

SKILLED IMMIGRANTS AN ASSET TO OUR COMMUNITY

**An Exploration of the Numbers, Experiences and Potential Employers for Skilled
Immigrants**

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For The Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
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Executive Summary

Project Description

The purpose of the project was to support the development of strategic integrated bridging services for skilled immigrants in the area serviced by the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society. Essentially, the work was to identify a way of finding an accurate picture of the number of skilled immigrants in this region by asking local agencies, community leaders, and regulatory boards about their contacts with skilled immigrants. The next step was to put a “human face” on the difficulties faced by skilled immigrants by providing exemplars. A summary of the exemplars was to remind all of us about the issue in the most human terms. The next step was to contact a varied range of employers, large and small companies both private and public sector, and covering the diversity of employment opportunities here. Finally, these contacts were analyzed to determine the next steps for the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society in providing skilled immigrants with the assistance they need to attain and retain meaningful employment in the area of their expertise.

The project began with some assumptions that were put to the test. No, not everyone was using the same definition for “skilled immigrant”. No, local agencies and regulatory bodies did not keep data on skilled immigrants just for this region, if at all.

Methodology

Questionnaires that could be completed in a face-to-face interview or by telephone were devised and field-tested for each of the target groups; agencies, regulatory bodies, community leaders, immigrants and employers.

These questionnaires with covering letters were sent to the above groups after a telephone call had initiated the contacts. Interviews were set up and completed with those employers willing to participate.

The interviews with regulatory bodies were discontinued after knowledge that other groups were focussing on regulatory bodies. The decision was made to increase the pool of employers for interview because this link was considered the most important.

The interviews of the skilled immigrants who self-selected themselves to air their stories were recorded, sent back for verification and included.

The response rate of the employer group was quite good, 22 out of 30 agreed to be part of the project.

Results

There was no agreement on the definition of a “skilled immigrant”. The definitions varied depending on the purpose and funding of the agency.

No one agency kept statistics on skilled immigrants and even collectively there was no way to tease out the numbers. The best information came from the Immigrant Settlement worker and the employment unit of the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society.

The agencies identified how and why they kept statistics, were interested in what others were doing and were happy to participate in the project. They identified concerns for immigrants as the immigrants attempted to find meaningful work within their area of expertise.

The recommendations from these groups included more ESL classes and some cultural orientation or orientation to the “Canadian workplace” classes. This theme was to be seen throughout the project.

The regulatory bodies contacted were able to share the process used to assess an immigrant’s credentials. For the most part, the process was not easy. There were many times that an immigrant was told to take more English language classes or take refresher courses or do something else to prove competence. There appeared to be elements of protectionism in some of the respondent’s answers. This element of bias has been detected previously and remains a challenge for agencies that work with immigrants. The need to educate and form partnerships with regulatory bodies to address the issue will require long-term efforts.

Interviewing skilled immigrants and listening to their stories was both a privilege and an eye opener. The sense of frustration and betrayal was a common thread. Some immigrants felt embassy workers in their home countries had misled them. Even here there were more roadblocks than they expected. Many were working at entry-level jobs to provide for their families.

The gradual loss of skills as they were unable to keep up with the new technology was particularly distressing to the respondents. As well, the cost of attempting to meet the requirements set by regulatory bodies was an issue. Any courses they had to take were costly, since it meant some could not work while taking them and tuition fees mounted up.

The employer group interviewed covered a cross section of all the employers in the region. Twenty-two out of a possible thirty completed questionnaires or met with the researcher. All were generous with their time and expertise.

Size of company varied from 2,100 to seven and covered retail grocery chains, technology companies, manufacturing sites, senior care facilities, automobile dealers, an airline, call centre, seafood distributor, municipality, health care and service companies.

Many employers had no job vacancies at this time and did not anticipate any for the next five to ten years. Most employers did not know if they had skilled immigrants

working for them or not. They were unable to assess this due to size of company, or policies against identifying individuals by race, colour or ethnicity. Where an employer was able to answer that question, it was because the company was a small one or the contact had very good information about that workforce. The shortages anticipated by some employers would be due to the anticipated retirement surge in the next ten years. The shortage was more evident in the Trades; body shop workers, heavy equipment operators and mechanics, air conditioning and heating technicians and those with “gas tickets”.

Perhaps the most surprising responses to questions of need came from the employers of teachers and nurses. At this point, there are no nurse vacancies in the region from Duncan to Port Hardy. As well, there is not a shortage of teachers within the school district. The reasons are related to the economic climate and the provincial government’s funding for both the health care system and the education sector.

Employers identified the barriers for immigrants as lack of English language competencies, lack of an orientation to the workplace culture and the Canadian culture. The other major hurdle identified was the difficulty in getting foreign credentials evaluated against Canadian standards. Many employers would hire skilled immigrants if the professional or regulatory bodies had approved the immigrant as competent to practice in BC.

Two employers had initiatives in place to address potential shortages in some fields. One had set up a program with Malaspina University-College to prepare bakers. One employer set up a program where graduates of an Appliance Repair program could be “indentured” to the business by working with a journeyman, for a period of two years.

Finally, employers seemed open to the idea of programs such as “job shadowing” or “mentoring”. Some expressed a need to have such a program outlined fully before they could endorse it.

Recommendations

- Continue to make available the enhanced English classes with the focus on the workplace environment. This includes jargon, cross-cultural training, norms and workplace behaviours.
- Review scheduling of English language courses to accommodate people already employed by offering the classes at weekends or evenings or part-time.
- Continue linking with the BCITP network so as to expand the profile of BCITP and encourage membership within the network. Encourage development of other support groups by professionals.
- Skilled immigrants require support while going through the credential review piece. They must also show commitment to the process by meeting existing criteria and following through with it.
- The CVIMS should continue to contact employers to fill out an accurate outline of where the jobs might be and how skilled immigrants might access them. The face-to-face approach is recommended since it provides the employer with an opportunity to have his/her interests addressed, an opportunity to give feedback

in a more personal way. Face-to-face communication is generally fraught with less misunderstanding than either telephone or electronic means.

Project Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the project was to support the development of strategic integrated bridging services for skilled immigrants in the area serviced by the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society.

The intent was to ask these questions. How many skilled immigrants are there in the mid-Island region? What processes do they have to go through in order to find work in their fields of expertise? What is the impact of these processes in terms of financial and emotional costs? What can our agency do to enhance their abilities to find and retain meaningful employment?

In order to answer these questions, it was necessary to engage in discussion with local immigrant serving agencies, both governmental and NGO's, regulatory, credentialling and licensing bodies and community leaders.

Next, it was important to talk to a number of credentialling bodies to find out what applicants must do in order to have their credentials recognized.

It was important to listen to the immigrants' experiences. Rather than having immigrants complete a questionnaire about their experiences in seeking credential recognition and gainful employment, it was thought that a few exemplars would tell the story much more eloquently than any compilation of statistics.

The final and most important point, if we were to serve our clients better, involved engaging local employers in dialogue to gather information about local needs and to build relationships for any future strategies. By discussion with employers, we could identify local labour market opportunities and any potential barriers in place for access.

Assumptions

Before commencing the project, the consultant and the staff of CVIMS, started out with some assumptions. They were:

- Everyone knew the target population and we were all using the same definition to describe the group.
- Not all immigrants would have used the services of CVIMS, but by talking to other agencies and community leaders, we should be able to get a collective picture of the numbers.
- Since 50% of all employment in the region is with firms that have 20 or fewer employees, we would have to approach more than just the largest employers to get a better picture.
- We would use the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce membership list to select a diverse group of businesses for inclusion in the study.

Community leaders would know about the circumstances of other immigrants within an ethnic or religious community.

Deliverable One: A Detailed Picture of the Skilled Immigrant Labour Force in the Nanaimo Area

Methodology

Main sources used to determine the number of skilled immigrants in this region:

- Federal and Provincial government sponsored employment programs including Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and ASPECT Training program.
- The Immigrant Settlement Services worker.
- Federal agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO's).
- Department heads for practice-based programs at Malaspina University-College: Nursing, Practical Nursing, Human service workers, Trades.
- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) advisors at Malaspina University-College and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers.
- Private trades and language schools.
- Known leaders within some ethnic groups. This includes churches, temples and outreach workers.
- Professional/licensing/trades bodies.

For each of the target groups; agencies, community leaders, licensing bodies, immigrants and employers, a different cover letter outlining the purpose and scope of the project and a questionnaire were developed. (See Appendix A) The questionnaire was field-tested and amended slightly to increase clarity.

Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS) staff and the consultant generated a list of local agencies that were known to deal with immigrants. (See Appendix B) The Immigrant Settlement worker was able to identify leaders of various ethnic groups who might be willing to talk to the consultant and provide information on the experiences of immigrants.

A telephone call was made to set an appointment with the appropriate person at each agency. The project outline and prepared list of questions were sent to the contact person prior to the meeting. Face-to-face interviews were conducted where feasible, but some respondents chose to complete the questionnaire in writing and forward responses by e-mail. Face-to-face meetings were conducted with 16 of the 18 agencies. The short time frame for the project made it difficult for some agencies to respond as they dealt with fiscal year end, proposal writing and other pressures on their time.

Results

Definition of a Skilled Immigrant

One of the most interesting aspects of this project was the variety of definitions for a “skilled immigrant”. For some respondents, they were absolutely clear about the definition and expressed amusement that the question was being asked.

“A skilled worker, just like any person, that is an immigrant”.

For those working in employment-related agencies, the credential was less important than the ability to do a job.

“Not necessarily formal education. Skills must be marketable.”

For those in post-secondary institutions, it was important to have the credentials.

“Some accreditation through education and training”.

Numbers of Skilled Immigrants

Finding the number of “skilled immigrants” was a challenge. Even within the CVIMS, the statistics kept by the employment unit and the settlement unit were not presently organized to be able to count just “skilled immigrants”. The funding for each of these programs dictated what statistics were kept and for what purpose.

“I do not keep separate statistics for skilled immigrants. I keep statistics on anyone eligible to work in Canada and is unemployed or works less than 20 hours a week.”

“ I see many immigrants every day, but they are all counted, not just the skilled ones.”

Before the completion of the data collection, the program manager for the employment unit called to report they had manually reviewed all files and found 28 women and 18 men who would be classified as skilled immigrants. Further, the local British Columbia Internationally Trained Professional (BCITP) group had 17 members; eight women and nine men.

The current immigration policies provide no data on skilled immigrants. There is no tracking system and after the immigrants have been seen at their Port of Landing, no way to determine where they are or what they are doing. Since landed immigrants are not tracked, it is impossible to determine the number of skilled ones. One way might be to list the people applying for the Permanent Resident Cards, but this would contravene the existing laws on the protection of privacy.

The employment agencies, public and contracted-out, keep statistics on the number of people using their services, but not just skilled immigrants.

The City Planning department keeps statistics on the number of immigrants, the language used in the household, country of origin and length of time in Nanaimo, but not on “skilled immigrants”.

The departments at Malaspina University-College keep track of their own students, but no one tracks the numbers of skilled immigrants asking for assistance in recognizing credentials or applications for upgrading courses. The Advising Department was unable to help and could only provide “best guess”. The nursing department was the best source for identifying skilled immigrants, nurses, since they have long been used to providing “bridging classes” for foreign-trained nurses. Even the PLA coordinator at Malaspina University-College was not able to respond as to the number of immigrants asking for advanced credit as part of their credential-recognition process. The ESL department knew of many skilled immigrants (teachers knew their students well) but not all immigrants take ESL classes. The CVIMS ESL classes could provide some information, but not all immigrants take those classes either.

Statistics Kept: Who and Why

All the agencies contacted did keep statistics, even if they weren't the ones we wanted. Most kept them for the funding agencies or for their own use in program evaluations. Most used the terms of, “accountability” or “monitoring” in their explanations.

“We are required to do so (collect statistics) because of the “eligibility rules” of the funding agency, such as E.I. As with all subcontractors of federal and provincial funding programs, there is a predictable cycle of assessment, planning and evaluating that comes with all contracts.”

“We provide...with these statistics to prove that we are offering the services we contracted for and to prove we are being effective.”

“Some (statistics) economic, multicultural background and languages.”

“We do not keep statistics on skilled immigrants accessing our services. They become part of the flow of people through here in the course of a day.

Number of Skilled immigrants Within the Client Base

The overwhelming number of agencies was unable to identify the number of skilled immigrants within their client base. The only exceptions were for those three agencies that could/would be willing to go through their files manually.

The lone exception was able to because, “...through their self-identification on our registration form that everyone must complete in order to receive services. It would also be identified though our initial employment needs assessment interviews that most clients undergo when they first register for services.”

An Accurate Picture?

For most agencies, people were only able to “best guess” on the accuracy of numbers of skilled immigrants.

“Our approximate 3% statistics of skilled immigrants that access our services is quite consistent with BC Stats.”

“Not really, but would like one.”

Contacts With other Immigrant Serving Agencies

Most respondents accessed a common pool of agencies in order to serve their clients. The list includes HRDC, Ministry of Human Resources (MHR), and ESL departments at Malaspina University-College, ESL departments at private language schools, Chamber of Commerce, Ladysmith Resources Centre Association and CVIMS.

“Should share information. Need something more than a report. Should have half-day workshop for all NGO’s”. (For information derived from this report)

More Information Needed

The majority of respondents (eight out of eleven) felt that further information on skilled immigrants would be useful. For some it would help them with planning or counselling, others were more concerned with the assessment of credentials.

“There is a systemic problem with collecting good data.”

“The info is needed. Might help in student counselling/advising.”

“

Information from this project would help us determine if we are meeting current needs.”

Concerns for Skilled Immigrants Finding Employment

This question generated a lot of discussion. Not surprisingly, the issue of English language competence was mentioned, as was the lack of Canadian experience.

“Immigrants have language barriers and lack of Canadian experience, which makes it very difficult to get a job.”

Others mentioned they thought the overseas counselling was improper or unclear and that immigrants came with unrealistic expectations.

“Sometimes, immigrants are led to believe from embassy/consulate people in their home country that their ability to get a job will be easy with the credentials

they hold in their home country. Because many of them are judged on their credentials, they are ill-prepared for the difficulties of getting credentials recognized in Canada.”

Still others mentioned the “environment” of Nanaimo as a concern. Azmier and Huynh (2004) identify racial bias as a barrier to successful immigration, “Given the benefits of immigration, it is distressing that many western Canadians-particularly rural Westerners-are opposed to increased levels.”

“Nanaimo is a small town and there is bias here.”

“There are systemic barriers, discrimination.”

The credential recognition process was viewed as unfair and unwieldy; for example, an engineer having to commute to Vancouver twice a week for courses his professional accreditation body said he needed, in order to get accreditation.

The need for specific support groups was noted.

“In addition to professional support, they need community support. For example, take a group of nurses and connect with other nurses (not just from the same country) and have them operate as a support group.”

As an aside, one respondent remarked on the importance of listening to the immigrants.

“There are hundreds of stories to be told here, untold riches. For some immigrants, they hang on so their kids can have a better life.”

Review of Community Groups Working with Immigrants

This “second tier” of contacts was used to flesh out the numbers of skilled immigrants unobtainable from other sources. It was felt those community leaders or outreach workers would know of immigrants who were not accessing either CVIMS services or other established groups. The decision of who to contact was made on the basis of the newest and largest populations groups by ethnicity. Unfortunately, the other groups contacted were not able to participate at this time. They were, however, willing to make themselves available at a much later date.

