural understanding.
25. Host community events & meetups that encourage multicultural interactions.
26. Open high-quality conversation clubs that are divided by professional interests.
27. Set up a Newcomers' club to help understand the unfamiliar environment and atmosphere. Also, give proper courses to teach Newcomers how to communicate in English well.

Language & Family Dynamics

28. Provide opportunities for kids to be exposed to different languages in school. This can help Newcomer kids feel proud of their languages and encourage Canadian kids to be more curious about other cultures.
29. Support families in understanding the benefits of speaking in their native language.
30. Parents should not pass on their fear of learning a new language to their children.
31. Children may learn faster than parents, which may cause cultural issues at home.

Overcoming Barriers in Language Learning

32. Learning styles differ, so language learning should be more conversational and specific to each learner, i.e., job, lifestyle, etc.
33. Culture shock can be a challenge that most people face when learning a new language.

Workplace Language Expectations

34. People from diverse backgrounds working in stores should communicate only in English, similar to the practice in other countries.
35. If an immigrant speaks English, they should focus on finding work to earn money and support themselves, rather than relying on social assistance.

5. Top Priorities for the Five Themes

The group was asked to identify the top five priorities in each area which were identified as:

Indigenous Perspectives

- Bridge Newcomer youth with Indigenous youth.
- Indigenous speakers to come out and speak to us; visit First Nations lands and attend pow wows.
- Offering the blanket exercise to all Newcomers. (The Blanket Exercise is based on using Indigenous methodologies and the goal is to build understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada by walking through pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization, and resistance. Everyone is actively involved as they step onto blankets that represent the land, and into the role of First Nations, Inuit and later Métis peoples. By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the Blanket Exercise effectively educates and increases empathy.)
- Introduce and teach Newcomers about Indigenous people, history, and tradition as we are living on Treaty land.
- Aid Newcomers in understanding what Indigenous people and the Indigenous community do to approach distinct aspects of culture.

Leadership

- Work towards mirroring the organizational values and stimulating a supportive work culture.
- Increase employee morale by adding trust, being loyal and supporting our Immigrant colleagues' achievements. Assisting new hires as they integrate into their new society.



- Employers must make sure Immigrants feel important to the organization. Interacting with the individual and assisting with policy and procedure. Working towards a common goal of fostering relationships and building teams.
- Feature Immigrants in leadership roles.
- Educate employers on Newcomers' capabilities and education.

Employment

- Orientation lunches to help us grasp Indigenous cultures and provide us with a better appreciation of their challenges. These would be helpful as questions about Indigenous cultures are often featured in interviews.
- Consider incentives for engagement by Newcomers.
- Internship opportunities by Immigrant and settlement agencies or IPSK.
- Coaching and training in interview skills are more desirable and important than resuming writing.
- Partnerships between post-secondary and regulatory bodies to streamline the “Gap” in equivalency.
- It can be challenging for a new immigrant to find suitable employment in Saskatoon. A dedicated center that provides job search assistance and referrals to the right employers would be highly beneficial.
- Fast track credential recognitions, paid internships, and mentorship programs,
- Increase employer engagement & awareness of the Newcomer sector and provide specific training.

Social Inclusion and Civic Engagement

- Building and strengthening relationships is essential for a better life. Developing and maintaining a strong social network where immigrants can connect with others for support, companionship, and guidance is especially important.
- Provide opportunities for normal employment in professional career areas for new Immigrants with foreign professional credentials and experience.
- Engage with Community Associations to find ways to engage with Newcomers.
- Host conference in Saskatoon with all settlement agency staff for learning, collaboration, and networking.
- Building and strengthening relationships is essential for a better life. Developing and maintaining a strong social network where immigrants can connect with others for support, companionship, and guidance is especially important.

Language

- If an immigrant speaks English but needs financial support, they may need to find work, manage their time effectively, or apply for social assistance.
- The ability to speak the English language is key to living in Canada. The provincial government should continue to subsidize or cover the entire cost of language classes for Immigrants.



- Provide access to English language classes regardless of immigration status. Language classes are now government funded and have long wait times and they also have specific requirements for immigration status.
- Provide opportunities for kids to be exposed to different languages in school. This can be an effective way for Newcomer kids to feel proud about their own languages and encourage Canadian kids to be more curious about other cultures.
- Develop conversation partner clubs where first language (English) speakers can converse with Newcomers.

6. Appendices

Survey Questions

Questions under each theme hosted on the online platform as well to fuel the Zoom sessions:

1. What is the one great opportunity we must develop fully?
2. Why is this important?
3. What role should IPSK play?
4. What role should partner and Immigrant serving agencies play?
5. What role should Newcomer's play?
6. What else should we know or consider?
7. What outcomes are most desirable?

The central question used during the breakouts and at each themed table:

What one thing relevant to this theme, when done well, will make a meaningful difference for Newcomers to Saskatoon and deserves IPSK focus and attention?

Project Leaders

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