Contact with recent Immigrants

All three respondents worked with immigrants during the course of their jobs. The two Christian ministers saw immigrants as part of their pastoral duties while the other respondent was an outreach worker. The groups they represented were Korean, Vietnamese and South African.

Each of the respondents identified how many immigrants they saw and under what circumstances.

Concerns Expressed by Respondents

Concerns of immigrants varied but each was believed to be in significant numbers by the respondents. For example, when you want to evade contact with someone, such as an immigrant, you just let your secretary screen out the calls with accents. Or, when you see resumes with ethnic names and work experience elsewhere, as one of our stories describes, there is more likelihood of it reaching the circular file.

“If someone with an accent makes a call, sometimes you don’t get through to that person.”

“There was bad impression left about the Vietnamese community when drug crimes made the news. Why do the press have to say, ‘Vietnamese drug...’? The press never write that a ‘white man’ was arrested, or that the person being charged is a ‘Canadian’.”

“Unable to find sustainable work, most immigrants unless highly qualified do not try to find work in what they have previously done.”

“The Island is a different scenario to most other places in Canada and requires a great deal of networking to find gainful employment.”

“The biggest concern is getting a better level of English.”

“They are not using the support services because there is no information on the organizations. They do not know how to get a job.”

Main Stumbling Blocks

As with local agencies, two of the respondents cited English language proficiency as a major barrier to advancement of skilled immigrants. One tried to describe the “unique nature” of Nanaimo, while another identified “racial bias” as a factor blocking the efforts of skilled immigrants. It is not to be assumed from the basis of one comment that Nanaimo has a “unique” culture, but that perception can be found in many people who have moved here, and not just immigrants. The perception seems to be that Nanaimo has kept its “small town” persona, no matter how many people live here!

“The Island is a ‘who you know’ society. A great deal of networking must be done and this is foreign to many of the immigrants. They think they can simply put in a resume and get a job.”

“There is a bias in Nanaimo against immigrants.”

It is no surprise to those who work with immigrants that some immigrants end up taking jobs that are “entry-level” and pay minimum wage. Immigrants take any job they can while they are waiting to be “legitimized” by the professional or accreditation bodies of their disciplines or until they can find better employment.

“Some are working in commission-only selling jobs because these are in reasonable abundance. Most of these do not produce a sustainable income and only certain personality types can thrive.”

The other issue for most immigrants, as described by these respondents, is the number, levels and scheduling of English language classes. The majority of ESL classes with CVMIS, Malaspina and private schools are scheduled during the day. This may not be practical for some immigrants. Someone may be needed to provide child-care or hold down a job so the family has an income.

“They can only afford for one of a couple to go to classes. Only the partner who is not working can go to day classes. Sometimes it is the Landed partner who is eligible to go to free classes (CVMIS) and the other has to wait to get credentials recognized and then they can work or go to classes.”

“Some of them have invested in businesses instead.”

Final Thoughts

Our three respondents had a final say.

“I would add: the need to learn networking techniques, a more thorough understanding of the local job market, a job evaluation process (direct skills required and helpful transferable skills). A qualification’s evaluation process. An orientation to Canadian culture.”

“Get the government to work with CVIMS and help with visa’s and help with students getting Landed Immigrant status. Can CVIMS help?”

“Not enough upper-level courses. Run classes part-time so it is easier to attend. (Hard to go to classes and earn a living, too).”

Conclusions

This deliverable of the project is unattainable. Snapshots of the numbers are best seen in the present documentation of skilled immigrants by the employment unit and the settlement unit of the CVIMS. Other community agencies provide excellent services for immigrants but their focus is not on reaching just skilled immigrants. They were most willing to assist us with the project and were anxious to see the results. The interagency cooperation stems from their desire to provide services to all those that need them.

However, the CVIMS will not be able to rely on any one source for determining the number of skilled immigrants in the region. Also, it should be fairly easy to identify skilled immigrants from all the immigrants that use the CVIMS services. Therefore, information on programs designed especially for skilled immigrants will need to be disseminated through a number of channels; ESL classes, bulletins to local agencies, immigrant settlement services, diversity programs and local newspapers.

The comments from agencies identify the need for more Advanced English classes with a focus on the “workplace” environment and should include cross-cultural training, jargon, behaviors and workplace norms. There should be a review of the scheduling of these classes to accommodate immigrants who are employed but working below their skill level. Classes could be offered at evenings, weekends and part-time.

There should be continued linking with the BCITP network. Additionally, CVIMS will assist BCITP in expanding their profile, encourage membership in BCITP, and encourage development of other support groups by professionals. See Appendix for complete reports.

Deliverable 2: Statistics on the Actual Number of Applications for Licensing or Membership within Professional, Technical and Trades Regulatory Bodies.

Purpose and Scope

The role that the professional, licensing and regulatory bodies play, is a key factor in skilled immigrants getting a job in their fields of expertise. All of the trades “closed shops”, businesses and industries, require certification of a Trade Qualification before a skilled immigrant can be employed. Many of the professions, such as nursing, teaching, dentistry, medicine and engineering strictly control the regulation of that profession. Asking all the regulatory bodies to identify the number of skilled immigrants that applied for membership by geographical area was to add to our picture of the number of skilled immigrants in this region. Additionally, it was hoped that each of the organizations contacted would provide accurate and thorough information, which could be used to advise skilled immigrants. This plan was abandoned by realization that all regulatory bodies could not be contacted within the scope of this project. Also, the information that another proponent was thoroughly researching this topic meant that more time could be spent on another part of the project, the one talking to employers.

Methodology

A cover letter and questionnaire were developed and field tested with the first interview and revised slightly to clarify some questions.

A list of the regulatory bodies that would represent the mix of skilled immigrants within this region was compiled. The decision was made to start with the Registered Nurses' Association of British Columbia (RNABC), the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC (APEG), BC Council of Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN's), the Trades Qualification (TQ) branch of the Ministry of Skills and Development, the Nanaimo and District Labour Council, some jurisdictions of the Health Sciences Associations and some trade unions directly.

Telephone contact was made and followed up with an outline of the project and the questionnaire. Appointments were made to discuss the questions in person or by telephone.

Those who participated were helpful and informative for the most part. All were intrigued by the project.

Conclusions

Based on some of the experiences in contacting these regulatory bodies, it would seem there is sensitivity to asking them about skilled immigrants.

“Let’s keep politics out of it. We have high standards. We take domestic workers first and then look at immigrants.”

As with the local agencies approached in responding to Deliverable 1, regulatory bodies were unable to provide any numbers of skilled immigrants from this region that approached them. Most could only provide us with a “best guess”.

“In 2003 we received 763 applications from both Landed Immigrants and foreign trained nurses already here”.

“The TQ assessment branch receives about 100 applications a month. About one third come from other jurisdictions.”

“Canadian Merchant Service Guild receives about 40-50 applications a year.”

Deliverable 2 is unattainable. No real conclusions can be drawn from the limited numbers of respondents. However, some useful insights were gleaned from the few who were interviewed.

Some immigrants have seen the issue of documentation of past qualifications as problematic. For some, it is the difficulty of actually getting original documents. For others it is that the papers must be translated by a reputable translator and sent directly to the regulatory body.

“Most bring documents but they must be translated and then evaluated against the standards and educational outcomes of BC schools.”

In some cases, the original training schools have closed and the documents are not available.”

“No papers, no assessment.”

By far the most difficult phase of validation is the comparison of the immigrants’ education against the Canadian norms. This was further elaborated on by the Immigrants’ Stories. For the most part, regulatory bodies are convinced that this careful scrutiny is essential to carry out their mandate of protecting the public against unsafe practitioners.

“The differences vary and there is no real equivalent.

“Credentials are checked and then Transport Canada decides.”

“Criteria limit our members. We need to see translated documents.”

The regulatory bodies recognize the difficulty skilled immigrant's face in validating their documents. They are not unsympathetic but feel there are some steps that could be taken to minimize the impact on the skilled immigrants. Better advice before embarking is one such step as is starting the process from their home country early enough for the lengthy process to be in place. That is especially true when contemplating work within the merchant marine guild. Others suggested that the immigrants have unrealistic expectations and may have been given inaccurate information in their home countries.

"It isn't that they can't but may need refresher programs or intensive English classes."

"Sometimes immigrants have unrealistic expectations based on information given to them before immigrating."

"The need is for better English language skills; there is the safety issue."

"In order to certify, some applicants have to take all seven exams. Each exam takes 2-3 months of study and costs money. All courses are not offered all the time, so may have to wait until the next year.

The few responses we did elicit before altering the project's original scope, underscored the need for Upper level English classes and the "cultural piece" of the work environment.

"Language and culture of the profession."

"The biggest challenge they face is for them to adapt to the cultural change. I've seen immigrants from India who came from cadet programs (that prepares officers) where the immigrant has not had to do the trades qualifications that Canadians do. 'Officers do not get their hands dirty'. But here on the West Coast, we have mostly small tugs and crew must be able to do all tasks."

Finally, the immigrants may face bias in the workforce as these comments suggest.

"There may be less tolerance to immigrants, a 'red-neck' attitude sometimes seen. We have qualified people in Canada, we do not need to take in more immigrants"

Pressure on unions and professional associations to review their current processes on validating skilled immigrants education will be affected by political will, pressures from employers and economic changes such as severe labour shortages.

Deliverable 3: A Summary of Anecdotal Stories to Support or Challenge the Statistical Findings and Put a "Human Face" on the Issue

Methodology

All of the immigrants who volunteered to talk to the interviewer were self-selected from ESL classes. Faculty members who teach at CVIMS and Malaspina University-

College were approached to survey their classes for immigrants who wanted to share their experiences about finding meaningful work here in BC.

The decision to interview a few immigrants rather than survey as many immigrants as possible by questionnaire stemmed from the fact that we believed all the responses would show similarities. The CVIMS has spent 25 years working with immigrants and were well aware of the “horror stories” regarding skilled immigrants and their effort to find work in their field. A few exemplars would demonstrate the plight of many. However, those who wanted an opportunity to talk about their experiences were the ones who’d had the “horror stories.

What follows is a summary of the stories but the immigrants’ concerns are best understood by reading the complete stories in Appendix E.

Conclusions

Deliverable 3 was felt to be met. It was impossible to listen to the stories and not be moved by them. As identified by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre there is a “transition penalty” for immigrants where it now “takes ten years in Canada before unemployment rates for skilled immigrants reach the same level as native born Canadians.” (Lochhe, 2003) Several studies have identified the loss in productivity and economic terms, but the emotional toll seems far more damaging to the individual. The cost is incalculable.

To watch someone’s fragile self-esteem being battered by the “system” makes one ever aware of the multiplicity of challenges facing new immigrants. There is spiral of decreasing confidence and support. There is no quick fix and it will take the efforts of many to effect change in the system.

The skilled immigrants interviewed were frustrated and bewildered, let down by a country that had promised them hope. In some cases, this was tinged with anger as well. These stories reinforce what other respondents had said.

Having a better understanding of English and an orientation to Canadian culture would be beneficial for most immigrants. On the other hand, immigrants can have some responsibility here. There is a need for the immigrant to show commitment to the process by meeting the existing criteria and following through with tasks. An example for that would be for immigrants to initiate the credential-validation process much sooner, preferably before they arrive in Canada.

The CVIMS needs to continue to support skilled immigrants and assist with compiling up-to-date profiles of what credentialing agencies want.

The CVIMS should continue to support the BCITP group and others seeking employment with Job Clubs or other support groups.

Deliverable 4: A Report on the Possibilities for Relevant Employment for Skilled Immigrants in the Local Labour Market.

Methodology

Using the expertise of the two employment counselors at CVIMS, a list of 30 employers was drafted. The original intent was to interview four large and four smaller businesses to act as a snapshot of the local labour market. However, with the decision to stop research into regulatory bodies (See p. 4), there was time to enlarge the pool of prospective employers. Since this was deemed to be the most important part of the project, it made sense to do so. Size of company ranged from 2,100 to seven. The type of business ranged from public institutions to small family run companies. They encompassed retail, industrial and technology.

A cover letter and questionnaire were developed. They were field tested on the first contact with an employer. No revisions were made at that time but the questionnaire was later revised to be more applicable for smaller businesses. The key part of this project was to improve our labour market information, especially as it related to potential employment for skilled immigrants. A telephone call was made to introduce the project to employers. Copies of the cover letter and questionnaire were delivered to the employer, and a time for meeting set up. Employers were offered the option of a face-to-face meeting or telephone exchange. Of the 30 employers contacted, 22 completed questionnaires. Some may yet return questionnaires and will add to the data- base being developed on local employers. This work of contacting employers to establish a database and build links with the employers should be continued.

Conclusions

There are some jobs out there. Three employers who granted us interviews asked if we had a skilled immigrant who was looking for work through our employment services. (ASPECT or employment units) Seven employers said they would be willing to hire skilled immigrants just as soon as their foreign credentials have been recognized by whatever regulatory body has jurisdiction in this area.

“The barriers to employment are ...and getting credentials recognized in BC”.

“All positions are union positions and hiring practises are described in the collective agreements.”

“Any of the ‘skilled worker’ categories must have BC license or certification in order to work here.”

“All hiring done through the union hall for journeymen. He has no choice, he must take the next on the union’s list.”

It is difficult to generalize from a sample size of 22 but some themes did emerge. Despite a series of media releases about a shortage of skilled workers, few of the employers interviewed had much in the way of vacancies at this time. Three employers

asked if we had a specific person that we were assisting to find employment. In the Trades area, eight employers indicated they might face shortages within 10-15 years. In the occupations where vacancies did show up, they were in specialty subsets of the respective professions, teachers and nurses.

The most startling of response was that there were no unfilled RN positions in the north end of Vancouver Island at this time. (From Duncan to Port Hardy) That doesn't mean to say that over the course of this summer there won't be shortages in some specialty wards like critical care or operating rooms.

“Even new graduates from Malaspina’s nursing program would have to look elsewhere in the province or the United States for work.” “There are some shortages in staffing for physiotherapists and pharmacists.”

“The plans devised three years ago to address the potential problem of labour shortages in the profession (teaching), have an ironic twist. This district has no trouble filling positions from the pool of teachers/staff because of recent retrenchment in government funding has meant many layoffs. There are enough people on the part-time/casual call list to fill almost anything in staffing vacancies. The only exceptions would be the specialty areas such as Trades, Home Economics, Business and Languages.”

In the industries that were likely to need skilled tradesmen, the need was projected in 10 or 15 years.

“At this time, the company has one job opening for a steel fabricator. I don't see any shortages in the immediate future.”

“Do expect some shortages in the next 10-15 years with gas fitters and heating/ventilation/air conditioning technicians.”

“There could be shortages in the future for competent well-trained heavy-duty mechanics.”

“There may be potential shortages of RN's (most are currently in their 40's or 50's) as retirement approaches.”

“There are no vacancies at the moment but there could be shortages in body-shop workers, technicians and mechanics within five to ten years.”

We encountered only two employers who identified that they had skilled immigrants working at a skill level below their qualifications. However, since most companies do not “flag” an employee as a skilled immigrant, there is no way to clearly identify them. The existing laws related to equality preclude identification. The two who were able to identify skilled immigrants could do so because the staff was small enough or the contact knew the staff very well.

Employers were cognizant of the barriers skilled immigrants face. Sixteen respondents identified lack of English skills as the biggest barrier for skilled immigrants.

“...Are primarily the English language skills.”

“Due to the composition of the residents (a care facility), there is a requirement for non-accented English speakers. Accents make it more difficult for the elderly to understand the speaker. In addition, there may be some level of bias from residents who were raised with earlier value about culture and race.”

“Dealing with people in their own homes requires a good command of the language.”

The second biggest hurdle for skilled immigrants was that of understanding the “culture” of Canadian workplaces. Eleven respondents suggested that immigrants do not know how to behave in the new workplace.

“Another area of concern is the ‘cultural piece’ of that profession. Examples of immigrants not wishing to speak out even though it would be appropriate to do so.”

“Understanding Canadian culture, especially in the health care sector, requires a good grasp of the language and the norms...”

“A cross-cultural forum would be essential for any immigrant wanting to work here.”

In addition, several identified the lack of understanding related to the forms/policies of governmental agencies as an issue. These were identified as things such as WCB, EI, Workers Compensation, etc.

“A barrier is the things known by Canadians such as EI programs, WCB regulations and others.”

“They (skilled immigrants) have continual problems with the government in the ever long paper trail: WCB, Revenue Canada, GST, PST, EI and all the rest.”

Employers saw getting credentials recognized as another hurdle facing skilled immigrants.

“They receive two to three e-mails from skilled immigrants seeking employment, but since all skilled staff requires certification, these are referred elsewhere.”

“Many of the jobs do have prerequisite courses. A car salesman has a three-day course he has to take. Even a parts man has a four-year apprenticeship now.”

A few employers did see the need for some process for skilled immigrants to bridge into the workforce. No one employer had anything specific in mind but did show interest in exploring the issue.

Some were even willing to take skilled immigrants along on “shadowing” trips or other limited job experience so skilled immigrants were able to see the workplace and understand what would be required.

I’d be willing to take someone along in a shadowing role even if his/her command of English wasn’t perfect as long as he/she had the qualifications.”

“I’m open to training programs.”

“The respondent was not able to say if the company would support any initiatives until they had some idea of what was involve.’

Recommendations

CVIMS should continue to offer the upper level English classes, which contains the “workplace orientation” identified by employers, immigrants and regulatory bodies. As noted previously, the scheduling of classes should be reviewed to accommodate immigrants’ needs; evening, weekend and part-time classes may be more helpful to some.

The CVIMS should continue to work with employers. Continued contact with employers gives the them opportunity to see that their needs are met, they have an opportunity to give feedback so they could continue to have a source of qualified people for any vacancies that occur.

The CVIMS should continue this effort and complete an Employer Matrix (See Appendix F for sample) that shows the size and type of employers with the opportunities for employment. One of the employment counselors has expressed the need for such a tool. Just the small number of employer visits as part of this project raised a level of awareness within the business community. It was clear during some interviews that many employers had not given the subject of skilled workers a great deal of thought. Until fairly recently, there had not been a need to wonder where the skilled employees of the future would come from.

All future contacts should be done face-to-face since the personal touch is a better way to enlist employers help.

Deliverable 5: Recommendations and a Program Plan for future service delivery including formation strategies for development of an Employers Council or other tools to engage employers.

Program Plan

A Skilled Immigrants Job Placement Program in direct partnership with the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society's existing HRSDC funded Employment Services Program and in collaboration with BCITP Net and Enhanced English Language Classes if available.

Key Essential Elements:

1. Continue to gather and maintain a database of interested and appropriate employers, including detailed profiles of the employer: number of staff, location, job categories, key contacts
2. Use personal face-to-face contact with employers, thereby promoting and demonstrating:
 - Our knowledge of their workplace environment
 - Our commitment to the relationship
 - Our collaborative approach
3. Offer cross-cultural training and interpreting as needed
4. Develop and promote job-shadowing, volunteerism and mentoring initiatives for skilled immigrants
5. Dispel employer fears and misconceptions through dialogue and education
6. Market skilled immigrants to potential employers
7. Screen skilled immigrant clients for demonstrated commitment and willingness to meet requirements
8. a catalogue of credentialing criteria for specific trades and professions

Key Preferred Elements:

1. seek out funding to support employer financial incentives: ie: insurance coverage for volunteers or work experience workers; training allowance
2. a job club
3. a client database of skilled immigrants looking for work
4. Additional training in workplace culture including communication styles
5. Develop and coordinate an Employers Council using web-based communication strategies over formal meetings, to ensure maximum participation and reduce time commitment required by employers. This will encourage the collaborative process and offer maximum input by employers.

Appendix A: Regulatory Bodies Letter

SKILLED IMMIGRANTS AS AN ASSET TO OUR COMMUNITY

In the work of the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, we have seen a significant population of skilled immigrants working below their skill level or outside of their area of expertise. We have received a small grant from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services to help us determine the magnitude of the problem and begin to identify some steps we can take to address this issue in our community. We are looking into the experiences of skilled immigrants as they arrive in Canada and attempt to find meaningful employment in their areas of expertise. There are several barriers they face, most of which are documented by a variety of agencies, and usually include level of English language skills, differences in culture and expectations, programs not recognized here, educational credentials not commensurate with Canadian standards, financial support, and many others. We see some of the problems they encounter when they submit their credentials from their home country to be assessed as they apply for permits to work.

At the same time, we recognize that any of the accrediting bodies have, within their various mandates, a responsibility to maintain standards within that discipline and for many, a duty to protect the public.

Our project will attempt to reach all the agencies that might collect data on these skilled immigrants. As well, we are collecting "stories" of these experiences. Finally, we are seeking out employers to determine the vacancies of skilled workers they face and what might be done to assist in the transition for skilled immigrants. This project is directed only, at this time, to the area served by the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society.

Many agencies collect data related to skilled immigrants but each does so within fairly narrow parameters. Not all use the term "skilled immigrant" in the same way. Many collect statistics as part of quality assurance or accountability and evaluation processes. So, while data exist in some degrees in many places, no common statistics are kept in this community that allow us to get a picture of the "real" numbers. Reality is such that, we will never be able to identify all the skilled immigrants in our community, but we would like to improve on our present knowledge. To that end we are contacting as many of the professional, technical and trade organizations to ask for their assistance. Your responses to this questionnaire will be helpful. All information will be treated respectfully and confidentially. We are interested in the numbers, only, and no names or other identifiers will be used in the final report. We will include the name of your organization but will omit your name if requested. Any and all information will be gratefully accepted. We anticipate that your organization may have printed material for prospective members and a copy of that would be most useful to build a resource library here.

A copy of the kind of information we are seeking is appended.

Further information about the project can be had from our consultant, Pat Robinson (250-758-7492 or 250-618-1942) or Hilde Carlson (250-753-6911) Executive Director of the Central Vancouver Multicultural Society.

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Regulatory Bodies

1. How many applicants approach your organization requesting recognition of foreign credentials and work experience? Monthly? Yearly?
Out of these, how many come from the Central Vancouver Island area?
2. What form do most documents take?
3. How many applicants have detailed outlines of the educational program/s they have completed in their home countries?
4. What is the match between their qualifications and Canadian programs?
 - What happens when an immigrant has no corroborating paper trail?
 - What would you accept as proof? E.g. “ Would you accept letters from past employers as proof?”
5. What do you see as the biggest challenge for skilled immigrants who want to work in Canada but who cannot get the necessary approval/credential here?
6. What has your organization put into place to deal with requests from skilled immigrants? What future steps might your organization take?

Appendix A: Employer Letter

PROJECT INFORMATION HANDOUT SKILLED IMMIGRANTS-AN ASSET TO OUR COMMUNITY

The Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society has been assisting in the transition of immigrants to the region for twenty-five years. One of the most complicated issues is that of finding employment. Most immigrants arrive with skills and knowledge they are anxious to put to work in their new life. Many have difficulty doing so for a number of reasons; English language skills, different work culture and climate, no direct recognition of their credentials, or no job that directly equates to their training, education, or work experiences.

At the same time, a number of employers are having difficulty finding skilled workers for some jobs. Often in the news will be examples of some fields that are critically in need of skilled workers. The doctor and nurse shortages have been high profile for some time now. In an article by Azmier and Huynh for the Canada West Foundation, they cite that 80% of the industries they surveyed will have some or severe shortages of skilled workers in their future. Since it appears that BC cannot fill some vacancies now, nor do we expect to fill them with enough new graduates trained in Canada in the future, it is timely to look at the issue of immigration and the arrival of skilled workers.

The Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society has received a small grant to look at the issue in this region. The project has four parts: to identify the numbers of skilled workers here, to ask credentialing agencies about the number of applicants they see from this region, to talk to a number of skilled immigrants to see the problem from their perspectives and to discuss with employers the possibilities and potential for jobs in the various fields.

Your assistance in this endeavour would be most appreciated. At your convenience we would like to interview you, in person or by phone, or someone you designate to discuss the issue. All information will be treated as confidential. We will not name you or your organization, should you desire. It usually takes about 10-15 minutes to review the questions. An outline of the kind of questions we would like to discuss with you is on the next page. If you have questions, you may contact our consultant, Pat Robinson (250-758-7492 or 250-618-1942) or the Executive Director, Hilde Carlson (250-753-6918).

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Employers

For the purposes of this project, we are defining “skilled immigrant” as “a person who is foreign-trained or educated in technical, trades, management, or professional disciplines. They may have degrees, diplomas, tickets or other documents that illustrate their skills.” Also recognized are some “immigrants who have demonstrable skills but have no supporting documentation.”

1. Please tell me a little bit about your company/organization. What is the scope of your business or organization? What kind of work force do you have? How many employees?
2. What types of workers do you have: management, professional, technical, trades or labourers?
2. Do you have skilled immigrants that you know about working for you? In what areas or jobs?
3. Are you aware of any skilled immigrant working at jobs below their skill level in your company or organization?
4. How often do skilled immigrants approach you for employment? What kinds of jobs do they apply for?
5. What do you see as the barriers to skilled immigrants moving to more skilled jobs or improving their positions?
6. Do you foresee any shortages of skilled workers in the immediate and long-term future? In what areas or with what skills?
7. Does your company have strategic plans to address any labour shortages? Do you have methods in place now? Can you share these with me?
8. What kinds of initiatives do you think are needed? What initiatives would you support?
9. Are there any other comments you would like to add?

Appendix A: Skilled Immigrants - The Stories

The Central Vancouver Multicultural Society has been working with immigrants for twenty-five years in an effort to assist immigrants to make the transition to life in Canada. The Society has offered English language courses, resettlement services, employment counseling and many other services to assist with the transition. One of the concerns that many immigrants face is that of having had previous education, skills, or work experiences not recognized here by some employers and professional groups. Those organizations, who provide licenses, tickets, and other credentials/documents, that are essential to in some gaining work jobs, do not always have a way to examine the immigrants documents and equate that to a similar Canadian job. Often we hear of skilled immigrants who cannot work in their respective professions.

The society has received a grant to look into the experiences that immigrants have had in trying to find employment in their fields. Your assistance with these “stories” will help us to know your experiences.

If you agree to talk to our consultant, Pat Robinson, we will listen to what it has been like for you. We will not use your name, address or any other identification on any of the documents and you are free to cancel at any time, before, during and after the interview. We understand that you might be concerned about what will happen to the information you give us. The information will be collected only during the period of March 1, 2004 to May 31, 2004. It will be reported as a “story” and used to show what it has been like for you. At the end of the project, all original files will be destroyed. You may want to read the “story” when it is done and take a copy away with you. Please help us to tell your story by answering a few questions. These questions are on the next page.

Appendix A: Immigrant Stories Questionnaire

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself. You do not have to tell anything you don't want to and you are free to stop at any time.
2. Where did you live before coming to Canada? How long have you been in Canada? Is Nanaimo the first place you came to? How do you like Nanaimo?
3. What kinds of jobs did you have in your home country?
4. What kind of training did you have to have in order to work in those fields? Did you have to go to school for it? How long did you have to study? Did you have to have work experiences as well as classroom study in order to complete your program?
5. Did you learn skills at a job site? How long did you have to work before you were qualified in your field?
6. What do you think you are qualified to do in Canada? Do we have a similar job that all your skills fit?
7. Have you talked to professional organizations here in Canada about your qualifications? Or are your qualifications looked at by trade unions? What did they say?

Appendix A: Community Leaders Letter

SKILLED IMMIGRANTS- AN ASSET TO OUR COMMUNITY

The Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society has been welcoming immigrants to Nanaimo and surrounding areas for twenty-five years. The Society has provided immigrant settlement services, English language classes, employment assistance programs, as well as many other services.

Immigrants arrive with a variety of languages, customs and beliefs, and skills. Many have acquired degrees, diplomas, certificates and trades tickets and may have had many years of experience in their fields. However, many find themselves unable to work in their areas of expertise.

We have received a small grant from the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal, and Women's Services to look at this issue in our region. We are attempting to contact as many people as possible that work with immigrants in an effort to understand the magnitude of the problem. Some may have already received assistance but many have not. No one organization keeps track of immigrants once they arrive in Canada. The CVIMS sees many, but not all. We know, as well, that churches and other support groups see new immigrants and offer assistance. It is for that reason we are approaching you. We would like your help to identify the number of people you know who may fit into the "skilled immigrant unable to work in his or her particular vocation" category. We are not seeking names or to single out any one particular group. All information, other than the numbers and reasons, (see next page for number and type of questions) will be kept confidential.

If you need further information about the credibility and references with this project, please contact the project Consultant, Pat Robinson at 758-7492 or 618-1942 or Hilde Carlson, Executive Director of the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society at 753-6913.

Appendix A: Community Leaders Questionnaire

1. In the course of your work, do you have contact with recent immigrants? I.e. those who have been in Canada less than three to five years?
2. In what capacity do you see them?
3. Approximately how many do you see? Month? Year?
4. In listening to them, what are their concerns?
5. Do you know how many, if any, have indicated they cannot work in a field they have previously qualified for?
6. What is the major stumbling block for them?
7. Do you know what resources they have used? What organizations have they tried to contact or negotiate with?
8. Are they working in another job? Are they taking classes?
9. What would you like to add?

Appendix B: Agencies Responding to Skilled Immigrant Project

1. Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
 - a. HRDC Unit
 - b. Immigrant Settlement Services Unit
2. Volunteer Nanaimo
3. Nanaimo Women's Centre
4. Planning Department Nanaimo City Hall
5. Setting Employment Transitions
6. HRDC Nanaimo
7. Living Word Ministries
8. Korean Christian Church
9. Outreach Worker –Vietnamese Community
10. Global Vocational Services
11. Customs and Immigration Canada
12. Malaspina University-College Departments
 - a. Advising Centre
 - b. ESL Programs
 - c. International Department
 - d. Health Department
 - e. Trades Department
 - f. PLA Advisor

Appendix C: Community Agencies Working with Immigrants: Responses

1. What does the term “skilled immigrant” mean to you?
 - Credentialed, not necessarily with papers. Our definition should be what the skill is described in home country. There is a spectrum of skill sets. In the final analysis is, “can they do the job”? Education for a specific purpose
 - More than a professional or someone with papers, someone with a specific “skill set”, even businessmen have a specialized skills, it is really a broad term.
 - This definition is interesting to CIC. It is the competencies necessary to succeed in Canada. We don’t want to lose valuable resources. It is a credential plus expertise.
 - Have a skill, any type, not necessarily credentialed. “The Associates” is a VN project to place immigrants with Committees and Boards with a mentor”.
 - Education and marketable skills. Need to assess credentials and practice. The barriers for SI are different from our usual clientele.
 - Some accreditation through education and training.
 - Not necessarily formal education. Skills must be marketable. See SI in office, their biggest hurdle is to speak English. There is a cultural bias in community.
 - A SI is someone with post-secondary credentials.
 - A Skilled worker, just like any person, that is an immigrant.
 - Any kind of credential. People come with skill sets they cannot use.
 - Professionals, tradesmen, etc. Representative of the general population. Look at National Vocational Qualifications process in England.
 - Have employability skills, e.g. appearance, English skills, skills in a specific area. Enough to retain employment. Can’t get employment without showing skills. Need to be commensurate with what is here. Someone who can demonstrate the skills whether they have papers or not.
 - Someone who has competency sets. Some credentials/certification plus education. Has some focussed credential or profession.
 - Set of skills from another country. Local employers unable to hire without certification. Level of technology is an issue. Trades programs have raised the entry requirements since employers want piece of paper.
 - Anyone with a credential from another jurisdiction. The problem is in employability. There is disparity between programs.

2. In the course of your operations, do you have contact with skilled immigrants? How many skilled immigrants do you see? Daily? Weekly? Yearly?
 - As an employment counselor, I see many skilled immigrants. Because of the funding arrangement, I do not keep separate statistics for skilled immigrants but keep statistics on, “anyone eligible to work in Canada and is unemployed or works less than 20 hours/week.” The busiest periods are those just before semesters start as everyone wants to go to school. See attached report of numbers.

Note: After completing this interview, the respondent called to say they had reviewed all current files so as to provide exact numbers for skilled immigrants. They provided employment needs assessment for employment services for 28 woman and 18 men. They further identified the BCITP group with 17 members- Eight women and nine men.

- As an ISS worker, I see immigrants every day. For detailed numbers, see attached document. A total of 379 clients were seen last year. Koreans make up the largest ethnic group arriving in Nanaimo last year with Chinese, Indian and the Philippine the next largest groups.
- The CIC office has no real statistics on the number of skilled immigrants arriving in Nanaimo. There is no current method for tracking any immigrant once they have come through the Port of Landing. Unable to track any immigrants means there is no way to separate out the skilled workers from others. As a “best guess”, would be 800 skilled immigrants a year.
- We see lots of students, often to use English skills. They see 100-150 people through the door each year. Of that, the best guess is 10-15 skilled immigrants. This agency does presentations at Malaspina University-College annually so immigrants may learn of the agency this way.
- This employment contractor sees skilled immigrants in with all other clientele. She sees professionals, clerical office administrators and others. At present, there is no data collection on any of the clients. They collect only the total number seen.
- This planning department does not collect numbers on skilled immigrants. Any data collection would be related to the overall statistics on Nanaimo. See partial report appended.
- Unable to say within any certainty how many immigrant women use this service. Best guess is 30/year. They may come in as clients and then stay on to volunteer for the organization.
- We do not have documented evidence of the number of skilled immigrants using this service. However, they may see some during a course of a personal interview related to entry to their program. There have been about five in the last 18 months.
- We do not see very many skilled immigrants in Ladysmith or Chemainus, perhaps because we are smaller centres. Approximately, less than 30% of clients that use our employment assistance services are skilled immigrants.
- This advising centre does not keep statistics on the number of skilled immigrants who seek their help. The best guess is that about 2-3 a week may come for help. They are usually seeking help in having some credentials recognized or entry into programs that would either validate their skills or give them another option for finding employment. An example is of a client from India who had a B.Sc. Biol., Master of Forensic Science, who wanted to enter the Dental Assistant Program. Another example of a Russian lawyer who was attempting to get into the Legal Secretarial program.
- We see 30-40 skilled immigrants a semester. Many have given up using their own qualifications and are taking advanced English level in order to access other training programs.

- Although I am the PLA manager for the campus, I see very few skilled immigrants. Now, people seeking the PLA process for their qualifications go directly to the different departments who will assess the presented credentials. Any advance credit for work previously done needs to be done in an educational context. E.g. There was an overwhelming number of individuals seeking credit from the Nursing Program. Other departments that have been engaged in the PLA process are Recreation/Tourism, Human Service Workers, and Education. There have been 100-120 people going through a PLA process a year.
- Applicants to this department are more often those seeking the Graduate Nurse Refresher Program. Because all nursing programs require approval (in the form of a letter) from the registering body, the numbers and types of programs has little scope for changing criteria or processes. The department does offer some coaching. The department does not keep statistics on the number of skilled immigrants approaching the department for guidance, or assessment.
- This department does not see very many skilled immigrants. Advising will see most of these. In the last year, there have been only three who did.
- Of the present time, there are eight skilled immigrants who are students in the nursing programs. In the past year, there have been five foreign-trained nurses in the program and of the present Graduate Nurses Re-entry Program class of 14, 50% are foreign-trained nurses. This organization has the contract for the province for nurse assessments.

3. Do you keep statistics on your clients? Who do you collect statistics for? What are they used for?

- We keep statistics for HRDC. We track the number of people who use the services both for job placement and going to school. Statistics are kept for accountability.
- We keep statistics (see attached) but we only see the immigrants who use our services. We keep statistics for MCAWS because they are our funding agency.
- We only keep the number of immigrants coming to Canada. We could determine the whereabouts of some of them as they apply for their Permanent Residence Cards but we couldn't let them know about it because we don't track them. Privacy laws apply.
- VN, yes we keep statistics, but for our own use to establish accountability for funding agencies. Any such statistics would be useful to us.
- We keep statistics on the number of clients using our services. We are required to do so because of the "eligibility rules" of the funding agency, such as E.I. As with all subcontractors of federal and provincial funding programs, there is a predictable cycle of assessment, planning and evaluating that comes with contracts.
- The planning department collects many statistics as part of its planning process. Some are economic, multicultural, background languages. All data collected is to set benchmarks for progress.
- We see, counting clients and volunteers about 30 per year. And we do keep statistics but only on clients using our services. We track phone calls, drop-ins, Fax's, e-mail and letters. We keep data for our funding agencies and for ourselves.

We need to make sure we are providing services that women want. However, with the loss of funding to Women's centres, we won't have to keep data for MCAWS.

- Not documented. We provide training and we keep statistics on those. Again, we do it for accountability.
- We collect statistics for ourselves to monitor the different client groups we see, the services we offer and the success rate in achieving their re-employment goals. We also provide Human Resources Development Canada, our main funders, with these statistics to prove that we are offering the services we are contracted for and to prove that they are being effective.
- We do not keep statistics on skilled immigrants accessing our services. They become part of the flow of people through here in the course of a day.
- We do not keep statistics on the number of skilled immigrants in our classes. We do track the total number of students and whether they are here on work or study visa.
- We keep track of the number of people through this department because it is part of the Advising Centre. Because of our funding formula with the Ministry, we do keep some student demographics and service deliveries. This is done for planning and part of the feedback cycle. See documentation of Province's Student Outcomes.
- We keep statistics if needed, especially for program planning. It determines support needs, where is pool of students? How are we marketing?
- Statistics kept are for program planning. See Advising Centre or Program Coordinators for more information.
- Yes, we keep statistics. We keep them for planning, etc.

4. Could you determine the number of skilled immigrants from among your clients?

- Yes, by hand reviewing the files.
- Probably.
- N/A
- Not really.
- No.
- Not really, but would like to.
- Sometimes. Have to dig and do it manually.
- No.
- Yes. Through their self-identification on our registration form that everyone must complete in order to receive services. It would also be identified through our initial employment needs assessment interviews that most clients undergo when they first register for services.
- No.
- No.
- Don't know skilled immigrants from data.
- Only with a hand count.
- No.
- Yes, since numbers are small and I interview each prospective student.

5. How accurate a picture do you have on the number of skilled immigrants in this community?

- Best guess only.
- Not sure how applied. Even if not registered for English classes, may still use other services like employment services.
- N/A
- Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society does refer clients to us but we do not know how many are here.
- Picture? Not really.
- Not really, but would like one.
- Not really. But it would be useful in educating staff/volunteers about issues.
- N/A
- Our approximate 3% statistics of skilled immigrants that access our services is quite consistent with BC Stats.
- No.
- No.
- Not really.
- N/A

6. What other agencies/groups do you have contact with who might have information on skilled immigrants/

- Use the ESL department of Malaspina University-College, contact with Amber Education, HRDC, in some degree all EAS services, Ministry of Human Resources, Chamber of Commerce, social agencies (both ways; we refer to them, they refer to us)
- Malaspina University-College, private language schools.
- CVIMS
- Share information. Need something more than a report. Should have half-day workshop for all NGO's.
- Not formally. Information from this report would be useful to us.
- CVIMS
- The Ladysmith Resource Centre Association (one-stop shopping for referral to programs and services other than employment assistance services, which we offer in our community. Contact is DL, Executive Director, phone number 245-3079
- Just other departments here.
- CVMIS
- Within Malaspina only.

7. What information do you need (that you don't have access now) that would give you a better picture of the number of skilled immigrants in this community? Would this information be useful to you?
- The problem with knowing is the time-lines. Immigrants have been here from 30 years to three months. My focus is on newcomers. Would like updated piece. There is a "point of landing" debate. Dollars flow to the "Port of Landing" even though immigrants head elsewhere; the dollars don't follow them.
 - We may need better recording system. If I use a conversational gambit, start a friendly conversation, I get more. What about a few documents kept by NGO/government?
 - None really.
 - There is a systemic problem with collecting good data.
 - We need a better way to assess credentials.
 - Not immediately needed.
 - N/A
 - Not really.
 - The info is needed. Might help in student counselling/advising
 - Yes, Information would be useful especially the Numbers of skilled immigrants, port of embarkation, why they came to Nanaimo, what the training needs are. How could PLA be useful in the community and to employers? I want to know how it all ends.
 - Information from this project would help us determine if we are meeting current needs. Help in planning for future Graduate Nurse Re-entry program.
8. What other concerns do you have around this issue of skilled immigrants finding employment in his/her field?
- How do I help skilled immigrants find work in their respective fields? There are systemic barriers, discrimination. An environmental engineer has to take a ferry to Vancouver twice a week at night to get courses that his professional association says he must in order to get a job. People from India with bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees (mainly bachelors) most often wind up taking menial jobs because their credentials are not recognized. Do we classify by gender because the problems placed by women in immigrant families have different problems than their spouses? E.g. day care, transportation, etc.
 - Immigrants have language barriers and lack of Canadian experience, which makes it very difficult to get a job.
 - Sometimes, immigrants are led to believe from embassy/consulate people in their home country that their ability to get a job will be easy with the credentials they hold in their home country. Because many of them are judged on their credentials, they are ill prepared for the difficulties of getting credentials recognized in Canada.
 - Any recommendations that are developed need to have dollars attached to them. This report needs to be shared.
 - Would like to have her staff's input before making comments.

- The biggest concerns are English language ability and the fear of authority figures that some immigrants have.
- I have a personal interest in this topic. I wonder if the overseas information is realistic?
- Good luck with the study.
- Nanaimo is a “small town” and there is bias here. It comes down to people’s expectations. We don’t have a sense of multiculturalism here.
- There are hundreds of stories to be told here, untold riches. For some immigrants, they hang on so kids can have a better life.
- I’d like to help CVIMS anyway I can.
- We are seeing RN’s from other countries accessing the Graduate Nurse Re-entry Program but it is not really suited for them. They lack an understanding of Canadian practice. They need other education/training and the approval of the licensing body.
- In addition to professional support, they need community support. For example, take a group of nurses and connect them with other nurses (not just from same country) and have them operate as a support group.

Appendix D: Agencies and Community Groups Working with Immigrants (Churches Outreach workers, and Temples)

1. In the course of your work, do you have contact with recent immigrants?

There are 80-90 parishioners, including six new families in this congregation. I have had contact with several immigrants, mainly from Republic of South Africa. Yes, I am the outreach worker for the Vietnamese community.

2. In what capacity do you see them?

- I am the outreach worker for the Vietnamese community. I fill out forms, translate, and help with banking and other tasks like that. I carry a pager and cell phone and I am available 24/7. I work with about ten families now.
- I see them mostly in the context of my pastoral role. I have also met several others through other members of the church.
- I see the members of my church. There are about 80-90 members of the congregation. I don’t see them about jobs.

3. Approximately how many do you see? Month? Year?

- At one time there were about 4,000 Vietnamese here but now it’s about 2,000. Many have moved to Vancouver because there are better opportunities there in the fishing industry and restaurants. Many of the immigrants came as part of the “family re-unification” process. Women find jobs more often than men do and this contributes to the breakdown of the relationship. Women gain identity. For men,

there is culture shock. Children at school see they are not the same as Canadian children.

- I would see them several times a week- either at weekly services or a visit on a regular basis in their homes.
- Through the regular routines of the church.

4. In listening to them, what are their concerns?

- Racism is an issue. If someone with an accent makes a call, sometimes you don't get put through to the person. That means you can't follow up a resume with a phone call. There was a bad impression left about Vietnamese when crimes and drug issues were prevalent. Why do the press have to say, "Vietnamese drug...."? The press never write about a "white man" who was arrested, or that the person up on charges is a Canadian? Because it was so difficult to get job with credentials, many immigrants end up buying into or starting businesses.
- Their concerns: Unable to find sustainable work, most immigrants unless highly qualified do not try to find work in what they have previously done. The highly qualified ones (doctors, accountants, executives, IT workers) do find work after a short time. The Island is a different scenario to most other places in Canada and requires a great deal of networking to find gainful employment. The lack of full-time sustainable employment on the Island. The only way to sustain life is by holding down 2 or 3 minimum wage jobs.
- The biggest concern is getting a better level of English. Koreans get English taught in schools but only the reading and writing. They do not get listening and speaking practice. When they go to Malaspina, the class is mainly academic prep. This is not what many want or need. They are not using the support services because there is no information on the organizations. They do not know how to land a job.

5. Do you know how many, if any, have indicated they cannot work in a field they have previously qualified for?

- I don't know.
- Many immigrants have actually decided to break from what they were doing before and try their hand at something new before they even get to Canada. (Part of the great adventure.) There are very little, if any, industrial type occupations on the Island so people looking for work in industry have to transition to other vocations.
- I am not sure unless I ask them.

6. What is the main stumbling block for them?

- No Canadian experience. The level of English they have. There is a bias in Nanaimo against immigrants.
- The Island is a "who you know society". A great deal of networking must be done and this is foreign to many of the immigrants. They think they can simply put in a

resume and expect to get a job. The immigrants do not understand the job situation here at all.

- English language skills. Orientation to Canadian culture in the workplace. Understanding things like WCB, Labour standards, special resume writing.
7. Do you know what resources they have used? What organizations have they tried to contact or negotiate with?
- Some have used the CVIMS and government agencies.
 - Some use the CVIMS. Many read newspapers from Vancouver (written in Vietnamese) Some community resources. Some use church or temple.
 - I know that they have used most of the non-profit organizations offering employment advice and job-finding mechanisms but have found these only helpful to a point. (The ARC, The Job Finding Club, Job Wave, etc.- as I did myself!)
8. Are they working in another job? Are they taking classes?
- Some are working in commission-only selling jobs because these are in reasonable abundance. Most of these do not produce a sustainable income and only certain personality types can thrive.
 - They can only afford for one of a couple to go to classes. Only the working partner has the English classes and the spouse (who came as family member and not as Landed Immigrant) still cannot get credentials recognized and get another job.
 - Some have invested in businesses.
9. What would you like to add?
- I would add: the need to learn networking techniques, a more thorough understanding of the local job market, a job evaluation process (direct skills required and helpful transferable skills.) A qualification's evaluation process. An orientation to Canadian culture.
 - Get the government to work with CVIMS and help with visas and help with students getting Landed Immigrant status. Can CVMIS help?
 - Not enough upper-level English classes. Run classes part-time so it is easier to attend. (Hard to go to classes and earn a living too.)

Appendix D: Questionnaire Responses from Professional /Accreditation Licensing Organizations

1. How many applicants approach your organization requesting recognition of foreign credentials and work experience? Monthly? Yearly? Out of these, how many come from the Central Vancouver Island area?

- APEG No responses received.
- HSA members need to be approached individually.
- RNABC data not accurate. Unable to separate to give Island breakdown. In 2003, we received 763 applications from both Landed Immigrants and foreign-trained nurses already here. We have a fairly steady intake. We also receive requests from potential immigrants still in their home countries. In January 2004, we did 63 assessments of foreign credentials. In February 2004, we did 68 assessments.
- PPWC Local 8- applicants approach employers first, not union. The collective agreement provides for a certain number of apprenticeships every year. Because the company is a "closed shop", employer has to look at existing workforce first.
- Plumber, Pipefitters Union. Let's keep politics out of it. We have high standards. We take domestic workers first and then look at immigrants. No way to know how many immigrants seek validation of credentials because that is handled by the "old Apprenticeship Board".
- BC Council of LPN's. I don't know how many foreign-trained PN's seek recognition for credentials as I.C.E.S see most of them. My best guess is that 5% of requests come from mid-Island.
- Canadian Merchant Service Guild receives 40-50 applications a year. It is not known how many come from mid-Island area. We don't assess credentials; they go to Transport Canada for that. We do look at their resumes to see what certifications they have and where it was issued.
- Ministry of Skills and Development. Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission. The TQ assessment branch receives about 100/month. About one-third come from another jurisdictions. The way data is collected is problematic. Skilled Immigrants are often overqualified for jobs.

2. What form do most documents take?

- Most bring documents with them but they have to be translated and then evaluated against the standards and educational outcomes of BC schools of nursing. In some cases, the original training schools have closed and the documents are not available.
- Don't see them
- Need to have credentials recognized by apprenticeship people.
- I.C.E.S. sees most documents, which have to be translated.

- Most likely issued a Marine Certificate which will have what type of certificate and from which country.
 - Ministry sees whatever immigrants have.
3. How many applicants have detailed outlines of the educational programs they have completed in their home country?
- Most have documentation. Problems happen when schools are closed. If the immigrant does not have documents, RNABC will follow up with school. If documents are not originals, there is a process, which includes notarizing them.
 - Employer would see them first.
 - Criteria limit our members. We'd need to see translated documents.
 - No papers, no assessments.
 - Looked at by Transport Canada.
 - Most.
4. What is the match between their qualifications and Canadian programs? What happens when an immigrant has no corroborating paper trail? What would you accept as proof? E.g. would you accept letters from past employers as proof?
- The differences vary and there is no real equivalent. We have to look at individual factors. There are three possible outcomes; a program matches Canadian standards, there is a partial match and they may need some qualifying courses or updates, there is no match at all. Work references would help. We need to make sure that the person was a nurse "in good standing" in own country so there must be verification of registration. Employment references must provide a contact name for employer so RNABC can contact the employer directly. Canadian programs contain the five experience areas; medicine, surgery, pediatrics, obstetrics, and psychiatry. Many nurses from Europe come without experience in all five areas. They need to complete a course in the missing subject. We also need to see the number of theory and clinical hours they have had.
 - Not applicable
 - Since applicants need to have credentials recognized prior to joining the union (through Ministry), we don't see the documents. We do need to see their credentials before they can work.
 - Not applicable.
 - Credentials are checked and then Transport Canada decides on the process. The minimum requirement is two written exams and the "engine simulator" exercise. They must re-do their Marine Emergency ticket and take an oral exam with Transport Canada. The exams test English language ability.
 - I.P. exams (Red Seal) developed by that department. Can challenge exams directly. Can be placed at Levels 1, 2, 3. Need to ensure English language proficiency for safety reasons.

5. What do you see as the biggest challenge for skilled immigrants who want to work in Canada but who cannot get the necessary approval/credential here?
 - It isn't that they cannot but may need refresher program or intensive English classes. The cost of getting documents assessed is a factor. Sometimes Immigrants have unrealistic expectations based on information given to them before immigrating. They should always start the process before they leave their country.
 - Not sure.
 - N/A
 - Language and culture of the profession.
 - In order to certify, some applicants have to take all seven exams. Each exam takes 2-3 months of study and costs money. All courses are not offered all the time, so may have to wait until the next year. Courses only offered once a year. The biggest challenge is for them to adapt to the cultural change. This is less of a problem for European immigrants (and Russia). English language skills remain a problem. I've seen immigrants from India who came from cadet programs (prepare officers), where the immigrant has not had to do the trades qualifications that Canadian do. They are missing some program basics. "Officers do not get their hands dirty". But, here on the West Coast we have mostly small tugs and crew must be able to do all tasks. There may be less tolerance to immigrants, a "red neck" attitude sometimes seen. "We have qualified people in Canada, we do not need to take in more immigrants".
 - The need is for better English language skills; there is the "safety" issue. Immigrants are overqualified for some jobs they apply for. I don't think you are going about this the right way. There are too many studies done. We need a more practical analysis of what's needed and what's not. Immigrants don't get correct counselling. When they go to "job fairs", they should be there to get a job not to get informed. If they are looking for jobs, they should investigate the BC Safety Authority. They need ski lift mechanics, power mechanics.

6. What has your organization put into place to deal with requests from skilled immigrants? What future steps might your organization take/
 - RNABC is involved in development (with EASI) of a course designed as a specialized language class for nursing. The benchmarking tool is really an English Assessment Test to ensure information is out there. There are two issues for nursing; the Health professions Act and BSN requirement for all new graduates. There is an RNABC web-site that has an International section, which explains the registration/assessment process. Another difficulty for immigrants is to get a TOEFL or TSC or ILTS score high enough to meet requirements. The requirements are to get a TSC score of 50 or an ILTS score of 6.5 overall but no band score less than 6, and 7 for spelling.
 - We have bargained for three apprentices a year.
 - We are preparing for the future by enrolling apprentices now. There are absolutely no shortages now, or in the future. We have 4,000 members in the province and still have journeymen looking for work. We take 50 apprenticeships a year out of 100 applicants. We have about a dozen females in the field. We are opening a trade

school in North-Eastern BC. We could use one on Vancouver Island. We keep up with technology- orbital welding machine.

- The pilot program in English language skills (CELBAN) has been developed by VCC (has specific vocabulary for nurses). PLA opportunities are available.
- No union programs in place. We do have a number of potential retirees who are likely to retire within the next 4-5 years; the average age of members is 54. It takes 8-10 years to earn a C.E. ticket.
- There are 160-190 exams developed to test trades tickets. Of these, 60 are interprovincial. The ITC unit is an operational arm of the Ministry and is responsible for evaluation and assessment within certificate groups.

Appendix E: The Immigrant Stories

ANGELINA'S STORY

Angelina is an energetic and charming woman who moved to Canada to marry a Canadian whom she had met when he was travelling abroad in 2000. She says it was a difficult decision to leave her home and family in Colombia but she made the commitment and arrived here in January 2003.

Angelina's Experiences, Education, and Qualifications

Angelina says she didn't start out to become an electrical engineer. She was always a "people person" but hadn't really chosen a field of study when she finished high school. She had an uncle who was an electrical engineer and she had had that profession in mind, as she was very good at mathematics and Physics. She also liked philosophy and social sciences. She was not sure which way to go and she thought she might do a student exchange somewhere. However, her brother, now a physician in Washington, DC, who had known that she had some interest in engineering, submitted her name to the college. She was accepted. She claims to have found it hard for the first semester, asking herself if that was what she really wanted to do. She persevered and found herself enjoying her career and obtaining her Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering. She describes the University system as similar to the North American model, where students take about 15 hours of classes/week for a semester of five months. Her classes consisted of theory and were accompanied by practice labs. She says the total time spent in classes was 15 hours but a further 30 hours of study was expected. She did this for six years. The first five years followed the same format, and the final year was spent on writing a thesis.

Following completion of her degree, Siemens, a European firm, employed her. She worked for them for two years, nine months of which were spent in Germany. She then joined a telecommunication company who transferred her to the USA in 1996. She became a "troubleshooter" who was able to work as an engineer but also in sales. She completed an MBA in Colombia in 1995. She got involved in sales, customer services, and marketing' all activities which allowed her to work with people as well as project management and technical support.

She returned to Columbia to teach at a university. She did that for one and one-half years but the pay wasn't very good. She decided that she wanted a different life so she took a job in Florida where she was allowed to work on a number of projects. The work was with an environmental engineer who brought in students from other countries for "internships". During those internships, students would work as "cheap labour".

Angelina really enjoyed working with the students/interns.

She met her future husband in 2000, when he was sailing. He tried to persuade her to come to Canada then, but she was not yet ready. She says she was drawn to nature and ready to make a commitment. It took her three months to make the final decision. She still feels ties to Colombia but wants to make a good life here.

Angelina's Experiences in Canada

In the 14 months she has been in Canada, Angelina has received a work permit and has applied to APEG (Association of Professional Engineers and Geo-scientists of BC). She still needs to provide four professional references but she has a friend who is willing to help her with the process. While waiting for the professional organization to review her credentials, she has been teaching Spanish. She has been an active member of the BCITP network here, willing to work with the BCITP staff to improve things for those professionals whose credentials have not yet been accepted. I asked her what she hoped to get from the APEG/BC. She replied that she wanted the ability to network for jobs and have discussions with fellow engineers.

Angelina's Concerns

Angelina wants her credentials recognized and to find a meaningful job. She is new here, doesn't have a professional network as she did at home. She says that with time passing, she may find she is losing some skills she did have and missing out on acquiring those skills, which might be new in her field. The "don't use it, lose it", syndrome is at work. Now all she can do is drop off resumes and wait for the process to work.

March, 2004

JENNY'S STORY

"Jenny" and her husband moved to Canada two years ago from a major city in the People's Republic of China. They originally moved to Vancouver and lived there for eight months before coming to Nanaimo.

Jenny's Education, Qualifications and Experience

Jenny completed high school and attended a post-secondary institution where she studied computer sciences for two years. Her post-secondary education in this field consisted of 35 hours per week for nine-month school years. In these classes she studied basic languages (for computers), theories, systems, and mathematics. After completion of her diploma she went to work at a bank where she worked as a programmer and designer. She then went to a software company where she also completed a baccalaureate degree in economics. Jenny worked a total of nine years, of which three were part-time while she completed her baccalaureate degree. She says her education and background are like software engineers in North America. Despite all her experience in designing, programming, and evaluating software, Jenny now works as a technical support person at an inbound call-centre making \$8.50/hour.

Jenny's experiences in Canada

You can hear the frustration in her voice as she outlines her story. She doesn't think this will help her find employment in her field' she says, but it might help others.

"I'm losing my skills," she says quietly, "if I don't get to work soon, I'll forget what I do know and I won't be keeping up with all the new things, too".

I ask her about the information she was given in China. She believes they were misled about employment. She feels they were given a priority for emigration because of their skills. No one told her that her credentials would not be enough. She didn't think she would have to prove herself, again. She did not believe it would be so difficult to get a job in her field. It is only because her husband sold his business in China that they have been able to support themselves here. Soon the money will run out and they might have to return to China, as some of their friends have. But, she loves Nanaimo and wants to stay here. They had spent eight months in Vancouver upon their arrival in Canada but Vancouver was experiencing a slow-down and they could find nothing in their fields. She says they sent out many resumes but no one answered. They thought to improve their English skills and Jenny enrolled in the MBA program here (jointly offered by Malaspina University-College and the University of Hereford). Having completed it and spent a lot of money on the tuition, Jenny finds herself no further ahead. She will start looking for jobs in management, to take advantage of her new MBA. Her husband, who was not interviewed for this project, faces similar problems. He has a baccalaureate in Science but works at another job.

Jenny's concerns

Jenny outlined several things that were problems. To start, she thinks a much more honest outline of job prospects should be given before immigrants leave their home countries. Having the qualifications is not enough, getting them recognized is much more important. She thinks that the government (not specified) should offer incentives to employers to hire new immigrants; something like a mentorship or internship, so immigrants can show their expertise even though their credentials have not been recognized. This would be even more important during slow-down economic periods or recessions. Jenny and her husband experienced that upon their arrival in Canada. People with time-dated skills (such as computer skills, or any skill set in a rapidly changing field) should have some place to practise the skills they do have and to stay abreast of changes in the field.

She also believes that the English classes need to focus on the language used in a particular field. What is needed is an orientation to the culture of that occupation in Canada and the language (or argot) of that discipline.

While Jenny is aware of her professional association (software association), she has not yet attempted to join. She expressed doubt as to that association's ability to offer any real help to her.

Jenny expressed concern that one of the reasons she had no luck with sending out resumes is that she could be easily identified as Chinese. She believes that there are

some people out there who still retain biases about non-Canadian immigrants and therefore, her resume might not even be read. She also wonders if the fact she is a female seeking a job in the computer field is a factor. In the meantime, Jenny continues to work at a job well below her skill level and looks for opportunities in her field.

JESSICA'S STORY

Jessica was born in Hungary but at the age of three months, she and her family were moved to Russia where they lived for ten years. Following that, her family moved to the Ukraine where she remained until 13 months ago.

Jessica met her husband when he was on a visit to the Ukraine. She obtained a visa to visit Canada and married him here. She's only been married for one year. She likes Nanaimo and wishes to remain here but she would like to be able to practice her nursing skills.

Jessica's Education, Qualifications and Experience

Jessica's basic education consisted of eleven years before she went to a "medical college" for two years to study nursing.

The nurse's training was in a hospital-based program of two years. A mix of theory, lab skills and practice were part of an integrated program. The academic year went from September to June or July, with approximately 35-40 hours a week scheduled. This did not include study time.

As with most nursing programs attached to hospitals, students supplied staff to the wards in addition to spending time in theory classes. During their training, students had experiences on medical, surgical, pediatric, and psychiatric wards. Jessica also spent some time on an obstetrical unit. (This corresponds to a hospital-based nursing program here in BC about thirty years ago.) The ratio of theory to practice was 60-40 the first year and 50-50 the second year.

Upon completion of the basic program, Jessica went to work in the hospital attached to the medical college. She spent eight years working on an E.N.T. unit (ear, nose and throat specialty). The system in place at the time required that, after five years of satisfactory work and continued study, nurse had to sit another examination to be qualified as a Level II nurse. This indicated she had acquired higher skills. A similar situation occurred after a further seven years of study and work. This meant, again, that she was judged to have reached a higher level of competence and knowledge.

Jessica spent eight years on the ENT ward before transferring to a hematology unit. It was there that she perfected skills in starting intravenous systems, drawing blood for treatment and other highly technical procedures.

Jessica has spent a total of ten years as a RN and is anxious for these skills to be recognized so she can start work.

Jessica's concerns

Jessica wants to stay in Nanaimo with her husband, but she says she needs to work. She anticipates that it will take her some time to complete all the processes before she can begin the registration process. She was uncertain just what she to do, but her biggest challenge at the moment is to improve her level of English language skills. She said she felt alone and wondered about other foreign-trained nurses and what they were doing. It seems she would benefit from a support group such as the BCITP group. She says that with others working together, perhaps they could accomplish more than one person working in isolation. She was referred to the BCITP.

PETER'S STORY

Peter and his family moved to Nanaimo eight months ago from Hong Kong. Peter says the family decision was based on the fact that he wanted his son to have a better life and become fluently bilingual in English as well as Cantonese. In fact, because the family spoke Cantonese rather than Mandarin it influenced their decision to come to Nanaimo. Peter says that his sister-in-law had lived here, although had since moved, and the Chinese community had many Cantonese speakers.

Peter's Education, Qualifications and Experiences

Peter went through a school system that was somewhat similar to the British one where students are "streamed" into a particular program based on their intended occupations. Following completion of high school, Peter went into a technical school where he first studied electrical engineering. The school was organized so that the four years combined theory with practice. At the end of that time, Peter received a "Higher Education Certificate". During the day, Peter worked in a clerical job, but for four or five evenings a week, ten months a year, Peter went to three hours of classes at night. The first three years Peter was in school, he worked in a clerical capacity during the day. During the third year, Peter was appointed Assistant Supervisor. The final year of the four years, Peter studied building services. Some of the work was related to wiring, junction boxes and fuses, but his interest was in moving stairs, pathways, escalators, etc.

After completion of the Higher Certificate, Peter worked for the Housing Department for two years. The second year he was promoted to Assistant Building Services Inspector Peter then took some time out to study engineering management. He completed a Bachelor's Degree with second class honours. The course work focussed on accounting, human resource management, operating systems, and manufacturing. Now he would be able to deal with much larger systems such as hospitals. He continued to work for the government but the practical training was now on air conditioning systems, security, fire service and pumping systems. He worked for the government spending six years as an Assistant Inspector.

Two years later he moved to Canada.

Peter's Experiences in Canada

Before emigrating, Peter had been told that his credentials might not be recognized as such in Canada. He describes himself as "basically a manager". He has the employment services at the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society. He has sent out many resumes without success. He did not know about the credential evaluation services in the Province.

He is presently enrolled in Level Four English classes with the possibility of returning to post-secondary school to take other academic classes. He says his interests lie in manufacturing and engineering.

Peter's Concerns

In upgrading his English language skills, Peter would like to have a better idea about the work culture in Canada. What is appropriate to do in certain situations? There are many such things in the workplace for which most immigrants, no matter their level of English comprehension, find different and baffling. In the meantime, Peter works hard at finding out about Canada.

MARIA'S STORY

Maria first came to Canada nine years ago for a visit to Alberta. After the visit, she returned home to Costa Rica where she lived and worked until she met her Canadian husband. After a big decision to leave her family and friends, she followed her husband to Nanaimo one year ago.

Maria's Education, Qualifications and Experiences

Maria's basic education consisted of 12 years in a system similar to Canadian education. After completing her high school years, she went on to University where she spent another four and one-half years. Her university seemed to be similar to Canadian structure, in which students spent three hours per week per course for a full four-to-six month semester. That structure was followed through two semesters a year for four years. There was a final six-month practicum where students worked in the school system teaching within their areas of expertise.

Maria's area of specialty in her teaching degree was with computers and the application of computers in the schools. She acquired the skills not only to teach computer use to students but her proficiency led her to teach other teachers how to use computers as a

learning tool. In fact, Maria was part of a pilot program, where the best students were selected to begin teaching after three years in the four-year program.

Maria continued with her education at a second university for another three and one-half years, earning what she describes as equivalent to a Master's degree. Her qualification was called "licenciatura". There is no Canadian equivalent.

Maria's experiences in Canada

Maria has been in Nanaimo for one year but only commenced ESL classes two months ago. She believes her English language skills are quite good because English was part of her curriculum at school. She is not particularly happy in the present classes and thinks she might not go any further after her term ends in two months. She perceives that the classes are structured more to meet the needs of the South East Asian students who form much of the class.

Maria has approached the BC College of Teachers to have her teaching credentials approved. Despite her advanced education, a total of eight years, she has been told that she needs a Master's degree in order to teach here in BC these days. While she has produced her documents from Costa Rica, she is told she must now pay to have them professionally translated. In addition, she must take an English 12 level and two Canadian content courses (Canadian History and Women's Studies).

Maria's concerns

Maria is anxious to begin work and earn money. The hurdles that have been set for her are frustrating and somewhat demeaning. Her spoken English is quite good and she seems to feel they make her easily understood by Canadians. The classes do not allow her to proceed as rapidly as she would like and they seem geared more for the younger students from South East Asia. She believes that at this rate, it will take another three years to do everything and that is too long for her.

In the meantime, Maria teaches Spanish classes in her home.

Maria says she feels unfairly treated, as she believes the Canadian educational system is not as good as that of Costa Rica and yet she is expected to do so much more before she can get certified by the College of Teachers.

On a more personal note, Maria misses the comforting rituals of her faith and how that faith is part of everyday life in Costa Rica. Yes, she can go to church, but it is not the same.

She sums up her mood by saying, "All I study is for nothing!"

NINA'S STORY

Nina had been a nurse in Germany for 28 years before coming to Canada in 1995. She and her husband moved first to the Sunshine Coast where they spent three years before moving to Nanaimo. She and her husband expressed a desire to stay in Nanaimo but despaired of Nina ever being able to work as a RN.

Nina's Education, Qualifications and Experience

After completing high school, Nina went into a three-year nursing program. The program was a combination of theory and practice. Students spent 40+ hours a week in classes, labs, and clinical practice. They worked six days a week spending the first year in mainly class and clinical settings. The second year was about 20/80 for theory and clinical practice and the final year, while still including some theory components, was spent mainly in clinical practice.

Upon graduation, Nina went to work mainly on medical wards, becoming a head nurse on one unit. She also worked within a small emergency setting where critical care skills were honed. There she prepared patients for invasive procedures such as endoscopy tests, phlebotomies (blood for testing), conducted 12-lead ECG's, used defibrillators and started intravenous lines. These experiences made her a desirable immigrant when critical nurses in BC were at a premium.

Nina's Experiences in Canada

Nina was proud of her background, so it came as a shock to find she couldn't practice in BC unless she achieved credential approval and registration with RNABC, the regulating body for nurses.

She first applied to RNABC in 2000. She was told to have her documents forwarded from Germany and translated into English. That process took two years. When she checked at that time she was told that RNABC had not received her documents. However, her nursing school told her, that the documents had been mailed back after four months.

In 2002, she again asked her school in Germany to forward the material and it reached RNABC in August 2002. It was then she discovered that her transcripts and grades had been received but no accompanying (translated) letter regarding hours of practice and theory hours had been sent. The letter had to be formally translated and that was finally completed in December 2002.

Finally, by February 2003, she was told that she had a two-year time limit to complete a graduate nurse re-entry program, write the licensing exam and achieve a TOEFL score of 575.

Nina's Concerns

Nina, with her husband's help, described her efforts to work again as a nurse. She hasn't worked as a registered nurse for nine years now and is concerned she may never get to do so again. She has found she cannot work as a care- aide in Intermediate or Long Term Care settings. She cannot work as a Homemaker either. What she has been doing for three years is private-duty nursing, including some homemaker skills, but she cannot even call herself a registered nurse.

The embassy in Bonn told Nina she would have no trouble getting a job in Canada. That has not been the case.

Here she is a woman, with an extensive experience in nursing, who cannot make use of her skills. She describes the frustration of dealing with RNABC and her school when it takes so long just to get the documents reviewed. She wonders if RNABC lost her first set of documents and wonders why RNABC didn't let her know they had not received her paperwork. She wonders why the process is complicated. She says, if they would only just let her show them what she can do.

She even approached Malaspina University-College, Nursing department, to seek help there. Fortunately, the faculty member who spoke with her did speak German so it was somewhat easier to get information. She was encouraged by TOEFL test, take and pay for the graduate nurse re-entry program, she would have spent a fortune and taken years. The information, which indicated all, she had to do was take the TOEFL Test and complete the graduate nurse re-entry program. Nina decided not to enroll. She says the cost of all the steps are prohibitive; by the time she has credentials evaluated, translated, taken the required English Language classes and the After speaking with both husband and wife, it is clear that this is a most frustrating experience.

RICARDO'S STORY

Ricardo was born and raised in a Latin-American country where he acquired skills and knowledge in several fields. Those skills made it possible for him to immigrate to Canada using the point system even though his marriage to a Canadian woman would have helped him to apply for Landed Immigrant status. Ricardo came to Canada in 1999 with his Canadian wife, settling first in Vancouver and later moving to Nanaimo. Ricardo proudly became a Canadian citizen in April.

Ricardo's Education, Qualifications and Experience

The educational system in his home country is arranged so students make a decision at an early age whether they will go into an academic or trades stream. So, for grades 9-12, Ricardo completed high school requirements at the same time as learning to become an electromechanical engineer in a construction setting. The classes consisted of 40-hour weeks, and were arranged so there was a progression from more theory to practice to more practice than theory over the course of three years. From a preponderance of theory in the first year (simulated practices were part of that) to a heavy focus of practice in the third year and a final six-month practicum, Ricardo received a Diploma as an electromechanical technician.

In addition, Ricardo completed another year of schooling with a specialty of industrial engineering. He worked for two years as a mechanical engineer.

After five years in the work force, Ricardo decided he needed a change. His mother is a lawyer and his father an accountant, so he believed he would prefer to work as a "white-collar" worker. He enrolled in Law school and spent three years there. He describes the

hours of study in Law school in a comparable academic year as Canadian universities. By that, he meant that he carried a course load of three-hours per week of all four classes in a two-semester system covering ten months. He supplemented his income during this time by working as a salesman. By the end of the third year, Ricardo was working as a paralegal.

Along the way he met and married a Canadian of Scottish descent and followed her here to Canada.

Ricardo's experiences in Canada

Although Ricardo has been in Canada since 1999, he has not yet submitted any of his documents to be reviewed. He says that his first responsibility was to find employment in any field so as to provide for himself and his wife. However, he believes that there will be some bias or prejudice in the process because he experiences that now. He is presently working as a warehouseman and has applied three times for a supervisor's job. He has been passed over three times, each time for a different "reason". The first time he applied, the job went to someone with less seniority but the person had a more friendly relationship with management. The second time he was passed over, it was when the company was doing business with an International firm. He was actually doing the work required in that position and he was often called in to translate for the transactions. He, also, managed the translation when the correspondence was by e-mail. He remembers that the manager sounded surprised when he showed his computer literacy skills. Management even made a comment, "Oh! Do you know how to use computers?" He says he felt that they had assumed that, because he was an immigrant from a Latin American country, he wouldn't know how to operate a computer, never mind being highly skilled with one. Despite his assistance with the project, he was not awarded the position. That was two years ago.

His third and last application was denied. He was given some reasons, but he says he doesn't think they were honest ones. Perhaps bias or jealousy was behind it. This company of 70-80 employees has a number of skilled immigrants working there but all of them are employed in "the less skilled areas".

Ricardo's Concerns

Ricardo frustration with the system is evident. He wants his credentials recognized. He asks for the opportunity to demonstrate the skills he does have. He says he could show them what he could do if they would only let him.

Despite a very good command of the English language, he believes he needs more language classes. He needs the kind of course that deals more with the workplace "language", he says. He also believes that some kind of "cultural orientation" would have helped him. To know if something is appropriate or not in work settings would be useful. The cultural norms (the etiquette of the work place) need to be taught to immigrants, he believes.

In his opinion, the system doesn't work very well and immigrants are frustrated and angry when they are caught in it.

Despite some setbacks, Ricardo remains enthused about living and working in Nanaimo.

Appendix F: Employer Responses

Employer Number 1

Date

1. This employer is in the post-secondary education business. There are approximately 1400 employees.
2. There is great diversity in the types of jobs found in this employer. There are teachers/faculty, technicians (computer, lab science,) clerical support, tradesmen, managers, and executives.
3. The personnel department displays about 60 postings a month. Because the employer has a “union shop”, postings are often filled with part-time or casual employees. There is no real tracking of types of employees and whether there will be shortages in the future. They believe that there is an aging worker population that will retire (Particularly in the Trades Department) and leave major vacancies in the institution. They are working on a plan to have the faculty as diverse as the student population. They believe that there should be enough role models within the faculty for most students to be able to emulate.
4. There is no way to determine the number of skilled immigrants on staff, without a file review of all employees. This is not feasible. Hiring policies forbid asking questions related to diversity.
5. Skilled immigrants do apply there but are treated like all others. Whatever the department requires for that job, all applicants must have.
6. English language skills pose the greatest barriers to employment, especially within faculty hiring. Students must be able to understand faculty. Within departments, recruiters have a tendency to hire “like” individuals to fit into departments. Personnel are working to encourage diversity.
7. There are no further strategies for recruitment other than above.
8. The personnel department will work with hiring committees to educate them about diversified hiring. The respondent believes they will have to initiate some aggressive recruiting strategies to fill some positions.

Employer Number 2

Date

1. This company is a family business that was started in 1911. It has been located on its present site since 1962. There are presently three branches of the company but the bulk of employees are at the Nanaimo plant. There is another plant in Kalama, Washington. This company builds heavy machinery for use in industries such as logging, etc. Depending on both local and global economy, the work force can be 150-250. This is for all three sites. At the Nanaimo site, the workforce is about 125-175; they retain a “core” section here.
2. The workforce consists of steel fabricators, welders, professional engineers, truck assemblers, machinists, support staff (accounting, purchasing), partsman, warehouseman, heavy duty equipment mechanics, manufacturing and technical

managers, engineering technicians (function much like millwrights), and production supervisors.

3. At this time, the company has one job opening, for a steel fabricator. The company receives 6-10 unsolicited resumes on a weekly basis. The company is a “union shop”, so it hires those with the appropriate TQ’s and prefers applicants who have had experience. The six technicians are graduates of two-year programs from BCIT and Camosun with AUTOCAD skill sets. The company hires from Malaspina University-College trades programs: There are welders, steel fabricators, heavy equipment operators and mechanics. What may have been considered semi-skilled positions in the past now require apprenticeship periods. It takes four years to become a partsman. The warehouseman’s course takes three years plus another year for specific occupations. The respondent does not see any shortages in the immediate future.
4. There are a few skilled immigrants presently working for the company. They have had applications from immigrants from Russia, other Eastern European countries and a few from S. Africa and China.
5. The company is unable to say how many skilled immigrants apply for jobs.
6. The barriers for employment are primarily the English language skills, and getting credentials recognized in BC. Immigrants have trouble with the “cultural context” of the workplace.
7. While there are no “in-house” programs for attracting new workers, the company supports apprenticeships. There are fewer apprentices now to replace aging workers but the company still doesn’t anticipate major shortages because this location (Vancouver Island) is considered an attractive place to work.
8. The respondent said that an improved business climate would have an impact on their hiring opportunities.

Employer Number 3

Date

1. This company is a dynamic one that makes specialized machinery and robotic machines. They are known for their hi-tech creative projects. They currently employ 35 people but that number will increase to 42 in the next little while. Their workforce fluctuates depending on the size or number of projects they undertake.
2. Employees can be engineers (mechanical, electrical, etc.), technicians (who have some form of certification) and technologists (who generally have more than a two-year diploma) from various fields. There is one sales/marketing person, manager/owners, and an accountant, a parts/inventory control person and some support staff.
3. At present they are looking for three employees. They recruit when they need specific skill-sets for a project. The respondent described their needs as, “peaks and valleys”. At times has trouble getting a person for electronic assembly work. They need a parts/inventory person and an accountant Respondent says it is harder to find good semi-skilled and unskilled people. They do keep resumes on file for a while.
4. They have had skilled immigrants in the past, with people coming predominately from Russia, Croatia, China (Electrical engineer) and the UK. What makes it easier

for this business to employ such a wide range of immigrants is that they do not insist on the employee's credentials be recognized here. Their philosophy is that if you can do the work, the paperwork doesn't matter. There are currently two immigrants working for them.

5. The firm receives about 6-8 applications a year from skilled immigrants. They apply for anything related to the specific project's needs. He suggests that they'd be better off getting an MBA and using the time studying for that to bring up English language skills.
6. Barriers include English language skills, both written and verbal. Another area of concern is the "cultural piece" of that profession. He cites examples of immigrants not wishing to "speak out" even though it would be appropriate to do so. Another point our respondent wanted to make was related to the "red tape" of trying to hire foreign nationals. An applicant they particularly wanted to hire was here on a student visa. The man had a background with electronics, designing electrical and mechanical systems and network systems. When the company asked to hire him, federal agencies denied the request. The applicant had to leave the country, apply for admission, and then he could work. The respondent suggested that the prevailing fear of "taking jobs from Canadians" was a "party line" but not based in reality. Another issue was related to the types of resumes the company sees from applicants. "Cookie-cutter" resumes won't catch his eye, but one that show-cases the applicants abilities and accomplishments is more useful than a list of previous employers
7. The company has no present plans to deal with shortages but strives to keep its employees employed.
8. No other comments.

Employer Number 4

Date

1. This is a municipality with approximately 450-500 employees. It provides all essential services such as water, sewer, roads, waste management, building inspection, etc.
2. Workforce consists of professionals (engineers, etc.) technicians, tradespeople (about ten different trades categories), unskilled workers, clerical and other support staff, and managers. The respondent indicated that there were many clerical (entry level) positions.
3. There are about 80-100 competitions for any of the very varied jobs in an average year. Most of these are filled from within from the existing staff of part-time or casual workers. All positions are union positions and hiring practises are described in the collective agreement.
4. She was unable to answer the question because of hiring practises that do not permit the asking of any questions related to identifying characteristics such as ethnic background or race.
5. Unable to respond.

6. Barriers to employment for skilled immigrants, other than English language skills, are the things that are known by Canadians such as EI programs, WCB regulations and others.
7. No plans for shortages as none presently anticipated.
8. No response

Employer Number 5

Date

1. This employer is an inbound call Centre that services Microsoft technical support and MCI customer service. It employs between 1200-1400 people.
2. Of the 1200-1400 employees, about 1000 are “entry-level” positions. Employees must be able to type 30 words/minute, have excellent (and preferably non-accented) communication skills, demonstrate a responsible work ethic, provide sales and customer service, handle shift work (since the centre is providing service 24/7), and be adaptable to change. Supervisory staff is chosen from within. Positions include trainers, IT personnel, analysts, and managers.
3. The firm does have some skilled immigrants on staff but none working in other than entry- level positions. Employment may be difficult for immigrants because of the English language skill level required. Customers may become frustrated if they cannot comprehend the speaker. There is also a perception of bias from some customers.
4. There are presently five skill immigrants working for the company. There may be more but if they have unaccented English they would not be noticeable to the respondent.
5. It is unknown how many skilled immigrants send in resumes for positions but the respondent suggested that the company would like more.
6. The problems of English language proficiency came up as a barrier. In addition, there are cultural differences, which might manifest themselves and make it hard for the employee to perform as other do in the Centre.
7. The company recruits frequently. It is seen as an entry- level job and many young Canadians use employment there as a stepping stone to other employers. The respondent felt that there had been an attitude shift and there is no longer a strong work ethic. People will just choose not to show up for work and not bother to let the employer know. Others quit without telling anyone of their decision.
8. Respondent is not sure what programs are needed. They have high turnover of staff. They recruit from high schools and Malaspina University-College.

Employer Number 6

Date

1. The employer is a public sector health care provider. The area of responsibility covers from Duncan to Port Hardy and the West Coast of Vancouver Island. There are 16,000 employees in the entire region of Vancouver Island Health Authority and between 7,000 and 9,000 in this sector (Duncan to Port hardy).
2. The workforce for this region contains physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dieticians, pharmacists, various lab technicians, managers,

IT personnel, trades people, clerical, etc. See Appendix for total list. Any of the “skilled” worker categories must have BC license or certification in order to work here.

3. Despite all the press suggesting a shortage of nurses, VIHA has no open positions for nurses. The respondent said that even the new graduates from Malaspina's nursing program would have to look elsewhere in the province or the United States for work. There are some shortages in staffing for physiotherapists and pharmacists, but most positions can be filled locally. If there are changes to the health system as a result of increased funding, then shortages may occur.
4. There are a number of skilled immigrants working within the region, but no statistics are kept. She believes there are between 10-20 skilled immigrants employed. The respondent was recalling anecdotal evidence to support the number quoted. She recalls that pharmacy and occupational therapy are two departments with skilled immigrants.
5. It is impossible to determine the number of applications from skilled immigrants since no screening or identifying information is used in the hiring process. The institution receives between 20-100 unsolicited applications every day. Some applications do not identify what area/ program they wish to be considered for. Many say, “Anything!” If a resume or job application is brought in person, staff tries to guide people through the process.
6. The single biggest barrier for skilled immigrants is that of English language proficiency. The employer has had functional illiterates on staff over the years. Some of these have been immigrants who managed their jobs very well and the problem was not noticed for some time. Understanding Canadian culture, especially in the health care sector, requires a good grasp of the language and the norms or “cultural piece” of any industry. The respondent described it as a “cultural lag”.
7. The organization draws from Malaspina's programs such as Medical Office Assistant, Mental Health Worker, Practical Nursing and BSN graduates. The job situation is “Flexible” with peaks and valleys repeating itself over time. A change in management will play a part in the retention of employees. Most recently, as of March 31, 2004, 90 registered nurses retired. The baby boom population bulge will affect ability to fill positions as this population retires.
8. This question was referred to a more senior personnel manager.
9. The respondent would like to see much less “red tape” for those nurses here on a special work visa. The annual renewal process is cumbersome.

Employer Number 7

Date

1. This publicly funded educational system is the largest employer in the region with a staff of 2,100.
2. Employees consist of professionals (teachers), 15 technicians (mainly IT and maintenance), tradesmen, and Occupational Health and Safety people.
3. There are no teacher vacancies at this time. Despite reports of a teacher shortage, this is not true for this area at this time. The district had laid off many staff as a result of the funding restrictions currently facing education. This is a desirable place to live. Some positions are hard to fill; they include specialty teachers (Trades,

Home Economics, Business, and Languages) and IT specialists. They may face shortages with support staff such as educational support and clerical.

4. The respondent was unable to identify the number of skilled immigrants employed. There has been no effort to recruit skilled immigrants because of the surfeit of applicants. The employer is trying to have better representation of staff from the First Nations communities so as to reflect the cultural mix in the schools.
5. There is no way to measure the number of skilled immigrants who apply for work. Since the professional staff and the maintenance (trades) staff must have recognized credentials, that would be the most significant factor in hiring. For all positions, people call in at the district office or search the employers web-site.
6. The respondent sees no real barriers for skilled immigrants once they have been granted Landed Immigrant or Citizenship status and their credentials have been recognized.
7. The plans devised three years ago to address the potential problem of labour shortages in the profession have an ironic twist. This district has no trouble filling positions from the pool of teachers/staff because recent retrenchment in government funding has meant many layoffs. There are enough people on the part-time/casual call list to fill almost anything in staffing vacancies. This part of the province is considered an attractive site to live and work. The exceptions would be the specialized professional identifies above.
8. No particular plans are in place to address shortages. See above. Applicants are referred to the Student Learning Booklet available on the web-site for information.

Employer Number 8

Date

1. This company provides trophies and giftware. There are seven employees. One Manager, three engravers, and three assembly- line workers.
2. The engravers need expertise in computer graphics as the machines do the engraving. Some engraving is done by hand.
3. There are no staff vacancies at this time. They do not anticipate seen now or in the immediate future. If they need to they hire college students with computer skills and complete on-the-job-training.
4. No skilled immigrants are working there.
5. In the past year, no skilled immigrant has applied for work.
6. The barriers for immigrants are English language skills.
7. No plans for anything special to ensure sufficient workers.
8. While this employer has not used any hiring programs, he would consider mentoring or job-shadowing programs.

Employer Number 9

Date

1. Computer school. Uses four facilitators to teach classes. Has two computer technicians on staff as well as two people with management skills. There is also the owner.

2. All employees are skilled workers. Must have demonstrated computer skills.
3. Hiring usually done within the skilled graduates of the program. At the moment has no need of staff. However, because the business changes with demands for courses, more staff could be needed.
4. Has no immigrants working there at present.
5. Has had applications and has hired a skilled immigrant- a technician facilitator.
6. English Language skills and cultural differences are cited as barriers for skilled immigrants.
7. Has no plans in place, will hire as and when needed.
8. No comment.

Employer Number 10

Date

1. Heat pumps, air conditioning. Sales and service, installation and repairs. Does mostly commercial and industrial.
2. Presently has seven technicians, three support staff and one manager. All technicians must have Refrigeration and Air Conditioning TQ's (Trades qualifications) and a Gas TQ.
3. Staff averages around ten but goes up depending on volume. Business is good at present and no shortages are foreseen.
4. Has no skilled immigrants working.
5. In the last ten years, perhaps two skilled immigrants have applied (one from India, another from Asia) for technician jobs. He, "passed them on to the right place." Thought it was the Department of Labour. He said, while they were qualified, they didn't have the recognized TQ's. There is a six-year apprenticeship program but wages are about \$45+/hour.
6. All hiring done through the Union Hall for journeymen. He has no choice, he must take the next on the union's list. If none available, allowed to go to BCIT grads or the Union Training School. Must be certified like everyone else.
7. If more workers needed, we'll be in trouble as only 15-20 apprentices a year graduate.
8. Having more apprentices would help. Does "mentoring" now with support staff.

Employer Number 11

Date

1. This company business is for Installation, maintenance of heating units; wood stoves, gas fireplaces, and barbecues. There are a total of six skilled and semi-skilled employees.
2. The firm consists of an owner/manager, a skilled technician who runs the office and four other technicians.
3. Have all staff needed at present. Does expect some shortages in the next 10-15 years with gas fitters and heating/ventilation/air conditioning technicians.
4. Does have a skilled immigrant working for the firm. He was gas fitter from the UK who challenged the provincial exams and was successful. This was relatively easy since this person had English as his first language.

5. The company has not had applicants recently. Did have one man apply (From an African Nation) who went out with a technician and was able to put materials together and take them apart. At the end of the day, he asked what the machine was used for: It was a heater. He knew machinery, but there was a cultural piece missing.
6. Dealing with people in their own homes requires a good command of the language. Therefore, immigrants may have language difficulties in addition to the “cultural context” of the business as evidenced by the anecdote above. Another issue would be to get the provincial Trade Ticket (TQ). One would have to write exams etc. Even journeymen with appropriate trade tickets from other provinces would not be able to work without having their credentials assessed and written the exams. There is no interprovincial certification in this trade at present.
7. This employer would be willing to look at programs that facilitated entry into the work force. A junior technician who needed to upgrade his license would be considered.
8. Would consider mentoring someone whose command of English wasn't perfect, as long as he/she had the qualifications.
9. Malaspina University-College has a course in Duncan that teaches Appliance Repair with a “gas component”. Students graduating from that course (approximately one year course) can get a limited license. They are then indentured to a “shop” for a two-year apprenticeship under the direction of a journeyman. This company has hired Malaspina students from that course.

Employer Number 12

Date

This firm is a scheduled and chartered airline with approximately 30 employees. Employees consist of pilots, aviation engineers, licensed airplane mechanics, customer service agents, managers.

1. There are eight pilots who require 8,200 flying hours and must be Canada Transport certified. That is true for the mechanics who service the planes. Customer Services agents must have excellent communication skills and a familiarity with the aviation industry. Computer skills are needed also. The firm has an accountant.
2. Has no need of staff at present except for a newly created position “Check-in assistant”. The workforce there is very stable except perhaps for pilots. Lots apply to work and view the firm as a “stepping stone” to other larger craft and companies. (It builds flying hours. 250 hours required for commercial license and a further 500 hours on floatplanes before pilots can fly for them.) The firm is still growing as more people move to Vancouver Island.
3. There are no skilled immigrants working for them at present
4. They receive 2-3 e-mails a year from immigrants seeking employment, but since all skilled staff requires certification, these are referred elsewhere.
5. Anyone in the airline industry needs to have excellent English skills. Other barriers are those related to certification issues. The number of flying hours (at about \$90/hour) plus the cost of exams, Transport Canada requirements, etc. usually provide strong financial barriers.
6. Because they have a stable workforce, with only occasional vacancies in the summer months (bulk of business done then), they do not expect any shortages.
7. No comments

Employer Number 13**Date**

1. The business is a dealer for Volvo trucks (large semi's and dump trucks,) medium duty GMC trucks, which operate out of three branches in Duncan, Nanaimo, and Port Alberni. They sell parts for and repair all large trucks and equipment. There are approximately 50 employees, the majority of which are heavy-duty mechanics (journeymen and apprentices) and 15 partsmen.
2. The company is a family company and as such, most management of the company is shareholders and other family members. There is a small clerical staff, about 20 heavy-duty mechanics and 15 partsmen.
3. There are no vacancies at the moment but there could be shortages in the future for competent well-trained heavy-duty mechanics.
4. None
5. They do not keep track of job applicants are immigrants or not. Immigrants would be considered equally with anyone else.
6. Education, training and ability can be barriers for skilled immigrants.
7. No plans in place.
8. No response.

Employer Number 14**Date**

1. The company supplies paint and industrial plastics such as marine paint, laminating services.
2. This is a small business with a staff of seven, which includes the franchise owner. He has two fabricators who must have CAD skills. One employee has basic furniture- making skills, also. He has an accountant, a manager, a shipper/receiver and four sales/support staff.
3. At present has all the staff he needs and he doesn't anticipate any shortages.
4. He has no skilled immigrants working for him
5. He occasionally receives job applications from skilled immigrants.
6. The single biggest barrier is related to English competency.
7. He promotes from within and has no program in place to address shortages.
8. He is open to training programs.
9. He thinks applicants should be quick and eager to learn.

Employer Number 15**Date**

1. Retirement Community. It is licensed for Levels I, II, III, and Special Care (using the old categories). There is space for 120 apartments and 36 in-care units. The place strives to provide an “home atmosphere” and requires that all residents be essentially healthy. They may use assisted walking devices (walkers) but cannot require any other assistance. Those in the Special Care unit do require some basic assistance but anyone bedridden must be moved to an Extended Care Unit.
2. The business has a total of 72 staff in a variety of jobs. There is one Manager, one Care Coordinator, an RN on every shift, and eight excluded (management personnel) staff. The Care Unit is staffed by 5 Resident Care Aides over a 24 hour period. A Gold Seal chef runs the kitchen and all dining room personnel are trained as per the hospitality industry. There is a maintenance man who manages the housekeeping department. Housekeepers are trained on the job. In addition, there are laundry workers and other typical Seniors-type caregivers. Some staff are unionized (HEU) and some non-union.
3. There are currently no openings for new staff. There is potential shortage of RNs (most in 40-50's) as retirement approaches.
4. There are currently three immigrants on staff but these are in entry-level positions.
5. The business receives many unsolicited resumes for entry-level positions. Some say, under the heading of “Job Applied For”, write “anything”. They receive many from high school students. It is unclear how many applicants are skilled immigrants.
6. Due to the composition of the residents (mostly aged Canadians from European backgrounds), there is a requirement for non-accented English speakers. Accents make it much more difficult for the elderly to understand the speaker. In addition, there may be some level of bias from residents who were raised with earlier values about culture and race. It may be seen that some elderly are less tolerant about being understood by a speaker whose first language is not English. Some humour may not be appreciated either. This means that a cultural orientation would be essential for any skilled immigrants waiting to apply.
7. At present, no plans are in place to deal with any shortages.
8. A cross-cultural forum would be essential for any immigrant wanting to work here.

Employer Number 16

Date

1. This business is a part of the hospitality industry with a variety of skill sets being used. There are about 80-100 staff employed, some part-time or casual and some full-time.
2. Some jobs require diplomas while others may be trained on the job or have trades qualifications. The actual breakdown of jobs is not available but include food and beverage workers, serving staff, housekeepers, front desk (customer service representatives), electrician and carpenter. The majority of jobs start with unskilled workers who are trained on the job. Many arrive with previous experience and require little training. However, all staff must have excellent interpersonal skills.
3. While the company has a very stable work force, there remain some vacancies in some departments. This is a year-round occurrence. Given the mean age of their

workforce, they anticipate that some of the staff, who has been with a long time, may reach retirement age in the next few years.

4. They do have immigrants working for them. The majority of these are in entry-level positions. One has been with them for 15 years. The Food and Beverage Director is a skilled immigrant.
5. The hotel receives an average of five unsolicited resumes a day. Some are for specific jobs but many applications say, "anything".
6. Barriers for skilled immigrants remain the usual ones of English language skills and cultural differences.
7. There are no plans in place. However, they see people using private language schools in addition to the English classes taught at Malaspina and CVMIS. Certainly having a more adept use of English helps people move on to managerial positions. Their expectation of English proficiency depends on the position they are trying to fill.
8. The respondent believes that other hotels in the region would have similar staffing patterns.

Employer Number 17

Date

1. This employer is an independent family-based retail grocery chain with 18 stores across Vancouver Island and into the Lower Mainland. There are a total of 3,200 employees.
2. The workforce consists of customer service (or front-end) workers in bakery, meat, floral, seafood, grocery, produce departments and cashiers. These positions are entry-level jobs and the company trains on the job. Some employees may have taken classes in baking, meat cutting, or floral arranging. The company has an in-house program that all meat cutters go through. The company has a partnership with Malaspina University-College with in-house apprenticeships for the bakers on staff. Most employees start at entry-level positions except for specialized jobs such as pharmacists or the chef at the test kitchens. There are also positions within head office such as marketing, advertising, buyers, warehouse personnel, and IT staff. Store managers usually have been promoted from within. Other management comes from family members. This company has a very stable workforce with low turnover rates. All store hiring is done on site not through the head office except for the managers.
3. Most stores have all the staff needed for now and receive lots of applications. The only vacancy is for the Health Shelf. This needs someone who is knowledgeable about health food products, vitamins, supplements, etc. The most difficult positions to fill recently have been pharmacists as there is a real Canadian shortage. Otherwise the company does not expect there to be shortages. The other factor to consider in staffing would be the vagaries of the labour market overall.
4. There are a number of skilled immigrants working for the company. One notable is the Marketing Director. The company does receive applications from some very highly educated people, both domestic and immigrant. The recruiter believes that staffing should be representative of the community in which the store is based. The company values diversity and tries to encourage that within the system.

5. It is impossible to single out the skilled immigrant resume from any others. Since the tendency of the company to train and promote from within almost everyone comes in at entry-level.
6. The most obvious barrier for some immigrants would be the level/ability of the English language. Occasionally, the “cultural context” as it relates to the retail industry could be a problem.
7. The company already has the “*****College” to train managers from within, as well as the arrangement with a post-secondary institution to prepare bakers. Anything else that is needed can be developed “within house”.
8. See above.

Employer Number 18

Date

1. This company provides live shellfish for import and export. There is a plant staff of 15. The company works with First Nation’s people (300+) and Asians (50+) who do the actual collection.
2. The company employs management, professionals, technicians (Aquaculture technicians), trades and unskilled workers.
3. This firm has hired a number of skilled immigrants. The owner is from Mexico, the salesman from Lebanon and there have been employees from Vietnam and China.
4. There are no skilled immigrants working below their skill level.
5. Many immigrants apply for work with this company. They have had experience in aquaculture mainly.
6. The biggest barrier for immigrants is that of English language skills.
7. While the company would like to hire more multilingual sales people, they foresee no real shortages of workers.
8. From what they have seen of the Vietnamese community, the main problem they experience is related to English language competence. More than that, it is all the things small business owners need to know. If they don’t have a good grasp of English, ” they have continual problems with the government) for one) in the ever long paper trail. WCB, Revenue Canada, GST, PST, EI and all the rest.” “All become stumbling blocks. If each of these communities (immigrant groups) had a contact-interpreter that understood small businesses- taxes and the above aforementioned, that these people could turn to to help them understand and translate, life would be much easier for them”.

Employer Number 19

Date

1. This company provides Internet and broadband services, web designing, and collocations. They have a total of 14 employees.
2. There is technical support, customer service, engineers, and a programmer and designer. They anticipate they may need another programmer.
3. The firm has all the staff required for now. They do not foresee any shortages in the immediate future.
4. At this time they do have a skilled immigrant working for them. He is their senior web designer and is a very creative person.

5. The company receives approximately 200 unsolicited resumes a year. When looking for new staff, the company hires new high school graduates. Their youngest employee is 14. They prefer people with experience. If skilled immigrants apply, the respondent suggests that the length of time since the computer skills were used would be a factor in hiring.
6. Present barriers for skilled immigrants might be their ability to communicate with customers. Excellent English skills are required for customer support and technical help. Their employees need to be able to give assistance by phone and in person. This employer would want to know the working conditions in the immigrant's home country to see if they would be able to work for this company.
7. Given the nature of this field, there is a certain amount of protectionism and jealousy, which impacts any planning that, might take place.
8. This company would be open to initiatives but these must be realistic.

Employer Number 20

Date

1. This company supplies industrial asphalt and concrete paving. The staff consists of 15 general labourers, 25 skilled labourers, 10 cement finishers, 10 Heavy Equipment Operators, two quality control lab technicians, six office support staff and five others who work as sales people and in management.
2. This company has seasonal work so they are preparing to hire for the summer. They anticipate shortages in all of the skill sets. One factor is the difficulties of the job. "Nobody wants to do this sort of work anymore."
3. No skilled immigrants work here.
4. No one working below his/her skill level.
5. They do not get applications from skilled immigrants.
6. The biggest challenge is in English language skills. Unfortunately we will need to increase immigration in order to fill job openings now and in the future.
7. Anticipate shortages. (See above)
8. The company hires union and non-union workers. They want to see more apprentices in these trades.
9. The biggest factor in getting a job is the "right attitude".

Employer Number 21

Date

1. This federal department manages the hiring for all civil service jobs. The Pacific Biological Station is one of 20 federal departments employing thousands of people in all areas including professional, administrative, technical, informatics, clerical and labour positions.
2. The PSC has all types of occupations listed.
3. Most departments do employ skilled immigrants in all areas. The majority of immigrants seem to be concentrated in the scientific and technical fields. This is so for the research facility in Nanaimo.
4. The respondent did not know of any specific examples of skilled immigrants working below their qualifications but thought it was bound to exist. One of the goals of the

federal government under the Employment Equity Act is to ensure that visible minorities (who would be immigrants in some cases) have opportunities for advancement.

5. As the recruitment agency for the federal government, the Public Service Commission receives enquiries [sic] from skilled immigrants on a weekly basis. The enquiries [sic] focus mainly on scientific and technical opportunities but we do receive many enquiries [sic] from immigrants regarding clerical and labour jobs. Received 600 applications for 11 jobs here.
6. The two main barriers for immigrants are; not possessing Canadian citizenship and a lack of related experience in the field of interest. Our jobs are very competitive so applicants must possess all of the education and experience required for the position to be invited for an interview.
7. We are anticipating shortages in most areas, particularly trades and labour positions. There will be a need for skilled workers at the higher level of management once retirements start to take place in greater numbers.
8. We do continual outreach to promote the Government of Canada as an employer and to provide to members of the public with information on available career opportunities. Most doing this planning is always a challenge but this is the critical piece for federal departments to ensure that they are able to address staffing needs.
9. Departments engage in Human resources planning to determine future needs and to develop a plan to address those needs.
10. One of the biggest mistakes applicants make is to submit a generic resume to every position applied for. This has the result, in almost every case, of the applicant being screened out of the competition because he/she did not address the requirements of the position. It may be that the individual has the experience or education required for the job, but if this is not clearly addressed the application does not receive further consideration. I would recommend that anyone in your target population that are actively in job seeking ensuring they know what is expected of them when submitting job applications.
11. As mentioned above, Canadian citizenship is an important factor in gaining employment with the federal government. Preference is always given to Canadian citizens and it is rare that a non-Canadian would be considered.

Employer Number 22

Date

1. Automobile dealership with sales, parts, repairs, body shop departments. There are 75 employees.
2. The workforce consists of 18 sales people, 15 mechanics/technicians, 6 body painters, 8.4 clerical staff, 10 managers of various departments, 16 unskilled/semi-skilled workers (drivers, delivery service, car washers) a parts-man and senior management.
3. There are no vacancies at this point but there could be shortages in body shop workers, technicians, and mechanics within five to ten years. The biggest problem is in finding good young sales people who are competitive and productive and who stay around long enough to become sales managers.

4. There are no skilled immigrants working for this company but the respondent said he felt that the sales force should be representative of the population.
5. No skilled immigrants have applied for positions.
6. One barrier would be one of English comprehension. In addition to the language skills would be “cultural” aspect of the business. The example given was that resumes were mailed in rather than brought in personally. The company likes to see the applicant to determine if there is any point of even reading the resume.
7. Many of the jobs do have prerequisite courses. For example, a car salesman has a three-day course to take. The body painters, mechanics and technicians have four-year apprenticeships. Even the partsman has a four-year apprenticeship. Other than accepting apprentices for any of the skilled trades, the company has no other plan to deal with any shortages.
8. The respondent was not able to say if the company would support any initiatives until they had some idea of what was involved.

Appendix G: Employer Matrix

<u>NUM.</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Numbers</u>	<u>Types of Skills</u>	<u>Shortages</u>	<u>Plans</u>	<u>Barriers</u>	<u>Initiatives/support</u>	<u>Other</u>
8	Plaques etc.	3	engravers	not at present	uses on-the job training	English skills/computer	Never used programs before	Has no S.I.
	trophies	3	assembly line	wants college		literacy	but would consider	
		1	manager	students				
9	education	2	computer techs	occasionally	Hire as needed	English skills/computer	No response	No S.I.
		2	administrators	hires from own		cultural differences		
		4	facilitators	students		Need culture in context		
		1	owner					
10	air cond	7	technicians	In future	Rely on Union Hall for	Need union TQ	Do mentoring now	No S.I.
	refridge	3	support	only 15-20	hiring.	6 year apprenticeship		
12	airline	8	pilots	Not expected		English skills	No response	No S.I.
		4	mechanics	Many pilots		Transport Canada certification		
		1	general manager	use them as				
		1	chief pilot	"Stepping stone"				
		16	customer service					
15	retirement	1	manager	RN's maybe		English skills/accents	Never used any, would support	
	community	4.5	RN's			Cultural orientation	cross cultural training	3 S.I. At present
		8	excluded (man)			Communication styles		
		1	maintenance			e.g."pleasers"		
		72	kitchen/dining					
			housekeeping					
			laundry					
		1	chef					
		1	care coordinator					
13	Volvo	20	HEO mechs	HEO mechs	none	Education, training, ability	No response	
	trucks	15	partsmen					
		?	support staff					
		?	managers					
			family members					
11	wood/gas	1	owner/manager	Jr. Techs	Uses Malaspina students	English skills e.g.immigrant with		none at present
	stoves	6	skilled installers			all theory but didn't know what	a heater was used for.	

4	municipal	450-500	clerical	None	None	English skills information on E.I. WCB, etc.	No response	Don't know
		total	trades					Doesn't ask
			drivers					
			managers					
			all union shop					
<u>21</u>	<u>Research</u>		<u>professions</u>	<u>clerical sup.</u>				
			<u>technicians</u>	<u>trades</u>				
<u>20</u>	<u>Paving Con</u>	<u>70+</u>	<u>concrete fin.</u>	<u>expect some</u>	<u>apprent.</u>			
			<u>lab techs</u>					
16	hospitality	80-100	Managers-	None expected		English skills, cultural differences	None	Several
		total	front end, food &					
			beverage, house					
			keeping					
21	research							
20	[aving							
			trades (elec, carp					
14	chemical	2	fabricators	Occasionally		No response	Open to anything	No response
	supply	1	bookkeeper					
		1	manager					
		1	shipper/receiver					
		2	support staff					
3	builders	34-42	varied electronics	Occasionally	None specific	English skills, cultural differences	Nothing	2 S.I. Now
	designers	total	computer techs	specific for		Often unwilling to speak out		
	robotics		engineers	jobs				
			Mechanics(engin					
)					
			support staff					
		1	market/sales					
		1	sales manager					

19	Internet provider	total 14	programmers web designers technicians customer service engineers managers (owners)	None	None Government programs too cumbersome (red tape)	English skills		1 S.I. Now
2	Steel fabricators Heavy equip	150-250	engineers machinists millwrights HEO mechs partsmen managers support staff accountants computer techs welders sales force warehousemen	None now None expected	None	English skills, cultural differences		
1	Educators	1400-1500	faculty Support staff technicians trades-electricians carpenters groundspeople	None	Work with recruiter	English skills, getting right papers	None	Unknown
5	call centre MSN MCI	1200-1400	managers tech support customer service supervisors security/parking	all the time	entry level positions	English skills, accents cultural orientation		
7	Education	total 2100 13383 FTE's 15	teachers technicians IT techs maintenance	None Some specialists	None	No comment	No response	Unknown

			techs					
			trades					
			counsellors					
			supervisory					
17	grocery	total 3200	Managers	Usually none	Started Thrifty Foods	English skills		
	retail		Dep't specifics	Pharmacists	College for managers			
			bakery, meat	Health shelf	bakery college			
			floral pharmacy					
			health shelf					
			customer service					
			marketing director					
			entry level for most					
			automech					
22	automobile	75	bodyshop	in 5-10 yrs	apprents/none other			
			parts/sales	mechs/techs				
18	sea foods	15	plant staff	None expected		Language skills, able to deal	Vietnamese community need	owner sales
	fresh & frozen					with government red tape	intrepreter	rep, had many
		350	clam diggers			WCB, Revenue Canada		others
		300	First nation			GST PST EI		
		50	Asian					
6	hospitals	7000	total	None in RN's	None noted	Getting through professional	See senior manager for comment	Many
	care homes		PT's, OT's, RN's	Mental health		bodies for licenses		
	public health		Pharmacists	pharmacists		Other government red tape		
	environmental		technicians					
			Mental Health					